

HIGHLIGHTS

Engaging customers through social media helps transit agencies improve customer service, better communicate messages, and learn about and correct mistakes in a timely manner.

"Top 5" Benefits of Social Networking

1. Added visual presence;
2. Up-to-date info source;
3. Feeling of community;
4. Effective feedback source;
5. Positive public perception.

NEWS

Aloha!

Majic Consulting Group is excited to have been selected by the City and County of Honolulu for the Management Performance Review of Oahu Transit.



The Social Network:

Using Social Media to Enhance the Rider's Experience

Marketing is an ever-evolving business arena. In decades past, to ensure visibility to potential customers, companies could simply list basic contact information in the phone book. Now, a Google search and a nanosecond later, the world is at the customer's fingertips.

In today's internet market, "having an internet presence" has advanced beyond simply having an informational website. It now necessitates a working understanding of friend requests, tweets, blog posts, RSS feeds, and apps. Internet heavyweights such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have reinvented social networking, making it easier for anyone with an internet connection to log on and broadcast ideas.



Many transit agencies may not consider themselves in the right industry for social media. However, the new "virtual communities" have opened up legitimate avenues for public participation, outreach, and information dissemination.

In fact, these avenues are fast becoming the most influential, as more and more people of all ages and demographics turn to these communities for not only socializing, but also sharing information and opinions.

Migration to social media has been so rapid that for agencies yet to join Facebook or Twitter, the question is not "if," but "when."

"Top 5" Benefits of Social Networking

1. Added visual presence.

Is your agency's only visual presence the logo on your bus or route schedule buried in a county website? Most people nowadays have their eyes glued to a screen: TV, computer,

Smartphone, etc. Much of this screen time is spent on social sites like Facebook, and frequently involves watching and sharing YouTube clips and other visuals found online.

By meeting your customers where they *already are*, you increase your "face-time," familiarizing the public with your services.

2. Up-to-date info source.

For transit agencies, as for most businesses, the most straightforward function of social media sites is as a way to send announcements, especially for new projects, promotional events and unplanned occurrences such as service interruptions.

Transit patrons who become "fans" or "friends" on Facebook, or who follow a Twitter feed, are guaranteed to receive notices that they might otherwise miss through the traditional channels of press releases, posts on the agency website, or more costly direct mail.

How well does your customer experience match your brand identity?

Call Majic Consulting Group to bring your customers' experience in sync with your brand.



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3. Feeling of community.

“There’s a natural community that exists on public transit that does not exist when people travel by car,” says Jim Allison, multimedia managing producer for Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART).

Social networks, too, act inherently as communities, giving users a sense of connection beyond everyday in-person interaction.

Facebook pages and Twitter feeds can create and extend a rider’s sense of “commute community,” the feeling of shared personal connection between the rider, other riders, and the agency itself.

4. Effective feedback source.

For social network users, a main draw is the ability to state an opinion from the comfort and convenience of home, office, or wherever there’s an internet signal.

Transit agencies can capitalize on this desire to share “my 2¢” to discover

opinions of service elements, and shape them. Los Angeles Metro Community Relations Manager Jody Litvak, credited with setting up the first transit Facebook page, says, “Facebook is a way to put your story out and have some interaction and input for things like projects and things you’re promoting.”

Traditional forums, comment cards and public meetings, suffer “sampling bias”: only a small, likely non-representative portion participate, often to voice a personal issue. Surveys, while effective, are costly and so limited to occasional use on certain topics. Social sites give riders, stakeholders and the community a new platform for questions, concerns and praise—one more likely to be widely used, as many people are already used to sharing opinions online.

5. Positive public perception.

When the “brand image” you’re advertising and your customers’ experience—real

or perceived—are out of sync, perceived customer experience becomes your brand image.

Use of social media, in delivering the prior four benefits (added visual presence; up-to-date information; a sense of community; and encouraging feedback), inherently creates positive perception of your agency as effective and responsive.



Use social networks even more to your advantage, to actively shape perception.

Engage users with regular (yet not “spam”-frequent) updates, fun visuals, a friendly tone, and interactive features.

Tell your “transit story,” and help riders and your community realize their important part in that story.