



LAW ENFORCEMENT SOCIAL MEDIA
HOW-TO

GUIDE

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+ A step-by-step guide to creating and optimizing your agency's Facebook page.

Building Trust Online

A step-by-step guide to creating and optimizing your agency's Facebook page.

A Facebook page can be a great tool to help your law enforcement agency share stories, communicate helpful information, and engage with your community. Setting up a department Facebook page is simple enough, but you'll need to create a plan for what to include on your page and how you'll use the page.

We've created this helpful guide to help you get your department Facebook page started.

1. Create a strategy

Sit down with the relevant stakeholders (including command staff, information officers, and administrators) and decide talk through the big-picture strategy of your department's Facebook page.

Before you set up your page, you'll need to decide:

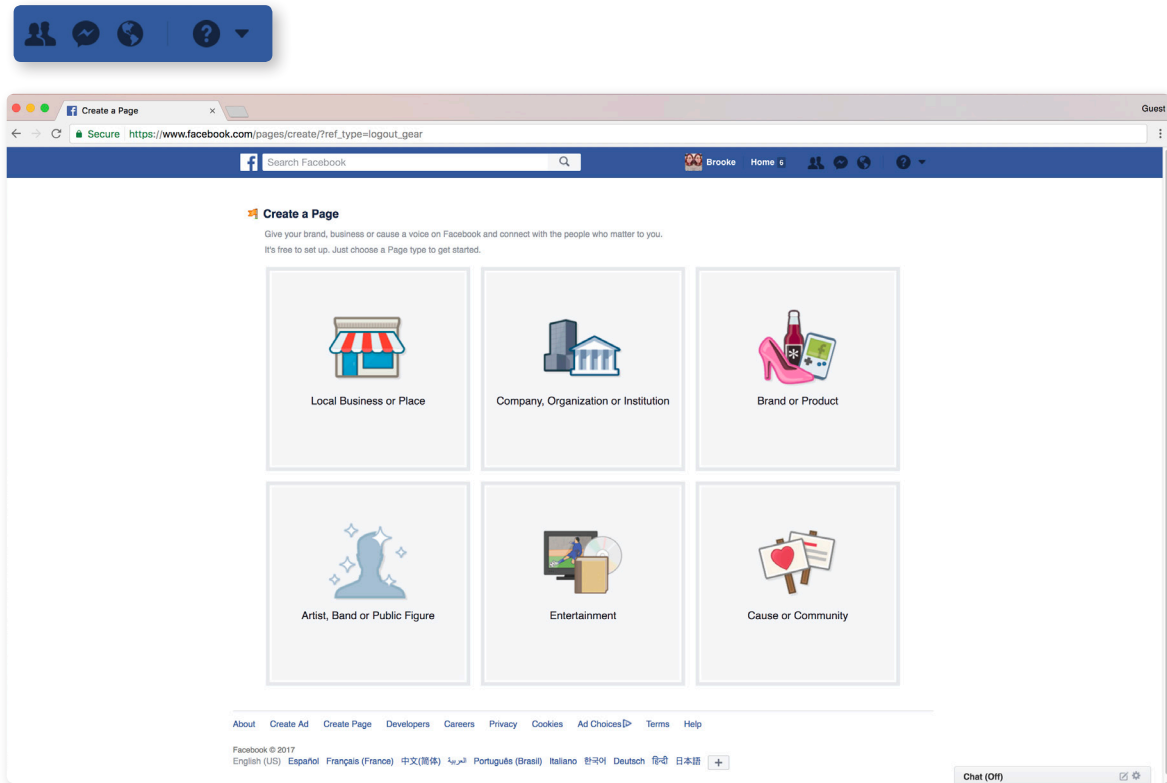
- The goals for your page - What are you hoping to accomplish with your page? How do you want to connect with the people who "like" your page? Discuss your priorities and how your department's Facebook page will help you reach those goals.
- Who will maintain the page - Will one information officer be in charge of your Facebook presence? Will you assign different staff members to update the page? Decide who will be responsible for creating and posting content.
- What kind of content you will post - What information will your audience want from your page? What is your department's unique voice? Clearly establish what kind of posts are acceptable and not acceptable.
- How often you will post - Brainstorm a reasonable schedule for posts.
- What imagery and copy you will need to set up the page - A Facebook page is an important part of your department brand. Talk through how you want to present your department to the public. Do you have strong, branded images to use for the header and profile picture? How will you present your department's mission and values in the "about" section?

You may need to revisit some of these questions after your page has been up for a few months and you see what content and posting schedule works best. But try to predict and account for as many variables as you can so you can establish a strong page from the very beginning.

2. Setting Up the Page

Anyone who has a personal Facebook profile can create a page. So have someone from your department (likely the PIO) login to their Facebook account and follow these steps:

1. Click the arrow to the right of the question mark icon to reveal a drop down menu. Click "Create Page"



2. Under category, select "Company, Organization or Institution"
3. Type the name of your police department in the Company Name field
4. Click Get Started

3. Optimizing the Page

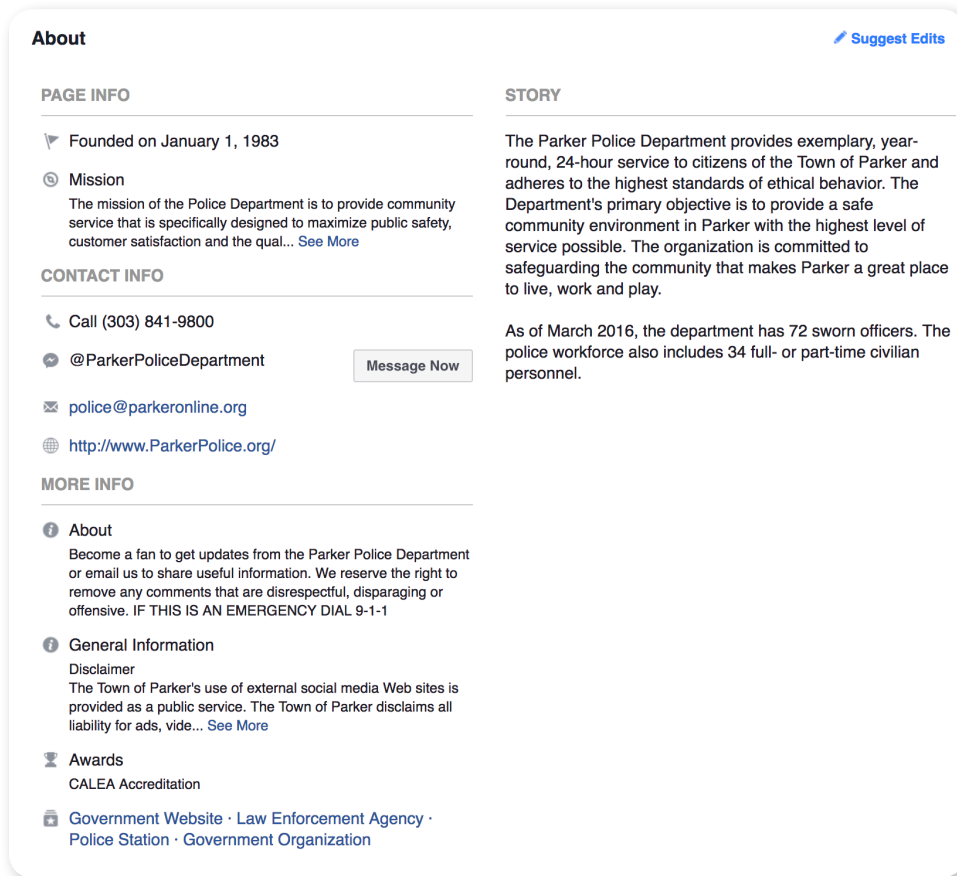
Once you have set up the page, Facebook will automatically walk you through a few key steps:

1. **Your profile picture-** Your profile picture serves as a visual representation of your department. A small version of the picture will show up in Facebook users' newsfeeds alongside anything you post, so make sure the picture clearly identifies your department. The industry standard is to use a picture of your agency's badge on a plain background. Make sure the photo is square and is at least 180 x 180 pixels.
2. **Your cover photo-** The cover photo is the first (and the biggest) thing users see when they visit your page, so make sure it represents your department well. Understandably, graphic design may not be your first priority as a public safety department, but the image doesn't need to be complex. Your agency name overlaying a photo of your community is a good place to start. Use a free resource such as Canva.com to create custom graphics for your page. Canva even has templates that let you easily add text on top of an image. You can update your cover photo as needed to highlight different events, special holidays, or department programs. For example, Parker Police Department's cover photo features the department's MYPD app and other social media accounts. Facebook page layouts change and are responsive to mobile devices, so make sure to double check to make sure the picture is cropped correctly.

- The current size is 828 pixels wide by 315 pixels tall.



- 3. Your Content-** Before you create any posts, you'll need to create the branded content for the "about" section of your Facebook page.



- A. Your Mission-** Under "Page Info," Facebook pages give you the option of including the date your department was founded as well as your mission statement. The mission statement can often be copied verbatim from your agency website.
- B. Your story-** This is an opportunity to expand on your mission statement and provide more information about your department. You may use this section to tell the public more about your department's goals and how your officers serve the community. But try to keep this write-up relatively short—this is not the place to get into the entire history of your agency.

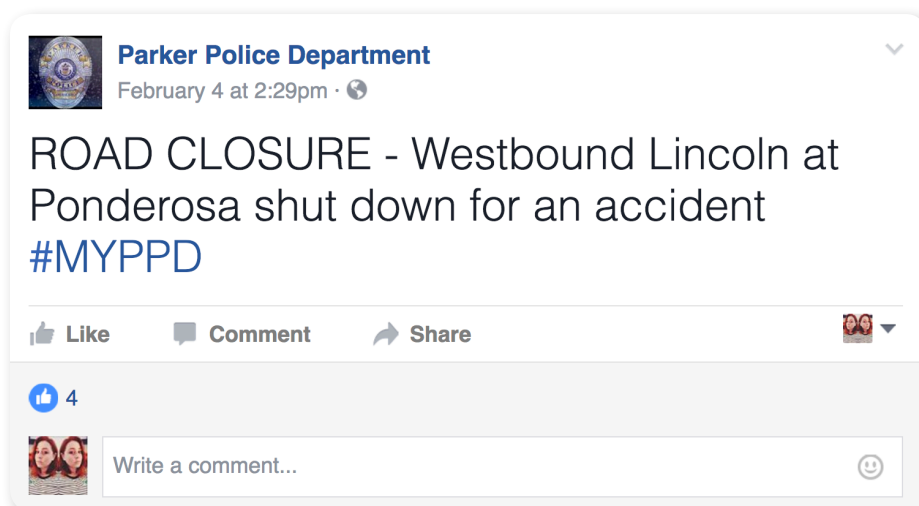
- C. **Contact info-** Facebook pages are a great way to break down walls of communication between you and your community. Try to give residents multiple ways of contacting your department—your department website, phone number, email address, Twitter handle, and any other contact points that could be helpful. This will help build a sense of trust and transparency with your community.
- D. **About-** A shortened version of this section will appear on the main section of your page, so make it brief and clear. What is the purpose of your Facebook page? Perhaps it's to educate the public or provide a vessel for helpful information. Maybe it's just for the community to get to know the department's employees. This is a good place to list that.
- E. **General information-** Since Facebook is a public forum, it's important to protect your department legally. For example, in this section, Parker PD includes a disclaimer about how they reserve the right to delete any inflammatory comments and even ban people from accessing the page upon repeat offenses.

4. Maintaining the Page

Once you're all set up, you're ready to begin posting and engaging with your community. Don't simply abandon your page after you've created the main content and imagery. In order for your Facebook page to be an effective communication tool, you'll need to regularly update your page with posts and respond to comments and messages.

The kind of content you'll post will depend on the needs of your community. But one of the best ways to learn how to operate a successful law enforcement Facebook page is to learn from other agencies. Here are some of the ways Parker PD has successfully used Facebook to build trust in their community:

Community updates Parker PD posts updates on things such as road closures, missing people, community events, and more. The department also posts a weekly crime report, PSAs, and safety tips.



These types of posts have helped Parker PD become a trusted resource for information in the community.



Internal updates As well as posting about what's happening in the community, Parker PD sometimes gives Facebook users a glimpse inside the department.

Parker Police Department
February 7 at 11:07am · 🌐

Congratulations

Congratulations Officer Chris Kozuch on your promotion to Sergeant.

Chris brings a very high level of enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to this organization and the community. He has been with our agency for more than 9 years and has previous military experience with the Marines. Chris has been an instrumental part of many programs, to include the Brazos e-Ticketing project, Records Management System selection project, Crisis Incident Team, Police Training Officer, Mentoring, Drug Recognition Expert, Motorcycle program, Child Passenger Safety, Crash Team and Working Out of Rank. Chris has served on several Town committees as well.

The command staff expects that Chris will be a results-driven supervisor who will be a leader by example. Chris will begin his duties as a Sergeant Saturday.

Like Comment Share

425 Top Comments

For example, Parker uses its Facebook page to celebrate staff promotions, highlight department accomplishments, and showcase community outreach events. Parker usually includes photos with these posts to help familiarize the community with the officers they'll see around town. This builds trust with the community and shows officers that they are valued and appreciated.

Very responsive to messages

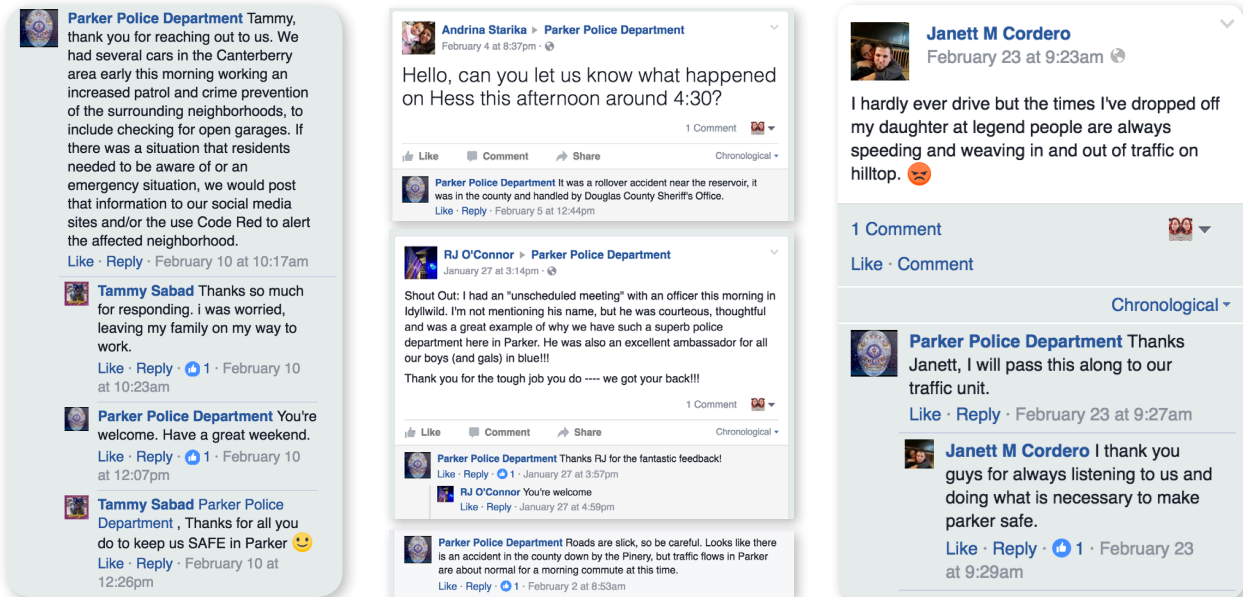
Invite friends to like this Page

Quickly responding to messages also awards you a commendation of being “very responsive.” All of these things build on your existing credibility within your community. The hard part is actually allocating the resources to answer these messages.

That's where a well-defined strategy comes into play.

5. Continually Improving your Strategy

Social media can be a powerful tool for engaging with your community, building trust, and improving your department's reputation. But maintaining an effective department Facebook page will take time and dedication. Remember that it's a privilege to be able to use technology with your community in a meaningful way. Before you start using a department Facebook page, make sure to establish thorough social media policies to help guide your department's strategy and make sure social media doesn't get your department into trouble.



"Research the optimal frequency to post on a specific social media platform and balance that with the level of staffing supporting your social media program. Understand how each platform works. For example, Facebook treats posts from businesses/government different than friends and family. It's better to do a few well than a lot poorly. Don't stretch yourself too thin. Social media done correctly creates a lot of engagement with your community and the amount of time required to run it increases as it becomes more successful. If you have too many platforms, you won't be able to dedicate the time to make them successful."

Josh Hans

Public Relations/PIO
Parker Police Department

Simplify Your Policy Management with PowerDMS

As you use your Facebook page over time, you'll need to revisit your strategy and revise your policy. The social media landscape changes daily, and you'll likely run into unfamiliar scenarios. Having a tool like PowerDMS that allows you to quickly collaborate, change, and distribute a policy for approval is crucial for a smooth social media operation.

For more information on how PowerDMS helps simplify policy management, sign up to receive a live demo.

Visit PowerDMS.com/demo or email sales@powerdms.com.

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