**Social Media Checklist**

**Rhett Fleitz – Social Media: The Fire Service’s Next Big Innovation 2011**

1. **What is your purpose for using social media?** Communication? Interaction? Branding your department? Showcasing your services? Increasing recruitment, retention, hiring? Decide what your purpose is with social media and continue developing your strategy. Does this social media presence compliment other current platforms for getting news and information out?
2. **Why use social media?** Are you increasing your reach to your customers/citizens? Connecting with employees? Are you simply trying to connect with the younger generations? Is the low cost of using social media worth the potential return of interacting with your audience?
3. **Do you need to define a social media policy?** Do you require a separate social media policy for your department? Does your locality have a social media policy? Who can use social media and when? How will your constituents use your social media platforms? What can they do? What can’t they do?
4. **What social media platforms will help you arrive at your goals?** Whether it is Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogging, UStream, or any combination of many other social networking platforms, you will have to decide what is and what is not going to help you reach your goals. Where is your audience at and which platforms are most worth your time and effort.
5. **Are you prepared for interaction…both good and bad?** The interaction and conversation within social media is why social media is so powerful. Are you prepared for the interaction? Are you prepared for both positive and negative feedback? Are you prepared to utilize resources to make your social media presence work?
6. **How much participation will you encourage?** Interaction and communication will not be entirely born on your side of the social media fence. Your followers might create participation on your social media platforms. Are you prepared for this and willing to give up some control to your followers?
7. **Who will administer your social media presence?** Social media does not sleep. That doesn’t mean that you don’t have to, but you have to have someone or a team of people who have a fairly consistent watch on what is going on with your social media presence. The people who administer your social media presence have to be able to create interaction, post news and information, and be able to monitor the metrics of your social media platforms. Do you have someone (or a team) who is ready to take this task on? This may include budgeting resources to make this happen. Furthermore, if your budget is limited like most departments, where have you pulled resources from to administer social media?
8. **How will you measure your social media presence?** How will you know if you are being successful at social media? Google Analytics, Statcounter.com, and other free metric analysis programs can give you insight for your reach and success. What goals have you created for your success and/or failure for your interaction? What can you do to increase your metrics? It is ok to adjust your goals if they are unobtainable at first. Take small steps toward creating an effective social media presence.
9. **Is the overall cost worth it?** Much of social media can be done for free. Is the relative low cost of social media enough of a reason to give it a try? Is the low cost enough of a reason to pull resources from other programs to focus on social media? Is there a need to invest in some professional assistance in the beginning to build a strong foundation for your social media presence? What are neighboring departments doing? What about across your State?
10. **What do you do next?** Now that you have formulated, created, and measured your social media presence…how will you continue to build on to your platform and offer more social media interaction as well as polish the ones you already have?