



**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.**

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Michigan

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN  
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDEBOOK**

## **About the VFW Department of Michigan social media**

Social media is a digital social space world-wide. For the purposes of the VFW Department of Michigan social media, the platforms of focus are X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and Threads. The goal is to interact with people informally in a social setting, spreading awareness of veteran issues, resources, and gaining membership. Additional goals can vary between Posts, Districts and Departments.

### **Disclaimer:** *Free speech and institutional protection*

VFW Michigan is an organization that serves veterans and protects veteran voices. Social media is a tool for which to accomplish this mission. Although the First Amendment protects an individual's freedom of speech, content posted on official platforms should reflect the character of the VFW. Each page should have a social media manager to direct the flow of published content. Should any issues arise, the social media manager can contact the Department Social Media Director for assistance in resolution.

### **Code of Conduct**

Social media is designed to be a free thinking and casual place to share thoughts and messages to the public. When representing the VFW online, it is important to act the way a VFW member would in person, which is reflecting the values of a leader driven to help veterans and continuing to serve the community. Politics often coincides with veteran issues, but the VFW is a bipartisan organization, and should be reflected in any social media publication. The social media manager must understand they are taking on responsibility of being the VFW's voice to the public. The organization that authorized the creation of the VFW branded social media pages has the authority to challenge the credibility of any page conducting themselves contrary to their brand and ethos. This challenge could result in termination of the page if deemed harmful to veterans and the organization.

### **Crisis Communication**

In the event of a crisis within the VFW Department of Michigan organization, posting rumors or unverified content that can hurt the organization is discouraged. Depending on the situation, the Department page may address an issue via a press release or another publication at the direction from the state commander. It is not recommended that public pages discuss Post or District internal politics. Content published on social media should always reflect the mission of the VFW, which is to help and serve veterans and their families.

If a social media manager is concerned about publishing content, please contact the Department Social Media Director with questions.

### **Protected Information within social media**

**HIPAA:** By law, it is our responsibility to protect confidential medical records.

“The privacy rule protects all ‘individually identifiable health information held or transmitted by a covered entity or its business associate, in any form or media, whether electronic, paper, or oral.’ Examples of protected information include: “...the individual’s past, present or future physical or mental health condition, the provision of health care to the individual, or, the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to the individual, and that identifies the individual or for which there is a reasonable basis to believe can be used to identify the individual.”

*Copyright and Fair Use:*

**Copyright** is a form of intellectual property law that protects original work of authorship, including literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works, such as poetry, novels, movies, songs, etc. Legally, copyright content cannot be published without proper credit.

**Fair Use** allows portions of certain works to be used without consent under specific situations, however it is safest to confirm permissions from copyright owner.

DOD-created and published photos and videos are not copyrighted and are available for use.

Other content can be shared or created for the page. If a copyrighted piece is going to be used for a social media post, make sure credit is given to the original author.

## Facebook Set-up & Content

### Types of Facebook pages:

- **Public:** This is recommended for a Post, District or Department page. A public page is inclusive to all audiences interested in what the organization has to share. A public page also allows managers to filter, schedule and review content before publishing. Also, this page has specific security measures that administrators can control to ensure quality and proper treatment of followers.
- **Private Group:** This page is exclusive to the public, with content only visible to members who are approved to join. A private group could be good for a specific purpose, like conversations between officers or a committee within the organization. It is not recommended this be a page that represents the Post or District, as the general public can not see shared resources or other content posted.
- **Public Group:** This page allows the general public to see content posted, but any member of this group can post. Page administrators can filter content but need to be vigilant on monitoring the page. This type of page could be good for discussions on specific topics, but is not recommended to represent a Post or District.

**Naming:** When naming a page, it is good practice to keep it simple, while building on the VFW Department of Michigan brand. For example, a Posts can title their page “VFW Post ###” or “VFW (Name of Town) Post ###”. Districts can use “VFW MI District ##”. The acronym VFW represents an association between pages, while numbers and cities make the page unique to their local areas.

**Profile and Banner images:** Page profile photos can vary, but it is good practice to use a logo to represent who the page is, while the banner photo should be updated regularly to show activity and updates. It is encouraged that the banner photos/videos show something that pertains to the uniqueness of the area or Post (something that shows the public the VFW is more than a building or canteen). Have fun with your own local branding, photos should reflect who you, your members and your area are.

**Administrative permissions:** It is recommended that a page have three or more administrators. This is to prevent any issues of people transitioning from the VFW and preventing the Post or District to have access. Further, additional administrators help keep the page active.

**How often to post:** Posting to your page at least one post per week, not exceeding five posts per day is current best practice for managing Facebook. The platform’s algorithm will treat your posts like spam if posted too often. If posted too little, the public will see the page’s inactivity.

**Content:** Content should be relevant to the veteran and military community of ALL generations and demographics. Consistent content is also important to build an audience, spread your reach and highlight important topics and current events.

# Facebook Publishing Best Practices

## Types of Posts

**Source:** Source posts means you have created content on your own. This content can be a message, event graphic, video, image, etc., and are posting it to your page. When source content is shared by others, it will direct audience traffic to your page.

**Sharing:** Sharing allows you to share content and spread a message to a wider audience, to include your page and the original. Sharing a post is mutually beneficial between pages to broaden a post's reach.

**Links:** Posting links, like news articles or videos, is quick content for your page and allows you to show credibility behind a message. When doing this, it is recommended that admins copy a link into the comment box, wait till Facebook recognizes the link and creates a link thumbnail, then erase the link in the comment box. This makes your post look clean, because Facebook will embedded the article for your post. Physical links in the comment section are a distraction to the post and can look messy.

**Videos/photos:** Visual posts attract attention and share a story. The latest social media data shows that visual content is more effective simple text posts. Videos can range from a few seconds to a few minutes. It is not recommended that a video last longer than 3 minutes because the audience may lose attention.

**Live:** This function sends a notification to everyone who follows your page that you have something active to say. The Live function allows viewers to tune see your video in real time. This tool is growing in popularity across all platforms. Going live can last anywhere between a few minutes to however long an event will last. Once the Facebook Live is concluded, the video will remain on your page as a video post. Viewers can also comment and interact with the speaker while the video is streaming live to the Facebook page.

**Stories:** Page stories are 24 hour posts that viewers can scroll through. This content can be anything, from a video, shared post or source content.

## Social Media Etiquette

**How often to post:** At least one post per week, not exceeding five posts per day unless otherwise directed by post leadership or higher. The reason we set a limit on posts per day is due to potential spamming, which will deter followers from engaging with the page and following.

**Tagging:** When posting content that involves another group, company, location, or any outside VFW organization, it is good practice to find their Facebook page and tag them. This will double your the potential audience and give a friendly shoutout to the organization your are highlighting.

For example: If VFW Post 123 hosted an event with WILX Media Group, it would be proper to take WILX's page in the VFW Post's content. This will send WILX a notification and they have the opportunity to engage with your Facebook post. Further, their followers will see an affiliation to your page, drawing further attention to your platform page.

- **How to:** To tag a group or organization, use the @ symbol to signal to Facebook you are looking for a group that partnered with you. For example, to tag WILX, type in @WILX, and a dropdown will appear. Select the correct page and they will be included as a tagged page.

**Keep it simple:** Social media is full of people continuously scrolling. It is good to keep your message short and to the point. Many people will skip over content that is long and tedious to read. Minimal text and impactful statements is more effective than a wall of text.

**Visual Posts:** It is beneficial to have some type of visual content in every post to grab attention on someone's home-feed. This could be a photo, video, meme, live ect.

**When to go Live:** Live can be used in many different scenarios. A page feature a Live to send a quick message form a commander or display a whole ceremony. The opportunities are endless. Keep in mind that notifications are sent to your followers every time you go live, it is recommended that you use this only a few times a week at most to not spam your followers, unless certain posting strategies are appropriate.

**Campaigns:** Campaigns are also useful to keep consistent content weekly. This way, you give your audience something to expect or look forward to every week.

For example:

- Motivation Monday
- Fun Fact Friday
- Meet the Officers (A weekly post highlighting an officer in your Post or District)
- Throwback Thursday
- Red Friday

## **Types of Content to Post**

*These examples of Facebook posts are not the only types of content you can publish, however, here are some ideas to get your Facebook page started.*

### **Content Examples**

- Current and Future Events
- Interesting things happening in the local area that may be interesting to your followers, keep it related to the VFW
- VFW Programs
- VFW Legislative mission
- National/Department announcements
- Content containing the VFW mission of helping veterans
- Veteran friendly content
- Relevant holidays (you can find a way to post for most holidays)
- VA changes or announcements that could affect veterans in your area
- Active military significant changes
- Holiday messages
- Generic military/veteran
  - This day in history
  - Exciting/Interesting equipment
  - Fun Facts
  - Old vs New
  - Celebrating a veteran that did something in your community
  - Military related memes

Remember, your Facebook content should always be for your audience. This includes anything that could affect them or interest them.