

Module 2. Social Media Content and Engaging Audiences

Imagine the following scenario:

Dominic Johnson, the New Media Director for a Division 1 athletic program in the United States, has been charged by the Athletic Director to bring the Athletic Department's social media accounts to a more competitive level. Dominic, who was recently hired away from another school, knows he is facing an uphill battle. Several of the coaches are resistant to use social media accounts to share information about their team, and Dominic feels that he is understaffed, having only 2 direct reports to help him manage social media across an Athletic Department with 18 programs in its portfolio.

In reviewing the current social media accounts, Dominic is underwhelmed by the content being posted. He notices that most of the content contains low quality pictures or video being used. Dominic has also observed that the content posted is duplicated across platforms and shows an overall lack of recognition for the audience on each platform.

As Dominic contemplates how to approach the social media strategy, he is reminded of a recent meeting with the Athletic Director, in which they discussed the need to connect with students on campus via social media, as student attendance for most sports, with the exception of football, has been minimal. The Athletic Director ended the meeting by telling Dominic to get an account on "that TikTok thing."

Dominic's thoughts are interrupted by a knock on his door from Stephanie Rollins, one of his direct reports. Stephanie informs him that she just checked the men's basketball Twitter feed and there are a lot of negative comments from fans about the increase in season ticket prices that were recently implemented. Stephanie notifies him that most of the messages indicate that people feel that the University does not care about them, and they will not be renewing their season tickets. Stephanie asks Dominic how they should respond before the pushback gets out of control.

Before Dominic can answer, his phone vibrates and he gets a message from one of the assistant coaches with women's volleyball program, asking if he can put together an infographic that morning so she can send it to one of their top recruits via Instagram private message.

Unit 2.1 Social Media Content

Managing social media can be a difficult task, particularly in sport, as fans and other stakeholders often expect continuous compelling content! Unlike other functions in the organization, social media is a 24/7 responsibility, since fans, athletes, and other entities relevant to the organization can post content that reflects positively or negatively on the organizations. Although there are some challenges with social media, it is also inherently rewarding, as the organization can use it to tell its story and develop and strengthen relationships with various constituents. However, in some cases organizations do not adequately invest in social media and/or do not develop strategy for how social media will be used. Like many organizational functions, to be effective, social media has to be a planned activity, it cannot simply be something that “exists” somewhere in the organization. Having a clear focus for social media, including understanding the differences between platforms and the need for diversity in content, in addition to taking advantage of resources such as analytical tool enable social media to be an organizational asset.

2.1.1 Understanding the Differences in Social Media Platforms

Think about traditional media for a moment —television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, for example. Each of these mediums have similarities, but also differences, and it would be impractical for an organization to market via radio in the exact same way it marketed on TV. For instance, with a radio promotion, an organization may utilize engaging sound and dramatic voice tones to capture the audience’s attention, and radio spots are generally short and to the point.

Conversely, with a promotion placed on TV, an organization might rely on strong visual graphics and key words in distinct font size to capture the audience’s attention. In other words, there are differences inherent in each of these mediums that require organizations to use them differently to reach the audience.

Just as there are differences between the way that traditional media is used, so too are there differences in the ways that social media platforms are used. Nevertheless, oftentimes organizations use each platform in identical ways, not accounting for variation in platform culture (e.g., Twitter’s culture is more about short messaging that links people elsewhere, whereas Facebook allows for longer posts, and Instagram is about visually dynamic posts

with little text), along with differences in the audience on each platform (e.g., Snapchat and Instagram are dominated by younger age demographics, whereas Facebook and Twitter have older age demographics.) Recall that in Module 1 we discussed that social media was a relational tool. Just as different strategies are used to develop relationships in different aspects of our lives, the uniqueness of each social media platform must be considered and factored in an organization’s social media strategy.

To begin, it is important that the organization identifies who its audience(s) are, and then determine which social media platforms are best suited to reach those audiences and what kinds of content is best equipped to reach them. For example, a professional football organization may consider its audience to be the following: (a) season-ticket holders; (b) general fans; (c) the team’s players; (d) the local community in which the organization is based; (e) corporate sponsors; and (f) the local and national sports media. After identifying these audiences, the organization would then determine what social media platforms would be the best way to reach those audiences and what content would be utilized in their efforts to reach them. An example analysis might look like this:

Table1. Social Media Audience Analysis

Social Media Audience Analysis			
Audience: Season Ticket Holders			
Social Media Platforms	Content Ideas	Content Ideas	Content Ideas
Facebook	Game recaps	“Behind the scenes” content	Photos and videos of Exclusive Season Ticket Holder Events
Instagram	Short videos featuring players and coaches thanking season ticket holders	Photos of unique areas of the stadium	Merchandise promotions using strategic hashtags

In determining what platforms are best suited to reach each identified audience, it is imperative to understand the differences among the major social media platforms. A summary of some of the most popular contemporary social media platforms is provided below.

Table 2. Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platforms		
Platform	Key Characteristics	Ideal Content
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No length restriction • Features that allow for live video streaming, check-in at venues, sharing, and event announcements • Audience reaction emojis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational storytelling that includes photos and videos • Content that provides “inside access” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event information • Links to website or other social media accounts • Invitation to people to share experiences and thoughts
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messages limited to 140 characters • Ability to integrate YouTube videos into posts • Live video streaming via Periscope app • Features such as “moments” that foster storytelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hashtags that allow for searchable content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time responses • Links to website or other social media accounts • Visual content such as photos and videos that tell the story of games, or other organizational activities and events • Use of hashtags to promote conversations about topics relevant to the organization
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily photo sharing site • Video of 15 seconds or less • Story feature that allows multiple posts to create a narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content that visually showcases what the organization has to offer or what makes it unique • Use of hashtags to encourage people to share their experiences • Linking of content on other sites
Snapchat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content that is temporary • Creative features such as filters that allow photos to be enhanced • Story feature that allows multiple posts to create a narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover feature that allows users to view stories compiled by organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video and photo content that tells organization stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Behind the scenes” content • Humorous photos and videos that are more light-hearted in nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of codes to encourage audience sharing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goggles that produce first-person view content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapchat takeovers (e.g., having a player operate the Snapchat account for a day)
TikTok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video content that is brief, yet humorous • Content that capitalizes on larger trends on the platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content that shows athletes or organization personnel in unscripted, funny type situations (e.g., dance-offs) • Content that encourages audiences to join in on trends occurring on the platform

It is important to remember that the above list is not exhaustive and that these platforms may change. As new platforms emerge and gain traction, organizations must investigate these platforms and consider adopting them into their social media mix. In other words, social media platforms are unlikely to stay stagnant, and organizations must be able to adapt to emerging social media technology and the audience preferences that come along with it.

To help you better understand how to plan using social media platforms to reach an audience, use the following template to identify one of the audience your organization is trying to target, what social media platforms would be best to reach that target audience, and what kinds of content would be utilized on that platform:

Table 3. Social Media Audience Analysis

Social Media Audience Analysis			
Audience:			
Social Media Platforms	Content Ideas	Content Ideas	Content Ideas

2.1.2 Developing Consistent and Relevant Content

One of the key elements of a social media strategy is to make sure that the organization is providing consistent and relevant content. One of the worst issues that an organization can encounter with social media is not putting out content consistently. The lack of consistent content tends to turn the audience away and shifts them elsewhere to those organizations who are providing consistent content. Recall that we have discussed how active sport fans and sport media consumers are on social media, they seem to be always seeking

information! Thus, a key part of any sport organization's social media plan needs to include a posting schedule to ensure consistency is achieved.

At a minimum, a sport organization should be posting daily across each of its social media platforms, and sometimes more, depending on the audience and the goals for that platform. For example, whereas multiple posts on Facebook can begin to spam an audience member's timeline, frequent posts are more acceptable on Twitter, due to the quick and immediate nature of the content. Snapchat is another platform where multiple posts a day are acceptable. This is not to say that an organization cannot post multiple times a day on Facebook or other platforms, but it is paramount to know that the "culture" of certain platforms is more or less amenable to multiple daily posts. Again, it is important to think about the audience for the platform and their needs, in determining how frequently the organization should post on that platform. Keep in mind that given the feedback mechanisms available, audiences may provide feedback when they have had enough, which can help determine frequency. We will cover analytics a bit later, but using analytic features available with platforms like Instagram can pinpoint when audiences are active on the site and this can help the organization in determining what times of the day to post content as well.

Whereas posting frequently is important, it is also crucial that organizations provide content that is relevant to their audiences. In determining what content is "relevant," an organization must again consider its goals for each of the platforms it is operating on and the audience it is trying to reach on that platform. For example, a professional baseball team may decide that they want to reach Generation Z on Snapchat, and put out content that is more humorous in nature. The team may also decide that they want to reach families on Facebook and Instagram, and so they put out content on Instagram that captures the experience at the stadium, and on Facebook, they put out content that reflects the fan experience at the game. For instance, Facebook content may feature families at the game, provide a discount ticket for the concession stands, and promote in-game entertainment designed for children.

In addition to targeting audiences, relevant content is also influenced by the story the organization is trying to tell, or said differently, what makes the organization unique? Whatever the answer to that question is, those items should be integrated into social media content. For example, a minor-league baseball team may decide that the ambiance at their games is a unique selling point to working professionals, as people come to primarily hang out and socialize, while watching the game is a secondary purpose. The team also determines that Instagram is the most viable way to reach that audience, and so content on the platform reflects the ambiance at the stadium. In short, relevant content needs to be

driven by the audience the organization is trying to reach along with the identity and uniqueness of the organization.

2.1.3 Visual Storytelling and Social Media

While organizations determine their audiences, the best social media platforms to reach those audiences, and the organizational selling points, social media content can also take on a storytelling function, which can produce very powerful results with the organization.

As we have discussed, social media provides an avenue for the organization to tell its story and get its narrative to the audiences it is trying to reach. Via social media, organizations become active media producers, and storytelling—in particular, visual storytelling—can be a very powerful way for an organization to connect with its audiences.

As you may know, visual content is very popular among contemporary social media audiences. Very few people will stop and read text-only posts consistently. The convenience of social media, particularly on mobile, has decreased attention spans, and thus, people have to be hooked within the first few seconds they view content, or they are scrolling on to the next item in their feed or timeline. With visual storytelling, it is important to first plan the stories the organization wants to tell. What stories would be of interest to which audiences? For instance, consider an organization that wants to promote the charitable work one of its athletes is doing in the community. How will this story be told? Who will be featured? Whereas there are times when spontaneous or organic stories can be told, planning helps ensure successful transmission of these stories to the audience.

Visual storytelling also needs to include length. As noted earlier, audiences have very short attention spans. Therefore, a 10-minute video featuring the athlete's charitable work is unlikely to gain much traction with the audience. However, if that story can be told in 30-60 seconds, the audience is much more likely to engage with it AND share it, which further circulates positive perceptions of the organization. To be sure, there may be times when a longer story is warranted, and in such cases, using YouTube to host the video and then linking to the YouTube URL via other social media platforms may cue audiences that they are going to see a longer video.

Finally, consider audience feedback in stories. What stories generate the most results when shared? Using basic metrics provided by the social media platforms can be one way to determine what kinds of stories audiences want to see in the future. Stories that generate significant Facebook likes and shares, Instagram likes, or re-tweets on Twitter are an

indicator that the audience connected with this content and similar content is likely to be desirable in the future. Using audience feedback is a key part of social media strategy, and there are some very robust analytical tools that can help sport organizations measure their social media strategy.

2.1.4 Social Media Content Tools and Analytics

As many sport organizations operate on multiple social media platforms, and in some cases, organizational responsibility for updating these platforms is given to only a few people (or in some cases one person!), managing social media can be a difficult challenge. Fortunately, there are several platforms, some with basic options that are free, and others that offer more advanced options with various monthly subscription fees. Some of the more visible social media content management systems include HootSuite, Sprout Social, and Buffer. These programs provide a visual interface that allows the user to manage multiple social media platforms, both via desktop and mobile (an increasingly important benefit!) These programs also offer planned, or scheduled, postings, which can help in the coordination of social media content across platforms. However, while planned posts can be very useful, it is important to be sensitive to current events and adjust content as needed. For example, if an organization has a planned Facebook post that is centered on season-ticket purchases, and the day the post is scheduled to hit, there is a community disaster, taking down the scheduled post will reduce perceptions that the organization is being insensitive to community issues. We have also discussed content calendars— these tools are also a great help in the coordination and planning of social media, as they provide structure and guidance for social media content, ensuring it relates back to the plan and overall strategy, rather than just hoping to find something each day to post.

In addition to content calendars, there are many robust analytic programs that can be used to help measure the success of social media and provide feedback on when adjustment may be necessary. At a basic level, there are metrics provided by each of the platforms that at a cursory glance provide feedback on the engagement and reception of that content. These include Facebook likes, reactions and shares, Instagram likes, re-pins on Pinterest, re-tweets on Twitter, as well as comments on each of these sites. On the surface, these metrics reflect how engaged the audience is with a particular piece of content and indicates more or less receptiveness. For instance, if a professional football organization put out a video on Instagram showing two of their athletes at a community event, and that post generated significant likes and shares, that would be an indicator to the organization that the audience is receptive and perhaps even desires that kind of content.

In addition to these basic metrics, however, most of the social media platforms offer very robust metrics that allow for more precise analysis and targeting. For instance, these metrics can report the place the people who engaged with the post live, their demographic information, the time of day they are most active on the platform, and conversions, or the number of people who clicked on a URL and who then took action from that social media post (e.g., buying merchandise from the team website.) Additionally, these advanced metrics enable organizations to target very specific groups of people, based on factors such as geographic location, income levels, gender, age, and things they subscribe to or talk about on the platform. These advanced metrics can further help sport organizations determine if their messages are reaching the intended audience and what the intended audience (or others) are doing with that message. Are they sharing it? If it re-directs them to the team website, or online ticketing site, are they making purchases?

The answers to these questions must then inform future social media strategy. While there is a certain amount of trial and error involved with social media, there is plenty of data out there that can help organizations make sure they are maximizing their efforts on social media and putting out content that is both reaching and resonating their target audience.

To help you understand the type of analytic programs that are out there, spend time reviewing three social media platforms and their business options (e.g., Facebook for Business) and the list the benefits and drawbacks each would hold for your organization:

Table 4. Social Media Analytics Comparison

Social Media Analytics Comparison			
Social media platforms			
Benefits			
Drawbacks			

Unit 2.2 Audience Engagement and Interaction

One of the most important elements of social media strategy for sport organizations is to make sure that they deliver on the “social” part of social media. Too often, many organizations treat social media like a one-way, rather than a two-way communication tool. For social media to be a successful organizational tool, it must be engaging. Think about the relationships your organization has with its customers or relational partners offline. How does the dialogue go in conversations between the organization and these entities? Is it a one-way or a two-way communication? Most likely, you answered that such communication is two-way. Otherwise, the organization’s relationships with these individuals likely would have very little permanence. To be certain, it can be daunting, especially for sport organizations, to manage all the engagement and feedback they get on social media, and clearly resource issues can influence how an organization responds. However, it is vital that there is a perception that the organization is listening and values what its audience and/or customers are saying. Organizations who make it a priority to put out engaging content and interact with the audience, or who embody the “social” aspect, will optimize their social media presence and build goodwill towards their audience and customers.

2.2.1 Importance of Engagement in Social Media Strategy

As discussed earlier, social media audiences have very short attention spans, and, in addition, are bombarded with a seemingly never-ending amount of content.

Thus, a key question for any organization, including those in sport, is how can our content stand out? One of the best ways to do this is through putting out engaging content and then engaging audience members back. While there is no “one” blueprint for developing engaging content, some general strategies include the following:

- **Authenticity** – Content that is genuine and written in a conversational tone comes off much better than content that is written in a standard, almost monotone matter. Consider the differences in the following tweets:
 - *“For tonight’s game stats of our 122-100 win over [Team X] click here”*
 - *“Want to see how dominant our performance was tonight? Check out [Player A]’s 30 points on 7-10 shooting from 3-point range! [Includes a GIF showing someone being excited!] Imaginary tweets of my creation*

- Which tweet would you be most likely to click on? Engaging content is content that sounds conversational! One thing organizational personnel tasked with managing social media can do is say the planned post out loud. Does it sound exciting, like something that is going to capture attention?
- **Using Pictures/Graphics/Videos** – Engaging content captures people’s attention and that is very difficult to do when using only text. Certainly, it is important to write a text in a conversational and exciting manner, but without the use of visuals, it is very hard for the audience to get excited. Having a visual image is more likely to get the audience’s attention, because it draws the eye, whereas text only does not. Many sport organizations are fortunate because they have access to game footage that can be re-purposed into GIFs and also used to show highlights or relate to other game content. Another important area here is infographics. Graphics have become essential in social media strategy, and with capabilities such as 360-degree technology, graphics can be very engaging and captivating for an audience.
- **Be Unique** – Posting content that is out-of-the-ordinary and unique to the organization is a great way to engage the audience. To be sure, organizations need to be careful not to stray too much from their identity and purpose on social media, but posting content that is unique helps audience members tune in so they make sure and see it and do not miss out. Some examples here include posting a picture of a snow-covered stadium, or showing team personnel or athletes doing things that would surprise the audience. A current popular strategy is having celebrities or other noteworthy figures take over a team account for a designated period of time. Sport organizations certainly have content that always needs to be shared (e.g., game summaries, recaps), but changing things up and finding “fresh” ways to engage the audience can greatly strengthen social media strategy.

Engagement is in part content, but also in part how an organization interacts with and responds to its audiences on social media. One valuable way to that engagement here is inviting or soliciting participation from audiences.

2.2.2 Strategies for Inviting Engagement and Interaction

Recall that we have discussed that for social media to be truly effective, it must be “social,” or involve some dialogue between parties. One way organizations can do this is by inviting engagement and interaction from the audience. There are both risks and drawbacks to inviting engagement, but social media is not itself without risks. Besides, as discussed earlier, if someone feels like they are only being “talked to” but never “listened to,” chances

are that relationship does not last very long. Following are some ways that sport organizations can invite engagement and interaction:

- **Contests** – Contests or games are a great way to get people involved. Some organizations utilize trivia contests to engage fans, while others have gone so far as to conduct scavenger hunts around the local community. Certainly, each organization has different resources, so the degree and frequency of the contests will likely vary. Additionally, contests can also be tied to in-game events and promotions. For instance, an organization could ask fans to submit their best tweet about being at the game, using a designated hashtag, and then put up the best or winning tweets on a video scoreboard. Contests can also prove to be great ways to engage corporate sponsors. While integrating the sponsor must be done in a delicate manner and cannot be plastered all over the promotion, having a sponsor associated with certain content can be successful.
- **Encouraging User-Generated Content** – Sport fans are passionate and have strong feelings for their team. A great way to engage fans and audiences, then, is to have them create and share content via social media. For instance, an organization could ask fans to send their poses of being at the stadium to Instagram using a designated hashtag, and these could be displayed on a video board. An organization could also invite fans to submit content showing them in team-affiliated merchandise or tailgating before the game. As social media is predicated on sharing, many people are willing to do so, if an organization will tell them what the organization wants the audience to share and how they want them to share it!
- **Inviting Responses from the Audience** – This strategy can be useful, but also carries some risk with it, as inviting responses can lead to trolling, or people posting hateful or sarcastic things about the organization that detract from the spirit of the campaign. This particular strategy is best used when responses are likely to be safe and make sense. For example, an organization which is coming off a successful season and posts on social media, “Let us know what you’re most looking forward to next season,” is likely to receive more genuine responses than an organization coming off a subpar season posting the same message. Another strategy that has been used here is making a player or organization executive available to answer questions from fans. For these to be successful, it is best to limit them to a particular time frame (generally around one hour) and to make sure the person being made available is one who generally has a clean public image. For instance, there have been several sport organizations who have attempted this strategy with athletes who have a history of legal incidents, and fans have turned these “ask” sessions into nothing more than a sarcastic mocking of the organization. Keep in mind that these campaigns can provide

helpful feedback from fans, but the context certainly must be considered before executing.

One element that goes along with inviting and engaging fans is to make sure that the audience is rewarded. If being done in-game, this can be carried out with a feature on a video scoreboard and/or a small prize. If being done outside a game, again, small prizes can be used, and at a minimum, those whose posts are featured should receive some recognition from the organizational account (e.g., liking the post, re-tweeting or favoriting the tweet.) Not only does this reward the fans who participate, but it also shows the larger audience that the organization is invested in its fans and audiences and wants to hear from them and reward them for participation. Of course, with invitation and engagement comes the potential for positive and negative feedback, and sport organizations need to have, as part of their strategy, a plan or method for dealing with both kinds of feedback.

2.2.3 Strategies for Responding to Positive Feedback

Positive feedback is something that most individuals and organizations seek. Positive feedback lets individuals and organizations know what they are doing well and what we do as individuals, or what an organization does that is resonating with others – in short, positive feedback makes us feel good! However, surprisingly, a lot of organizations on social media, when they receive positive feedback, do not acknowledge it! Certainly, if an organization is being inundated with hundreds and even thousands of comments, it can be difficult to respond to each one, but, in general, the organization should be making an effort to respond to positive comments, and for smaller organizations it may be much more practical to respond to every positive comment. Why does this matter? Think about the principle of reinforcement. When a person tells us something positive, and we acknowledge them and thank them for it, they are likely to do so in the future, because we acknowledged and validated his/her feelings. Think of this another way: if a person comes into your organization and tells you something positive, what do you do? Do you ignore that person, or do you acknowledge and validate? Of course, you acknowledge and validate – and the same, within reason, should be done on social media. Below are some strategies for responding to positive feedback:

- ***Basic Acknowledgment*** – At a minimum, when an organization receives a positive comment, it can acknowledge that by using the built-in feature of the platform (e.g., Facebook like, Twitter favorite, Instagram favorite.) This lets the person know the organization saw their feedback and appreciates it.

- **Acknowledgment + Response** – Again, while organizational resources will vary, responding to positive feedback via acknowledgment and response is generally more effective than just acknowledging. For example, if a customer said something good about an organization on Twitter, and the organization responded by favoriting the tweet, and then re-tweeting a response like “Thanks, Andy, we are glad you had a good experience, and can’t wait to see you again!”, by reaching out and engaging in conversation, the organization would let the person know not only it listened to the comment, but also it cares about it. When people get a response from an organization, it tends to enhance their positive affiliation for the organization. One very important thing here is to make sure and personalize the response by using the person’s name. That extra step can go a long way in forging emotional connections between the audience member and the organization.
- **Rewards** – Again, while this strategy is likely to vary by organizational resources and is something that cannot be done all the time, reaching out and giving a tangible reward can be a great way to respond to positive feedback and promote positive feelings towards the organization. For example, perhaps a fan posted a very heartfelt note about their affinity towards the organization or how much they appreciate the organization. Responding (as indicated above) and then perhaps giving a reward such as a free ticket to an upcoming game or a discount towards the concession stands can go a long way in reinforcing positive feelings towards the organization and cultivating loyalty.

Although positive feedback is something that needs to be recognized and appreciated, so too does negative feedback. Organizations need to be receptive to negative feedback, and as applicable, use it as a learning opportunity, both to understand what someone’s experience is with the organization and to get better.

2.2.4 Strategies for Responding to Negative Feedback

Bad news are often uncomfortable to receive. It is hard to hear that we are not doing what we think we are doing, or at an organizational level, that someone did not have a good experience or thinks negatively of the organization. At the same time, negative feedback represents an opportunity for understanding. As difficult as it can be to hear negative feedback, it does represent the experiences of a certain portion of the audience and warrants consideration. Whereas people have always had recourse to provide negative feedback, the convenience of social media makes such provision very easy, and perhaps it also makes people to be more likely to do so. In fact, a lot of organizations have realized this and established dedicated support and customer service accounts on platforms like Twitter

to account for people no longer calling 1-800 numbers to report issues, but posting about them on social media.

There are several strategies that can be used when dealing with negative feedback. One overarching strategy that we have already mentioned is to treat negative feedback on social media like you would treat it if it occurred in your organization. What would you do if someone came in and complained? Whatever that is, do the same on social media. However, it is important to remember that people can and do become abusive on social media, and if that is the case, it is not worth pursuing resolution. Organizations can report abusive behavior to the social media platforms and block those individuals as well.

Another element of negative feedback is trolls, who are common participants in sport social media. If a person is trolling and trying to “bait” the organization into a response, it is probably best to ignore, as paying attention to the troll reinforces the behavior. Interestingly, in many cases, when a person is trolling an organization, other users who have had good experiences with the organization will confront the troll and attempt to drive them away. While not always successful, this does reinforce the importance of responding to positive feedback.

- **Acknowledging** – Just as with positive feedback, it is important to acknowledge negative feedback. This can be done by responding to the person (using their name) and expressing an apology and asking what can be done to solve the problem. Once dialogue is established, organizations have a choice of trying to resolve the issue via social media, where the dialogue unfolds publicly or privately (e.g., asking the person to call a number or e-mail someone.) One thing organizations should consider is that for negative feedback that can be resolved quickly or that is of a basic or routine nature, handling it publicly in the social media forum can be a good way to show audiences that the organization listens and is receptive to negative feedback. With that said, for more sensitive issues, or if the person seems upset, re-directing offline is a more preferable route.
- **Reward** – Using a reward is a strategy that needs to be used with caution. While in some cases it can help rectify a situation and be seen as a gesture of good faith from the organization, in other cases it can be seen as a way of reinforcing complaining. As part of a strategy for responding, rewards may be viable when the person complaining is a known commodity to the organization (e.g., season-ticket holder), or when the situation is one that is unlikely to happen consistently (e.g., family was next to a fan who was using profanity at a game.) Using rewards is not something that should be done routinely, but offering an incentive as part of resolution can help bring the organization from a negative to a positive standing.

- ***Know When the Issue Cannot Be Resolved*** – Given how intensely fans follow sport, often sport organizations get negative feedback on social media for things that cannot be solved at an organizational level (e.g., bad performance by an athlete in a game), or that are not going to be resolved on social media (e.g., negative feedback about a coach getting fired.) Whereas these are negative sentiments that are being expressed, responding is likely to only enflame the situation, and the organization is best served by ignoring these comments and using social media to change the narrative by putting out content that casts the organization in a positive light and that will engage fans in a positive manner.
- ***Using the Feedback*** – Although not a direct response to feedback, it is vital that organizations assess the feedback they are getting and determine if changes are necessary. For instance, if an organization receives a lot of negative feedback on social media about the conditions of the restroom at the venue, it is warranted to investigate to see how this issue was temporary, or if it is something in need of resolution. If there is a need to address the issue, then taking care of it is likely to reduce complaints in the future. Being responsive on social media is great, but if an organization does not take steps to solve the issues being complained about, eventually the responsiveness on social media will ring hollow.

Managing social media requires a process. First, it requires understanding the culture of the various platforms and the differences among them, assessing organizational goals and audience, and determining which social media platforms are optimal to reach those audiences. Second, social media requires an emphasis on content that is compelling and attractive to audiences. Third, social media requires organization to be willing evolve, and constantly be looking for ways to improve. The interactive features of social media ensure that, at times, organizations will be notified by their customers and audience when things are or are not working, and it is vital that sport organizations are attentive to their audience and demonstrate that they are listening to them.

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