

Results from the

1st European Workshop on Social Media as a Tool for Police Communication

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Fraunhofer FIT

Schloss Birlinghoven

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Common Challenges

Aim: What do you want to achieve with social media?

Trust and Control: What are the roles of private corporations, officers and citizens?

Sharing: What can police organizations contribute to the community?

Approaches: Do you implement top-down or bottom-up? How's your overall internet strategy?

Speed of Adaptation: How do you stay aware of trends and up-to-date?

Diversity: How do you handle the many networks?

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What is social media?

"internet-based applications [...] which [allow] the creation and exchange of user-generated content"¹

So, are you on facebook ?
Do you twitter ?

Yes. We twitter and we work on being on facebook. We are publishing search warrants on youtube.

The use of social media is based on ambitions of my colleagues and myself.

We see great opportunities: A survey from Ireland* shows that social media can really improve our relationship with citizens and help to lower crime rates.

BTW: Google our twitter. The #1 link shows local police news of our region ...

... but this is not our twitter account. We don't know who set this up.

So, are you on facebook ?
Do you twitter ?

Yes, but as a way to link to our website. We work with an open-source content management system and then use social media to spread information that links to our site.

Also, we use LinkedIn as a means for internal knowledge sharing.

We have a social media strategy document for local police stations.²

Why do you have the news on your own website, if a news on a social media website can receive 100 times more attention?

We want to stay in control.

But can't you also control your twitter and facebook pages?

On our site we can publish information from our intranet and comply with accessibility standards.

Citizens may not use social media in general or the particular networks picked. There's not only facebook and twitter. Are you on habbo? reddit? hyves?

Why would you trust commercial companies?

So, are you on facebook ?
Do you twitter ?

Sometimes. Our central responsibility is to support investigations using information available on social networks.

In a special case, we used facebook to ask citizens for help. Doing this required special permissions and caused a lot of administrative effort.

It worked very well and we are working on making this facebook presence more permanent.

When using social media, you should not only take information from the community. You need to be authentic and present. Build your trust. Contribute and participate.

Lurkers³ are suspects.

So, are you on facebook ?
Do you twitter ?

Not yet. We would like to promote the image of the uniform police using social media, however, making use of these new means turns out to be complicated administrative procedure.

Be careful not to overrate social media, the image of the uniform police cannot only be solved online.

Other, parallel training activities for officers accompany these activities.

So, are you on facebook ?
Do you twitter ?

No. We use the Internet in a classic way. On our website we provide up-to-date information that can be used by anybody.

Our internet 'police station' files more reports than any other station in the state.

We have an iPhone app⁴ that provides information to citizens and was well received by the iTunes store community also for its transparency on data privacy.

Also, we are working on guidelines for how to use social media for all local police stations in our state.

Why do we need so detailed social media guidelines for police officers?

Well, they need to know what they should put on social media and what not.

It's simple: Don't twitter what you would not shout on the street to people who you don't know.

After all, we are giving officers guns. Can't we trust them to use social media?

It's not only about trusting officers. It's about trusting companies running the services that are located around the world.

Facebook put the ads for a chainsaw next to a report of a brutal murder.

How can we build trust with citizens like that?

Trust is a key issue on social media. Think about Amina Arraf⁵, a blogger that turned out to be fake.

But those guidelines take a long time to be developed. In the meantime we can't do anything in our station.

... and the networks that are currently popular are not popular forever.

We expect current social media applications to have a life cycle of 5 to 10 years.

If you want to know what is coming, look for China and Brazil.

1 Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010
2 http://www.fedweb.belgium.be/nl/publicaties/cc21_sociale_media.jsp
3 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lurker>
4 <http://itunes.apple.com/de/app/polizei-nrw/id418346277?mt=8>
5 <http://damascusgaygirl.blogspot.com/>

* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lurker>

