**Social Media transcript – guest Erin Martin**

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**Virginia Bowdidge:** Hi I’m Virginia from the Department of Education. Today, my colleague, Erin Martin from the Social Media team joins me today to talk about social media marketing for schools.

In this podcast we will look at how schools can use social media to promote themselves to their community.

Hi Erin, thanks for joining me today.

**Erin Martin:** Hi Virginia, thank you for having me here.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Could you tell me a little about the role of the department’s Social Media team?

**Erin Martin:** My team looks after all of the social and digital aspects for the department. We do content development, community management and campaign advertising and we are also responsible for helping out all of our Queensland State Schools with their social media management and any operational help they may require.

Specifically for schools, we offer, social media account set-ups, as well as support and guidance to ensure the schools feel capable and skilled and are equipped with the necessary information and the expectations required to manage social media platforms on behalf of the department.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What are the department’s social media channels?

**Erin Martin:** Currently we have Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn, that we use organically and for some of our paid marketing campaigns. We’re also using currently using Spotify, Snapchat, TikTok and Google Search Engine but that’s just strictly for campaigns for our advertising purposes.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And by organically, do you mean advertising that aren’t paid for?

**Erin Martin:** Correct, yes. So organically meaning, your normal content posting. Those channels can be used for campaigns as well, but those ones there organically are permitted for use by schools as well, where the campaigns advertising ones currently aren’t permitted by schools.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** If a schools is just starting out on social media, which social media platform would you suggest?

**Erin Martin:** It’s a good question, it does depend on the audience and the purpose of what the school would like to do but from our experience the platform that seems to work the best for schools and what’s most highly requested actually, is Facebook. And the reasoning for this is because, it’s got the better form format. You can get longer form content. More of the “parent audience” use it, which is definitely the target schools are going to be going for. You can do all sorts of formats, such as, video, imagery, carousels, you can write longer posts, you can write shorter posts. It’s a lot more user friendly than some of the other platforms and has less limitations to it. Such as, say Twitter or Instagram and it’s definitely the most requested one that we have. So we would recommend Facebook as your first port of call.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** And what’s the benefit of having a social media account for a school?

**Erin Martin:** Social media has definitely, has fast become the number one communication tool, I think for people in general. You look around and you see everybody is on a device, looking at some form of social media. So for a school, it’s a very quick and easy way to get communication to your parent audience. Whether that be about getting timely updates about what’s going on in the school, whether it’s about building the school’s brand to boost enrolments. There’s just so many avenues social media can be used for, for a school. It’s a great way to give your parent and just wider community a little look into the day-to-day life of the school. What the students are doing, what the teachers are doing. Great way to boost achievement, good news. Look at the staff, look at the students, look what we’re doing. Our community is great. Good for reminding parents, as well. “Hey, don’t forget that this important day is coming up”.

It’s also a good way to engage with your parents and wider community so it gives the school a good insight into what the community is doing, what they are looking for, and it gives the parent’s insight into what’s going on at the school. So you can build up that more collaborative relationship, with each other, which is always of benefit.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** What do schools need to know before they start out on social media?

**Erin Martin:** Yes, this is another great question because I think that there’s a lot of misconceptions around what social media entails. So, it actually is a big job. It requires a bit of time, so it requires time to look after the channels. You need to be able to put the time in to managing it, in the forms of resourcing, so we recommend; go to our One Portal page, read the information, do the online social media training that our team created specifically for schools. That gives you the fantastic foundational ground work that you need to get started on social media.

Remember it takes time to get started. You are not going to create a page and instantly and have followers. It’s going to take you some time to build up an audience and you need to do that with traditional combination of marketing methods as well. Whether that be your newsletters or website.

Content is King!

Invest time into your content. Have a think about, what have you got at your disposal at school to make content.

Conversation and engagement are Queen!

You don’t just want your social media page to be just another website. This is an engagement tool. This is a way to have that conversation with your parents and community. Find out what they want from you. Provide that and get some insight from them back.

The other thing I would recommend to starting out, right from the get-go is, create a consistent looking feel for your school page. You’ve got a logo, you’ve got school colours. Use those as your branding. There’s plenty of free tools out there that we can recommend to help you create your posts and get that consistent look and feel. And that can just really help take your page and elevate to another level. And it’s a lot simpler than you think.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Following on from that, what type of content should schools be aiming to post?

**Erin Martin:** Some of the more obvious things would be your basic information and practical advice posts for your parents. Whether that be, reminders about events coming up, important school dates coming up. They would be your everyday sort of posts. Achievements and good news, staff and student. These are great, we love to see good news. Everyone loves to see a good news story. A fluffy story, a funny story, you know that’s heart-warming so those are great. Behind the scene looks at your school. The day in the life at school. What’s going on? You know you don’t get to see what the students are doing or even the teachers throughout the day. That’s a great way of showing what’s happening within the school grounds, while you’re not there.

Quality visuals, images and videos. What I want to point out here, these do not always have to be polished. They don’t have to look professional like they’ve been done by a videographer. It’s actually been shown that more organic looking videos work best, because when people are scrolling through their feeds, it blends more seamlessly into it, it looks natural, so people are more likely to look at it. When they see it as a more polished professional looking thing, they think it’s an ad so they are more likely to scroll past it.

At the moment, our research and our data are showing that video are very, very popular on social media so if you can prioritise doing video posts, you know nothing more than about 15secs, that would be ideal.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** So it’s really something anyone can do?

**Erin Martin:** Definitely**.** If you’ve got a phone you can do something.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Great. That’s good to know.

What should schools do when they are ready to set up a social media account?

**Erin Martin:** Yes, we’ve made the process as simple as possible for schools. So all you really need to do now is head to our Social Media section on the One Portal page, have a quick read through on some of the info that’s on there. We have all of our guides and playbooks on there for you. They’re linked to the training that is there as well. And when you are ready, there are individual application links for each platform. So just look for the one you are planning to do. Click on that, follow the prompts, it comes through to the team and we’ll contact you from there. So nice and simple.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Yes, very easy.

What’s the most common question schools have about social media?

**Erin Martin:** There’s a few, and they change, they change often. Depending, you know social media is changing on a daily basis so it gets a little much for all of us some days, but some of the more common ones we have from schools are; can we have multiple pages, so could we have a school page and then following on from that, could we have a page for the football team and a page for the tuckshop and you know, a page for the library. That’s a common one. The answers, no! Sorry, it’s a no. It’s just part of the policy. Reason for that is, because it’s easier to manage. You’ve got one single point of truth to go to with a school and because it’s so easy to make fake accounts, we try and help our schools get verified, as much as possible. Yeah, just keep it to one account. If there’s issues, we’re always happy to talk you through the reasoning behind it.

Another one is, can we have closed accounts? Now, a closed account or a closed group, means that it’s locked down and invite only. That again, that’s a no because it’s a transparency issue. Things need to be transparent in the government. It’s needs to be open for all and there are just too many things, too many risk issues at this point in time so that’s also a no.

Can we turn off commenting, we don’t want to reply, we just want a page?

That’s a big one. Social media is an engagement tool. It’s not a website, it’s not a broadcasting tool. You want to use it as an engagement tool, as a way to be able to speak with your audience. It’s not a good look to not reply to comments. If you’ve got people asking you things it’s a customer service expectation to reply to provide a response. Even if it’s redirecting them to phone the school, if you don’t want to talk online. You know, just a simple reply.

Probably the other, the last question would be, can we have, such and such platform? One that’s not on the accepted platform list at the moment. We’ve gone through a very thorough risk assessment. It’s quite an arduous process getting platforms permitted for use. So the ones that are on our One Portal page are the ones that are permitted yet. If they are not on there, they’re not permitted yet. It’s not to say they won’t be in the future, it’s just to say at this point in time they’re not, so please don’t go and open one, because there are actually consent and legal issues with doing that too. So we’re only doing that to protect you as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Can people find most of this information on their One Portal page?

**Erin Martin:** Absolutely they can, and we are going through a process of updating it at the moment to make that One Portal page easier to find this information. So keep an eye on it.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Did you search for Social Media? Is that the easiest way to find it?

**Erin Martin:** Yeah, just in the One Portal search bar, you’ll find it.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Great, thanks.

Is there any training available for schools on social media management?

**Erin Martin:** Yeah there is. So we have our introduction to social media management online training. You can get that via the Learning Place or via our One Portal page. They’re individual platforms, they also have their own versions of training, such as Facebook. They have Facebook Blue Print, which covers a multitude of different areas of Facebook such as, content, community management, advertising and it’s for all abilities and different levels, so you just click through to there and go through the training at your own pace. I also recommend signing up to our Social Buzz newsletter if you haven’t already, because that is specifically focused on the social and indigenous landscape and we send it out once a term with a lot of tips, tricks and information to help you get the best out of the social media accounts. Also, the cyber safety air reputation management area of the department have school specific resources that are related to social media in a more incident management way, so it does tie in with social media, not exactly what we do but it will cross over and will be helpful to schools if you want to look at that. So if you just type Cyber Safety into One Portal, you’ll find those as well.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Thanks Erin, that’s all useful information.

**Erin Martin:** Thanks Virginia, thanks for having me today and if anyone needs further help, my team is always happy to help out. We can be contacted via phone or email.

**Virginia Bowdidge:** Great, thank you.

**Announcer:** You have been listening to a Queensland Department of Education podcast.

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