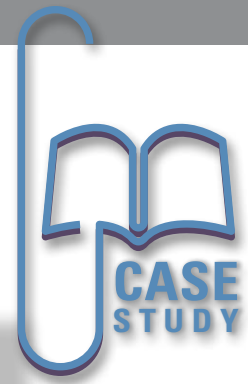




SOCIAL M

How the Philadelphia
Parking Authority embraced
social media to connect
with its community
and boost its image.

By Sue Cornell



EDIA 101

The growing phenomenon of social media has extended into almost every portion of our society. In the last 10 years, social media has grown from a passing fad enjoyed by college students to a prime communication and intelligence tool. More and more average citizens are Tweeting, turning to YouTube for ideas and entertainment, and sharing information on Facebook. This new digital domain presents enormous communications and monitoring opportunities. It is rare that an organization, brand, or company fails to use social media to build a community, spread a message, answer questions, and troubleshoot problems. That's even true, it seems, for municipal authorities.

The Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA) is one of the country's largest and most complex municipal parking organizations. Aside from employing 750 people, including 250 parking enforcement officers (PEOs), the PPA owns and operates 10 parking facilities, manages more than 50 lots, provides the only on-site parking for the Philadelphia International Airport, operates the only red light photo enforcement program in the state, and regulates the taxicab and limousine industry in Philadelphia.

Although the mission of the PPA is to continually enhance the quality of life in the city through the provision of comprehensive parking, regulatory, and transportation services, the recent harsh reality was that many Philadelphians didn't simply dislike the PPA. They loathed it.

Following the leadership of PPA Board Chairman Joseph Ashdale, Executive Director Vincent Fenerty

embarked on a progressive series of campaigns to interact, educate, and reach out to Philadelphians in a 21st century manner. The PPA was going to be kinder, friendlier, and, yes, way more transparent and accessible. Developing a social media strategy and approachable online structure was a key building block to crafting a new reputation.

Social Media Goals

The PPA had two main goals for the social media program: to provide the public with easy access to parking-related answers, and to promote the positive image of the Authority and the work it does for the city every day. Newspapers and broadcasts were trapped in a negative cycle of press, with no positive stories about the PPA. Not only did social media offer a way to connect and hear the customers, it offered a way to tell the full, positive story.

Where many organizations might have made

fixgear
Wed 01 Feb 16:32

@PhilaParking I'm not much of a facebook guy but I am glad to learn that you are listening, kudos

1

JenCannPro
Wed 01 Feb 18:03

Pleasantly surprised by @PhilaParking tweet. Just rec'd quick & helpful response! Thanks 2 @myantkinney for spreading the word. #redemption

2

Q102Philly
Sat 03 Dec 10:03

A Christmas Miracle! RT @PhilaParking Going shopping? Enjoy free METER parking citywide today from 11am-midnight. Info, <http://t.co/n6wLDwNg>

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MattCampana
Mon 30 Jan 10:43

@PhilaParking I really appreciate that. Seriously. This type of support goes a long way.

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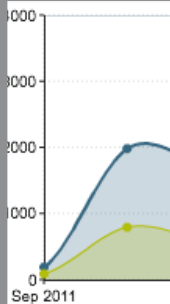
PPA PHILADELPHIA PARKING AUTHORITY

Park with Us. With a little effort, you can find a lot.

WEDNESDAY, "WHAT DO I DO?"

THE PPA BLOG

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Philadelphia Parking Authority

Parking Permit Questions? Take a look at the FAQ for answers. If you have other questions visit our Support Tab to the left. Happy Tuesday!

Permits - Philadelphia Parking Authority

FAQs: What is the purpose of the Residential Permit Parking program? How does the program work? Who is eligible for a parking permit? Are there any...

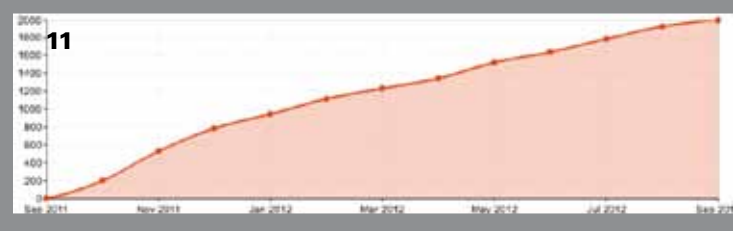
Josephine Noble likes this.

Tommy Van Der Grift Where can you find information on the parking zones? For instance the boundaries of parking zone 1, versus the boundaries for parking zone 27 thanks

Philadelphia Parking Authority Hello Tommy Van Der Grift, There is list of all zone/district areas at www.phila.gov, if you look on the left hand side of the home page then click quick links & look under city code and charter. Traffic code - Chapter 12-2700 - Permit Parking Districts. If you have other questions, visit our Support Tab on the left.

City of Philadelphia: Mayor Michael A. Nutter

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with their constituents, promote activities, and address customer service issues in real-time.”

Getting Started

ChatterBlast first set out to explore the playing field and see what the PPA’s peers were doing in social media.

“At the time, only a handful of parking agencies were online. The largest was the Miami Parking Authority. We carefully looked at them, as well as other city and municipal agencies,” said Matthew Ray, CBM principal and co-founder.

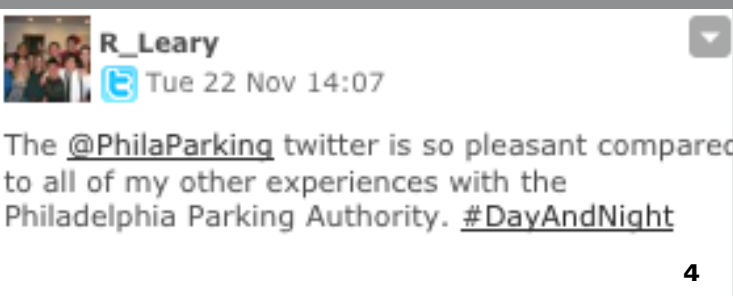
“We knew the PPA would be the largest parking organization in the country to embrace social media in this way,” said Urbania. “It was also important to look at the corporate world—companies like Comcast and Progressive who blazed the trail with social media customer service initiatives just a few years ago.”

CBM included PPA directors and advisors to ensure that a strategy was created to fulfill several goals for social media: information exchange, community outreach, and customer service.

“We got all the directors involved so that every department of the PPA was represented, from taxis and limousines to on-street parking enforcement. The entire PPA team was needed to make this project as successful as possible. We looked at everything

the catastrophic mistake of charging an intern with this audacious communications assignment, the PPA carefully explored every step with outside help. This was going to be a cautious and well-planned endeavor, and the PPA wanted to handle it professionally. ChatterBlast Media (CBM) was retained to ensure a 360-degree view on the implementation and development. It was important that the PPA had a partner that had a solid track record of navigating the social media world. The PPA knew parking inside and out, and wanted a partner who had the same expertise on the digital side.

“We’re seeing a shift in government services when it comes to online communications,” explains CBM Principal and Co-Founder Evan Urbania. “Social media represents a whole new channel for agencies, offices, and even elected officials to communicate



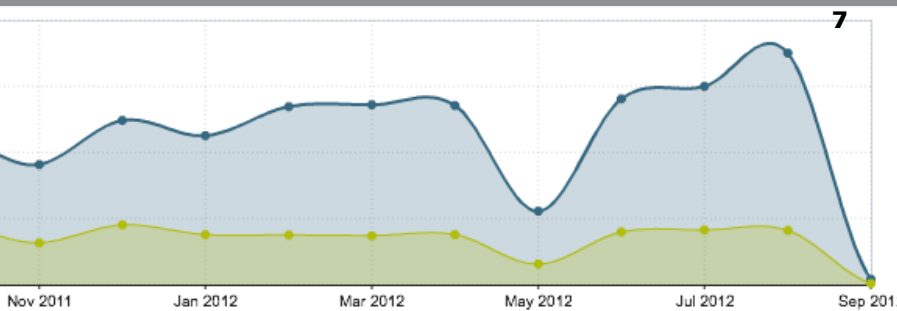
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1. Screenshot showing a user's tweet responding to our assistance.
2. Screenshot showing a user's tweet responding to our assistance.
3. A screenshot of a local radio outlet re-tweeting a useful tweet, helping to reach more users online.
4. Screenshot showing a user's tweet responding to our assistance.
5. Screenshot of the PPA customer service platform integrated into Facebook.
6. Screenshot of the PPA Facebook page.
7. Chart showing sentiment of posted items (positive in blue, negative in green).
8. Screenshot of the PPA blog which highlights common questions and provides valuable, relevant information to residents and tourists.
9. Screenshot showing a user's tweet responding to our assistance.
10. Facebook interaction showing problem resolution and a satisfied user.
11. Chart showing growth of the total network over time.

Developing a social media strategy and approachable online structure was a key building block to crafting a new reputation.

from how corporations were handling social media presences to fire departments, community organizations, and city governments,” says Ray.

Once the analysis and strategy were complete, CBM began to build the needed online infrastructure and create internal processes to deal with any issue (real or imagined) that could develop. Both teams wanted to be prepared for snow emergencies, enforcement questions, ticket issues, and the unexpected.

Procedures and plans were put in place to avoid any missteps and ensure positive engagement. Then, the PPA educated internal stakeholders on the new campaign and spent a week in a slow roll-out, testing the customer service software and double-checking all the possible scenarios. Once everyone was comfortable, the PPA informed local press of the new online resource. It was time to be liked.

Press and public feedback was positive. Instantly, Philadelphians began to interact and engage the new resources. The online infrastructure at roll-out included:

- **Blog:** philapark.org/category/blog-posts. Serves as the primary spot for up-to-date information, news, features on staff and all other PPA-approved content.
- **Facebook:** facebook.com/PhilaPark. This was designed to interact with the broadest possible community, disseminate blog posts and content, and act as a portal for customer service. Business-to-consumer (B2C) industry-standard customer service tools were integrated into the page. The application not only registered and logged every complaint, praise, or query, but also “learned” from them and built a library of replies to ensure that redundant questions didn’t have to wait for a response.
- **Twitter:** twitter.com/PhilaParking. Developed to communicate with the general public directly and to support city/state agencies, answer media inquiries, and interact with community organizations.
- **YouTube:** youtube.com/philaparking. Developed to offer video content about the PPA, including instructional videos and news stories.

Social Media Tips for Parking Authorities

1. Listen first. Take the time to assess your users' online behavior. Understand where they are talking about you and which platforms are the best channels to reach them.
2. Assess resources. A comprehensive social media program can be resource-intensive. Be sure to assess available internal and external resources to manage it effectively. Ensure your strategy fits your resources and bring in outside help when needed.
3. Determine your voice. Don't just use social media to broadcast alerts. Make sure your channels have a voice and tone that reflects the culture of your organization. Social media is a two-way conversation, so be sure to use it that way.
4. Leverage technology. New technologies allow for streamlined customer service via social media and can enable teams to monitor, publish and engage the community efficiently and without hiring new employees.
5. Be creative. Social media is an opportunity to go beyond corporate communications and press releases. Use these channels to reveal the softer, more compassionate side of your organization. Explore new ways to interact and communicate with your customers.

IPI members can download the *Social Media Marketing Guide for Parking Professionals*, a step-by-step guide that will help them use social media to communicate with their customers and find new ones. Read about cutting-edge methods you can use on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to help grow your business and improve customer satisfaction. It is written by Ted Janusz, IPI presenter and author of the monthly Sociability column in *The Parking Professional*. It can be accessed at parking.org/socialmediaguide.

Social Media Growth

Over the next few months, some of these new channels quickly grew in popularity.

"Twitter became an early access point for the community. People Tweeted the PPA a lot," says Ray. "Other city service organizations Tweeted us issues and connected. There was a lot of activity, and still is. As more and more people engage their city through their mobile device or smartphone, it was important that the PPA was prepared to handle those customer service issues digitally. Twitter's user base is growing everyday, and they Tweet questions, comments, and problems. They were already talking about the PPA, so we had to be a part of the dialogue."

"We were actually surprised," says Urbania. "After planning for a deluge of hate messages and customer service issues, we found that many of the problems reported were easily resolved."

While some people did vent or express frustration, the PPA preferred they do it on a Facebook page then to one of their officers on the street. The PPA has also received user praise, and the team has even seen the channel grow into a forum for customers to ask for more residential enforcement!

While the growth of the accounts has been organic, the results have been impressive. The Twitter account, for example, has proven to be a "must-follow" for Philadelphia city officials, media, and tourist agencies.

Some of the success metrics after just one year include:

- Combined reach of more than 3.1 million users.
- 7,100 actions on Twitter (replies, mentions, direct messages, clicks).
- 1,854 unique touchpoints (blog posts, Facebook updates, Tweets).
- 121 problems or questions resolved through the online customer service platform.

The new social media site has not reduced the number of customer service issues being reported by the traditional channels, but the PPA and CBM believe they have an explanation.

"We are touching demographics of people who probably would have never made a call, or sent a letter," says Urbania. "They would have been mad and built up a hostility. Instead, we've presented ourselves to them in the communications arena they use the most, and given them the opportunity to be heard. In the end, it helps ease their situation and continues our mission as well."

Long-term results are still being analyzed for this program, but the PPA is committed to remaining accessible and open on these new social media channels. Like any new program or initiative, the best way to success is to be well-prepared and stay focused on the value these opportunities bring to the organization and customers. **P**



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