

Digital Communications Guidelines

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Government
of South Australia

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Introduction

These guidelines aim to enhance understanding of the unique opportunities digital tools offer government agencies and to provide some guiding principles for the use of technology to enhance external communication and marketing activities. As technology is changing rapidly you are encouraged to seek advice from the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU), Department of the Premier and Cabinet in conjunction with use of these guidelines.

Media and tools covered within these guidelines include:

- Websites
- Search
- Social Media
- Mobile
- Online Classifieds
- Display Advertising
- Email (including Viral)

Some of these forms of communication may also be subject to specific requirements; therefore reference should also be made to the following documents:

- Government of South Australia Branding Guidelines
- Guidelines for the Premier's Communications Advisory Group Process
- Guidelines for Preparing an Advertising Brief
- Government Website Standards and Protocols
- PC023 Private Sector Endorsements on Government Communications and Materials
- PCo09 The Master Media Scheme for Government Advertising

All documents are available to South Australian Government staff through the SCU website. Access requires a password obtainable by phoning SCU.

Further information and assistance, including a comprehensive glossary of terms, is available from SCU:

Web: www.premcab.sa.gov.au/stratcomms

Email: stratcomms@dpc.sa.gov.au

Phone: 8204 9184

Opportunities for Government Communications

Web 2.0 has been recognised globally as offering a number of unique opportunities for governments around the world to enhance relationships with their citizens. The benefits are significant as social and digital media provide new ways of packaging, managing and engaging with information. For government, digital and social media can:

- Improve access to government information and services
- Increase the responsiveness of government to the needs of the community by facilitating flexible and agile communication and processes
- Facilitate democratic processes that are participatory, where citizens are invited to actively contribute to their communities
- Improve service delivery by allowing users of services to have input on their design and continual improvement
- Help organizations harness community enthusiasm and knowledge in the development of public policy
- Ensure greater transparency and openness in regards to government process

More specifically, digital and social media offer a number of tools and technologies that can be used to enhance marketing and communications activities undertaken by government agencies. While each tool is different and should be considered within the context of your broader communications strategy and objectives, some of the ways in which these tools may specifically benefit your marketing strategy include:

- Providing 24-hour access to your information and services
- Providing a mechanism for community feedback to be received and responded to
- Providing additional communication channels in an emergency situation
- Offering flexibility to rapidly respond to issues that arise or to counter incorrect media reports
- Providing niche targeting opportunities for difficult to reach audiences
- Providing low or no cost communications channels, reducing reliance on traditional media
- Providing insights into community sentiment
- Reputation management
- Engaging communities and/or influencers to support your objectives through word-of-mouth promotion
- Tracking your competitors and the discussions surrounding them
- Allowing communications to be personalized and one-on-one
- Testing creative and media to optimise campaigns while in market
- Providing real-time communication and detailed evaluation
- Providing searchable data and information
- Creating opportunities to offer free content, such as games or applications, to better engage your target audiences

Use of the Government of South Australia Branding and Logo

All Government external communications materials, including digital, social media and mobile advertising, should be consistent with Government policy and should feature strong and consistent branding of the Government of South Australia.

Use of the Government of South Australia branding is strictly controlled and must comply with the requirements set out in:

- Government of South Australia Branding Guidelines
- Premier and Cabinet Circular 023: Private Sector Endorsements on Government Communications and Materials

Both documents are available through the Strategic Communications Unit website. Access requires a password obtainable by phoning the Strategic Communications Unit.

Premier's Communications Advisory Group Approval Process

The role of the Premier's Communications Advisory Group (PCAG) approval process is to ensure a planned, coordinated and strategic approach to the Government's extensive and diverse communication strategies and programs. The desired outcome is effective public communication that presents all agencies and activities in a consistent and cohesive manner.

The PCAG meets regularly to review proposed advertising and marketing communications activity. Approval through the PCAG process is required for any government agency advertising and marketing communication to enter the public domain.

Any use of digital or social media that supports or is part of external communications activity must be approved via the Premier's Communications Advisory Group (PCAG) approval process. Approval will encompass:

- digital communications strategy (inc media and tool selection)
- proposed creative (inc branding and design)
- evaluation strategy and methodology (inc strategy for ongoing optimisation and maintenance)

Once approval has been granted, new or revised digital content (including blogs) will not generally need ongoing approval unless requested by PCAG.

For more information regarding the PCAG approval process for communications activities or how to make a submission to the Group please refer to *Guidelines for the Premier's Advisory Group Process*.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Optimisation

Digital and social media, like other traditional media, must be evaluated as part of the PCAG approval process to ensure your strategy is working and to provide learnings for future activity. However, unlike traditional media, digital and social media can also provide new opportunities to both optimise your activity while in market and gain useful insights into how your audiences perceive your brand or service at the same time.

Before choosing your digital and social media tools you should consider the following:

- Which of your communications objectives will be supported by digital and/ or social media?
- What value will the tools provide to your audiences and stakeholders?
- What type of qualitative and quantitative information will you need to track to measure the success of the tool or improve the strategy?

You should aim to start evaluating your activity as soon as it goes live to ensure you maximise the potential of these tools. A final evaluation report should summarise your learnings and provide an evaluation against your original campaign objectives.

Traditional evaluation tools such as market research, response tracking and media post analysis can often be used for digital and social media. In addition, some specific tools that may assist you in monitoring, optimising and evaluating your activity are as follows:

- *Search engine alerts* (e.g. . www.google.com/alerts and alerts.yahoo.com)
These provide an email alert whenever nominated search terms are mentioned online. Useful for tracking online news articles and blogs. Alerts can be set for a brand (e.g. TAFE SA), a service ('Trams Adelaide'), an event ('Tour Down Under') or issue ('Water Security South Australia')
- *Social media search engines* (e.g. search.twitter.com and www.facebook.com/search)
Each social media site incorporates a search function that will enable you to monitor groups or communicate with influencers within that specific site.
- *Social media monitoring tools* (e.g. www.socialmention.com and www.icerocket.com)
These allow you to track conversations and posts retrospectively across a range of social media.
- *Website analytic tools* (e.g. Google Analytics www.google.com/analytics)
There are a number of free tools available that allow you to track activity on your site including page views, how users find your site and what information they download.

In addition, there are professional social and digital media monitoring services that can provide more comprehensive monitoring for a fee.

The Master Media Agency Agreement and Other Suppliers

The rapid evolution of digital and social media tools has meant that keeping abreast of developments in this area often poses a significant challenge for marketers. Specialist suppliers can provide significant support to agencies undertaking digital and social media communications activities.

The Master Media Agency (MMA) agreement

The Government of South Australia has appointed master media agencies (MMAs) in order to achieve significant savings across government expenditure of advertising space. This includes the development of digital media strategy, planning and buying. All media bookings for advertising from government agencies and statutory authorities must be channelled through the appointed MMAs. This encompasses paid advertising including:

- Display (banners, pop-ups, tiles etc)
- Classifieds (recruitment, real estate etc)
- Embedded video or audio content
- Text, pull-through or display advertising on other digital mediums (e.g. radio)

Search engine marketing, advertising and campaign management are offered by the MMAs as optional services.

For more information contact the Master Media Agencies:

BRAND

Mediaedge: cia
Phone: 8366 4744

FUNCTIONAL

Starcom
Phone: 8291 0000

Other specialist suppliers

Services that other suppliers may be contracted to provide include:

- Digital or campaign strategy development
- Digital production (apps, animation, video, multi-media)
- Website development/ construction
- Digital creative/design (including websites)
- Mobile campaign management

- Production of materials eg; photography, illustration, artwork, print, broadcast recordings, film and video
- PR or media relations
- Project management and supervision
- Advertising and campaign management
- Search engine marketing and optimisation

When appointing external suppliers to provide marketing services, the process must be fair and equitable and conducted in accordance with the requirements of your department's procurement guidelines.

Tips for maximising your relationship with other suppliers

Navigating the services on offer can be both a challenging and costly experience if approached incorrectly. Some general tips to maximise the effectiveness of your relationship with digital and social media specialists are as follows:

- *Be clear on what you want*
When developing a website map out the pages and navigation and include this in your brief. For a retail strategy, set a minimum target for ticket sales. This may change following advice from your supplier but will give them an immediate understanding of where your expectations begin and end.
- *Ensure your solution is flexible*
Technology changes rapidly so make sure your activity can adapt and change in the future and include this as a mandatory requirement in your brief.
- *Build technical capacity in-house*
Don't be too reliant on external suppliers to provide ongoing solutions as this can be costly over a long period of time. Make sure solutions have the capacity to be managed with minimal ongoing cost (for example, manage social media content internally rather than briefing a third-party) and include staff training within your brief to ensure a streamlined transfer.
- *Understand the ongoing resources required*
Digital and social media is rarely 'set and forget'. Ensure you are clear on the resources required to effectively maintain your online presence and the costs involved in providing them.

- *Understand the costs involved*
The easiest way to do this is to ensure that no work commences without a cost estimate being approved. Always seek quotes for ongoing optimisation, maintenance, tracking and evaluation as often these are not included within development fees and may rely on third party software that is on-charged.
- *Prioritise function over beauty*
Most digital solutions will need to prioritise technology over design. For example, a website that looks good but can't be read by search engines or which is difficult for people to find information on won't attract an audience. Be aware of this when choosing the type of suppliers you will brief.
- *Seek quotes not just from different suppliers but different types of suppliers*
For example, if you need to build a website seek quotes from a website development company, a creative agency and a digital strategy specialist. All will approach your brief in different ways and offer different costing models.
- *Sense check ideas*
Just like you would test creative concepts make sure you review the digital and social media ideas presented to you. If you are not familiar with the technology find someone who is and ask them whether it would engage them. Ensure tools selected support your communication strategy.
- *Develop a risk mitigation strategy*
Seek advice from communications, legal and ICT professionals to identify any risks associated with your strategy and your plan to manage them.

Websites

Websites offer government agencies the opportunity to provide 24 hour information and services to the community. In addition, they create opportunities for enhanced community engagement in government processes by facilitating two-way communication and conversation.

Common Internet Site for Government (CISfG)

In 2009, as part of the Ask Just Once strategy the South Australian Government launched its CISfG: www.sa.gov.au. The site was developed to make SA government services and information much easier for citizens to access by providing a single-entry point for the community to access core government services and information.

The long term vision for this site is to consolidate government information, where applicable, into a single portal. While development of the site is an ongoing process, careful consideration should now be given to the establishment of new websites to ensure they can integrate with the CISfG model.

When establishing a new website to sit outside sa.gov.au you must:

- Prepare a communications strategy that clearly demonstrates a need for the new website and which outlines objectives and target audiences
- Contact the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) for approval of proposed domain names. All enquiries should be directed to: domain.names@sa.gov.au. OCIO will also facilitate approval for the site to sit outside www.sa.gov.au.
- Seek approval for your new website through the PCAG process. Domain names that are not consistent with the standard (as determined by OCIO) will need approval by PCAG. New sites will only be considered where approval has been given for them to sit outside www.sa.gov.au.
- Ensure built site complies with the *SA Government Website Standards* (available on SCU or OCIO website).
- Develop all content in line with the endorsed website writing guide - available at www.websitecriteria.com. This guide is the basis for all content that appears on www.sa.gov.au

New websites should be developed so that they are optimised for search engines. Refer to page 13 of these guidelines for more information. Consideration should also be given to enabling key information to be made available to people accessing your site from mobile phones.

Search

Unless you have an unlimited advertising budget to promote your website it is likely that more users will find it via search engines than any other means. Commonly, a mixture of both Search Engine Optimisation and Marketing is used to drive traffic to a website. Because search engines can take between 1 - 3 months to catalogue new content, paid keywords can be used to drive people to your website until optimisation delivers high organic rankings. The key differences between Search Engine Optimisation and Marketing are as follows:

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

SEO, also referred to as 'Natural' or 'Organic Search', is the process of making sure your website contains content and is structured so that it is easily read and catalogued by search engines. This is usually a technical solution paid for from your website development budget.

A website that is optimised should increase its organic search ranking, however, it can take up to 3 months for search engines to catalogue your content so don't expect to be ranked highly as soon as your site launches. If you are launching a site with other marketing activity, such as advertising, you should consider Search Engine Marketing activity to help your audience find your website until your natural ranking improves. SEO is an ongoing process that requires constant review as your site's content and the keywords your audiences search for change.

General guidelines to ensure your new or existing site is optimised:

- Ensure content is written using the same words and language that your target audience would put into a search engine
- Use key words within your page titles; don't use jargon or abbreviations
- Make sure headings and content are text, rather than image files, so they can be easily read by search engines
- Repeat key words in body copy, particularly within first 200 words
- Review use of other technology to ensure it can be easily accessed by all search engines. For example, if you are using Flash, deploy a shadow HTML site to sit behind your public site.
- Use good quality, relevant links and ensure they work; build linking relationships with other relevant sites to drive traffic back to yours
- Review and repeat the above steps at least every 6 months

When implemented properly SEO should deliver approximately 70% of search traffic to your site.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Also called 'Pay per Click (PPC)' or 'Paid Listings', SEM involves 'buying' key words so that a link to your site appears in the sponsored links section of a search engine. SEM provides qualified audiences to your website because it is based on a 'pay for click' model. SEM is generally a marketing solution that is considered with other marketing elements such as advertising. For this reason it is often implemented on an ad hoc basis, however, if you can afford it an ongoing presence is recommended.

When implemented properly SEM should deliver approximately 30% of search traffic to your site. SEM is an optional service provided by the Brand MMA, Mediaedge: cia.

Display and Classified Advertising

Display and classified advertising must be planned and bought through the government's Master Media Agencies, Mediaedge:Cia (Brand) and Starcom (Functional). This type of advertising includes:

- Paid display advertising (banners, pop-ups, rectangles, towers) on all sites
- Online classified listings including recruitment (e.g. Seek, CareerOne, MyCareer) and real estate (e.g. realestate.com.au, domain.com.au)
- Any other form of paid digital or online media (including video, text or other embedded content)

When planning a digital advertising campaign it is recommended that you include campaign management and adserving. While an additional cost, these services ensure your campaign is optimised while in market and evaluation is detailed. AdServing and campaign management of display advertising campaigns is an optional service provided by the Brand MMA.

For more information please contact the Brand or Functional MMA:

BRAND
Mediaedge: cia
Phone: 8366 4744

FUNCTIONAL
Starcom
Phone: 8291 0000

Viral and Email Marketing

Viral and email marketing make use of existing social networks to distribute your communications material. Unlike traditional direct mail, email is flexible and allows content to be forwarded on increasing your reach at no cost. Viral promotions may take the form of video clips, interactive games, brandable software or images. General guidelines for the use of viral and email marketing are as follows:

Viral

Viral communications should be assessed against your broad communications strategy and objectives. Key considerations include:

- *The location of your target audience*
The internet is not restricted to state borders. Often a viral is deemed effective based on the number of people who view it, however if you target audience is the South Australian community how relevant is it that it delivers a significant audience outside the state?
- *Your communication objectives*
What is the motivation for people to forward your viral on? Often, in making the communication appealing to your target audience the key message becomes diluted.
- *Your desired behaviour*
If you are building awareness, having significant numbers of people view your viral may be enough, however other evaluation methodology such as 'click throughs' to your website should also be considered.
- *How you will measure its effectiveness*
This is critical and should relate back to your communications objectives.
- *Your distribution method*
Make sure you are familiar with laws governing use of email addresses and ensure you have checked that the size of any files can be effectively distributed without negatively impacting on those receiving them.

All virals should adhere to the South Australian Government branding guidelines unless exempted from using a logo by SCU or PCAG.

Email Marketing

Often referred to as 'Electronic Direct Mail' or 'Permission Marketing', Email Marketing provides an opportunity to communicate one-on-one with your target audiences online. Because email addresses are covered by privacy laws you should seek advice regarding the distribution lists you propose to use and 'opt in/ out' requirements.

Effective email marketing should:

- Be simple and uncluttered to allow your audience to quickly find key information
- Include an option to 'unsubscribe'
- Include a clear call-to-action and evaluation strategy to measure responses
- Carefully consider the timing of email distribution
- Only include information relevant to your target audiences
- Be clearly identified as Government of South Australia material and include relevant branding
- Ensure sizes and types of any files distributed over email will not disrupt service to recipients.
- Ensure compliance with legislation (e.g. Privacy Act)

Mobile

In Australia, mobile penetration is currently over 100%. As the only completely portable media device, mobile can deliver direct messages to people at any time, wherever they may be. The use of mobile phones to communicate government messages therefore has the potential to provide new audiences and access channels.

Mobile is both a medium and creative platform – some of the marketing opportunities offered on Mobile Phones include:

- SMS
- Mobile Web (WAP)
- Direct Response
- Mobile TV
- Mobile Search
- RSS or other news feeds
- Gaming
- Mobile Music
- Content Downloads/ Applications
- Bluetooth

Key considerations when establishing communications activities via mobile technology include:

- *Ensure compliance with legislation*
Use of mobile phone numbers and email addresses are covered by privacy laws. You should seek legal advice to ensure you comply with this and other legislation (e.g. Do Not Call Register).
- *Ensure time of message release is appropriate*
As message delivery causes an alert sound you should ensure messages are not delivered late at night or early in the morning.
- *Ensure appropriate branding is applied*
SMS messages should include the end tag 'Msg GovSA', display content should carry appropriate logos.
- *Understand the resources required*
Direct response campaigns often require significant back-end support – make sure you understand resources required (e.g. IT infrastructure, fulfilment, database cleansing)
- *Competition requirements*
Make sure you seek legal advice regarding terms and conditions and legal requirements when running competitions.

Social Media - Introduction

Many government agencies are already using social media to enhance internal and external communications strategies. While social media offers many benefits to government it is important that use of any social media tool is considered within the context of your broader communication strategy and objectives. Simply selecting a tool because it is popular can be counter-productive if it does not support your objectives.

Key types of social media include:

- Blogs
- Microblogs (e.g. Twitter)
- Podcasting
- Social Networking (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook)
- Online Communities (e.g. Shelfari, LastFM)
- Storing and Bookmarking (e.g. delicious)
- Collaborative Tools and crowdsourcing
- Online Video/ Photography (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)

Before using social media for external communications or marketing activities you should:

- Prepare a communications strategy that outlines your objectives and target audiences
- Investigate options and tools available to you
- Seek advice from your ICT, Risk Management and Communications specialists regarding the proposed strategy
- Seek approval for the strategy and proposed social media tools as part of the PCAG approval process
- Ensure you have the resources within your agency to commit to ongoing management
- Be prepared for honest feedback and to lose 'ownership' of your message

Social Media – General Principles for Use

General principles that should be followed when using or hosting social media are:

- *Be credible*
Your contribution should be fair, honest and transparent. Don't pretend you are someone or something you are not. Ensure content provided by you is appropriate to the agency role you hold and is politically neutral.

Ensure the author of any content and the agency they represent are clearly identified. If agency staff are encouraged to contribute they should also clearly identify themselves and should not pretend to be members of the public.
- *Be respectful*
Encourage debate and deliberation while monitoring for inappropriate or offensive content. Constructive criticism should not be censored.
- *Ensure appropriate branding is applied*
Any use of social media by Government should clearly identify the author and the organisation they represent.
For more information see the *SA Government Branding Guidelines*.
- *Be human*
Social media has evolved to facilitate human interaction. While your contribution on social media tools should remain corporate in message, the tone should be more conversational and personal.
- *Avoid using tools for unrelated marketing purposes*
People have usually joined a mailing list or group for a reason. If you have set up a group to facilitate consultation on a policy don't use it to distribute generic or unrelated government messages.
- *Contribute regularly*
The effectiveness of hosted social media often rests on the frequency of contributions. Audiences need to be given a reason to engage with the conversation and this is difficult if the author is silent. Ensure content is kept relevant and any questions or queries from the public are answered in a prompt manner. Delete anything that is out of date as this will undermine your current communications.
Ensure you have enough dedicated resources to maintain the above.
- *Use social media tools proactively*
Monitor what the community is saying about your agency and its services. If questions are asked, answer them. If misinformation is being promoted, correct it.
- *Understand and assess any risks*
Seek advice from your ICT, Risk Management and Communications specialists within your agency.

- *Ensure you have a robust evaluation strategy*
Like traditional media, use of social media should be evaluated against your communications objectives - ensure this is built into your communications planning process.

Social Media – Requirements for Specific Media

Specific requirements for key social media are as follows:

Blogs (including those on Social Networking sites)

Blogs can be useful tools to provide the community with information or progress reports in a personal way. An effective blog should:

- Provide answers to queries about government policy and processes quickly
- Be updated regularly – at least once per week.
- Be human – while content should be corporate in focus, Blogs should be viewed as an opportunity to apply a more conversational approach to communication.
- Ensure appropriate government branding and logos are applied
- Don't set your blog to automatically accept followers

Microblogs (including Twitter)

Key guidelines for using microblogging tools are similar to those for blogs. In addition, for Twitter and other similar sites, you should:

- Use you agency's approved logo as your avatar
- Title your page as follows: "*Official Twitter Channel for the South Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet*". Where possible seek other means of verification (e.g. <http://twitter.com/help/verified>)
- Avoid using just RSS feeds (Twitter users can be hostile to the over-use of automation) – where possible rephrase for your audience and include additional content
- Update regularly – a general rule is a minimum of 2 and maximum of 10 posts per day with at least a ½ hour gap between them
- Use sites like Twitter to proactively monitor what other people are saying about your department or services. If the information they are providing is factually inaccurate or asks a question – respond to it.

Podcasting

Any podcasts should carry appropriate Government of South Australia branding:

- Audio files - branding requirements for radio advertising should be applied

- Video files – branding requirements for television advertising should be applied

Online Video (including YouTube)

- The Government has established a dedicated YouTube channel:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/sagov>
- All content posted on this site will require prior approval through the PCAG approval process. Content will also need to carry approved SA Government branding.
- The inclusion of content on this site is optional for agencies – the maintenance of agency-specific sites, e.g. TAFE SA, is supported.

Exemption to the above will only be considered through the PCAG approval process with approval granted by PCAG or SCU.

Industry Associations and Links

Industry Associations

Further information, case studies and resources can be sourced through the following industry associations.

Mobile Marketing Association (MMA)

<http://mmaglobal.com/main>

Australian Interactive Media Association (AIMIA)

<http://www.aimia.com.au/>

Australian Web Industry Association and Index

<http://www.webindustry.com.au>

The Communications Council (Formerly Advertising Federation of Australia (AFA))

<http://www.communicationscouncil.org.au/index>

Media Federation of Australia (MFA)

<http://mediafederation.org.au>

Australian Direct Mail Association (ADMA)

<http://www.adma.com.au>

International Social Media Association (ISMA)

<http://www.ismaconnect.org>

Useful Links

The following links provide additional information regarding government and Web 2.0

Cabinet Office (UK Government) – Digital Engagement Blog

<http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement>

Government 2.0 Taskforce (Australian Government)

<http://gov2.net.au>

Webcontent.gov (USA Government)

<http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/index.shtml>

Glossary of Terms

The Strategic Communications Unit has produced a comprehensive glossary of terms relating to digital and social media. A copy is available on our website or by contacting SCU.