



**Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
Social Media Strategy
Autumn 2013**
(Revised 11-13)

Background

Few doubt the impact and importance of social media today. From hashtags on every TV program to major brands using their Facebook page as their primary portal, there is no denying the power of the social networking sphere to communicate message, promote events and products, and influence ideas. Organizations from large to small are faced with the importance of coming up with a strategy to navigate this complex and exciting development. But the truly successful are not just about survival -- they thrive.

Recognizing that success can seem like a moving target, here are a few principles that guide our thinking about how to use social media:

Transparency = Credibility

An organization's credibility will be proportional to the degree to which it can become transparent to the individuals within it, and the procedures and processes that it uses to conduct its business.

Not one Internet but many

People do not do not generally experience the Internet as a totality. They are bound by habit and by preference into a particular web "information ecosystem" that appeals to their attitudes and interests. Success depends on providing communication and information that is distinct from that which is provided by any of the other sources your audience is also listening to. LMCC should be a unique voice in social media for the art-related audience.

Pick the right channels for the right people

Each of the social media platforms have their own audiences and their own intrinsic properties, and no organization has the time or energy to engage all of them. We are recommending that LMCC focus its energies on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Creating Communities

All successful web communities provide their members with three things:

- 1) a sense that they are contributing to something greater than themselves
- 2) means to affect what that something is and where it's going
- 3) recognition from the community for their specific contribution to the larger endeavor

LMCC Current Social Footprint

Facebook:

Reach: 4,286 Likes.

Content: Event and news announcements.

Voice: Not clear as each post conveys so much information.

Community engagement: Very few comments. Most comments are things like, "I'll check it out." Low engagement/interaction.



Twitter:

Reach: 8,294 Followers.

Content: News, Events, and interaction.

Voice: Best use of LMCC voice. Snappy, clever, witty, personable.

Community engagement: Fair amount of mentions. Good response times and content.



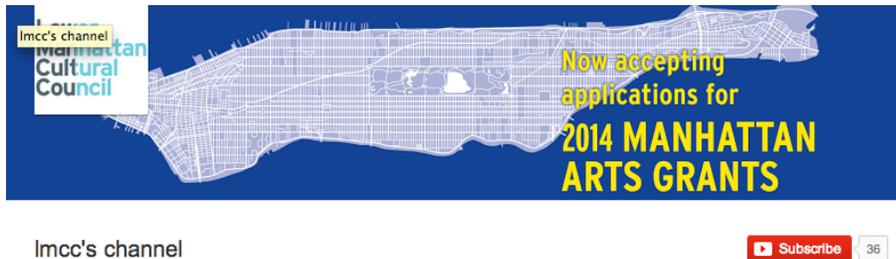
YouTube:

Reach: 36 Subscribers.

Content: Most recent activity related to River To River Festival.

Voice: Promotional pieces. Not a clear voice.

Community engagement: No comments on recent content. Difficult to foster community with promotional material.



Flickr:

Reach: 458 photos.

Content: Events, open house, previews.

Voice: Many photos do not have captions. That is the best place to have a voice on photo sharing sites.

Community engagement: No comments.



These are fair numbers – a good place to start. The channels are up-to-date (particularly Facebook and Twitter). Questions have received responses and the audience is aware of LMCC’s presence on these networks.

There are many tools available (such as Twitter and Facebook Analytics) to measure the reach and effectiveness of content and campaigns beyond follower numbers. This should be a priority as the move is made into a stronger strategy.

The temptation as we begin to think about social media strategies is to overtax staff as they strive to create unique content for each channel in addition to new ones that are of interest. This will always be an issue unless the choice is made to become *curators* of content and communities versus *creators* of all the content.

Overarching Strategy/Theme

LMCC has a unique place in the arts world in Lower Manhattan, Greater NYC and beyond. It has supported and championed artists for 40 years. It should have a social media presence to match. It should be the voice of the thriving art scene Downtown. Its channels should be where people go when they want something that makes them excited about art and creative possibilities.

LMCC should use social media to:

- 1) Empower artists (broadly defined) by helping them better connect with the public
- 2) Empower artists (broadly defined) by helping them connect with each other and the rest of the LMCC network
- 3) Contribute to the creation of vibrant communities by helping spread the word about LMCC activities
- 4) Document the vibrant community that LMCC helps artists create

“Why Social Media?”

1. Community

Art, by its nature, creates community. People who would otherwise be strangers can find themselves in a community when they experience the same art together, whether at a concert or an exhibition. Social media is democratizing and empowering -- everyone has a voice. Facilitating the creation of community, it allows the arts to spread beyond the usual temporal and spacial limitations. Social media leaves a trail that can be followed. Every event that is documented is searchable and forms a history. It can continue to create a community long after the show comes down or the concert is over

Social media is different from other forms of media because it is a two way street. The publisher of the newspaper and their audience are not in a reciprocal relationship and the extent to which they can be said to be in community is therefore limited. It is a uniquely appropriate media for an organization like LMCC to utilize because it closely matches the goal of creating vibrant sustainable communities.

2. Cost Effectiveness

For a non-profit arts organization in the most expensive media market in the world, a dollar spent on a social media message has a much better chance of impact on a wide audience than the same dollar spent on mass media messaging.

3. Empowerment

The value proposition of LMCC prizes empowerment of artists. An empowered artist is an artist who:

- a) has a relationship with a community of people who can enjoy, appreciate, respond to and be touched by their art. An artist that has no audience is not an empowered artist.

b) has the material and social means to create art and grow in their skills, both strictly within their field and also in non-art skills like managing finances, etc.

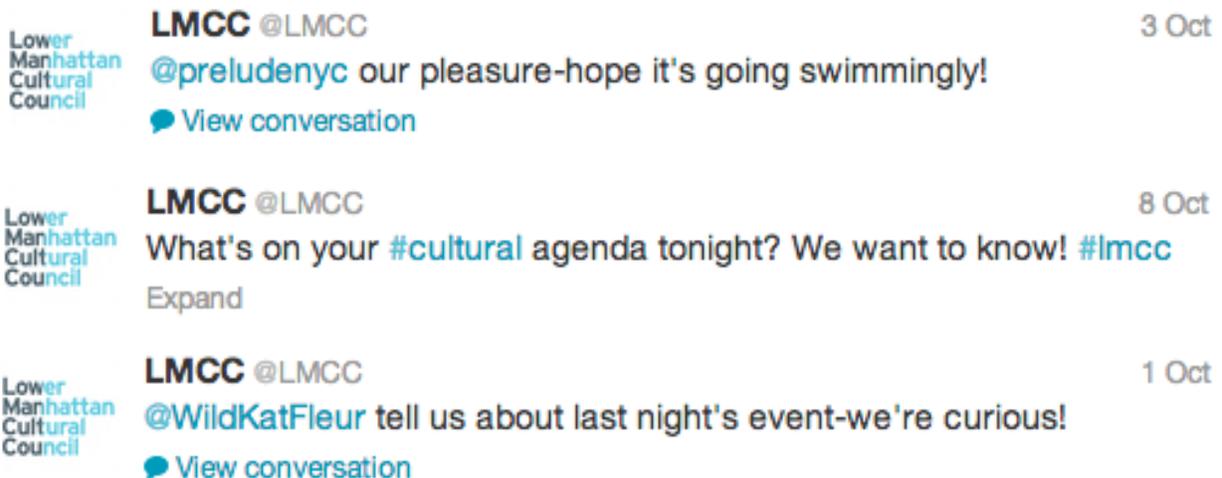
When artists can easily talk to each other they can learn from each other. When they can talk to experts in their field or other fields they can easily learn.

A connected artist IS an empowered artist.

Social Media channels and networks provide some of the best, most efficient ways to facilitate these connections and empowerment.

**LMCC's Social Media Voice:
"The quick-witted downtown art maven full of inspiration and insight"**

All channels should have a common voice. Short, clever, witty – with confidence that the speaker is "on to something good." This general attitude of, "I've found something that you as an artist, you as an art lover are going to unequivocally love." The voice used currently in Twitter replies exemplifies this:



It has personality, it has class, but it also has knowledge and understanding behind it all. Knowledge of "hidden gems" for the public and knowledge of amazing programs and opportunities for artists.

All communications on all channels should speak like this.

An example Tweet (geared towards the public):

Delightful, gorgeous, provocative. Writing we love by current #lmccWORKSPACE resident [@ocorina](https://twitter.com/ocorina) lmcc.net/corina_copp

A possible Facebook post (geared toward artists):

If everything you can imagine is real (picasso) then what's happening in your imagination today?

The communications are clear, concise and have a sense of personality and even humor. We want to make people smile when they see LMCC content – no matter the audience. LMCC will build a relationship with its followers as it brings new people into the community and fosters those that are already there. Vibrant, empowering -- LMCC.

“Why This Voice?”

This voice is another side of the LMCC personality. Similar to what you would use in official documents but slightly less formal letting more emotion come through. That emotion is enthusiasm for the arts, the artists and audience.

1. Wit

To meet its goal of empowering artists, LMCC will need to be constantly sharing, telling, explaining, enlightening and inspiring. While doing all of that, it must never seem like its talking down to the artists or the public. Shakespeare famously wrote, “Brevity is the soul of wit.” By keeping it short – acting as though you’re sure you don’t have to “spell it all out”, you imply a level of sophistication and intelligence in the audience. This is exactly the right tone for LMCC; it says, “We’re smart, and we know you are too.”

2. Maven

The definition of Maven is, “an expert or connoisseur.” This voice should be knowledgeable. You want your audience to think of you when they have any cultural related question. “I know who I should ask about this!” You want them to go to Twitter or Facebook or any of the other channels and ask the maven. The one from LMCC.

3. Inspiration

To empower is to inspire. Artists will create more and better art when they are inspired. Audiences will attend and enjoy and spread the word when they are inspired. The more inspiration, the more growth and influence.

4. Insight

This emphasizes the maven characteristic. Insight about culture and art, yes. But also practical things such as event happenings and logistics for the public or grant application deadlines and details for artists. Insight and information equals power and an influential voice.

“Why the same voice across all platforms?”

One unified ‘voice’ across all platforms will provide clarity and be easier to execute. This voice has been fashioned to work well across the different audiences on the different platforms. It also helps unify the identity of LMCC in people’s minds. For an organization that is not widely known (even though its programs are) this seems essential. If it feels like there is one personality behind all these platforms people will begin recognizing and remembering it much more quickly than if you were trying to have distinct voices in each platform.

LMCC content specifics

Use of Hashtags

There should be a specific hashtag for each event LMCC hosts/promotes. There should be signage and mentions of the relevant hashtag at each event/exhibit/performance. We suggest a form like #lmccR2R, #lmccSPACE #lmccOPEN #lmccPARIS. These work on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and Instagram and can be a feed on the LMCC website. They allow people to share and collaborate live throughout a program.

Multi-Platform Programs

Artist Takeovers & Social Media Residency

The artist takeover of a social media channel is a literal enactment of artist empowerment and functions as a powerful symbol of what LMCC is about. The social media channels of LMCC represent both a resource and a connection to an audience and by putting an artist in direct control of that channel, LMCC is giving the artist that connection.

The social media residency is an updated version of a physical residency and part of what that entails is time to engage with materials and create something new. In this case the ‘materials’ are the relationships that LMCC has with its social media network and the intrinsic properties of the social media technologies themselves.

Each channel should have one to two (or more) “Artist Takeovers” per year. A certain artist will program the channel with their favorites from their own discipline and beyond. This will promote and expose the artist in addition to the diversity of LMCC.

Example 1: A visual artist would take over the Instagram account for a weekend and post photos of their favorite, most intriguing street art. From the famous to the obscure. Followers could post their favorites as well by using #lmccTKOVR

Example 2: A playwright takes over the Twitter account for a weekend and writes an ongoing comedy in 140 character increments. Followers would contribute how they think the plot should progress by using #lmccTKOVR. If the outcome is good, it will be given a reading filmed for the YouTube channel.

ASK (#lmccASK)

This program builds on the assumption that the general public is a community interested in the arts. You wouldn't ask unless you thought the public had something useful to say. A group of people who are interested in each other's opinions is the start of community. By drawing people's focus to something that they share in common (i.e. being interested in the answers to questions about art) you encourage people who may have not been thinking of themselves as a community to build something stronger.

Ask an overarching question like, "What is culture?" People would answer through their chosen channel and there would be incentives like having a graphic designer make a poster of the best answer. #lmccASK would unify across platforms. The responses could be worked into an awareness campaign in print and billboards creating a feedback loop encouraging more people to participate. This program could be coupled with a series of guest-blog posts on LMCC's own blog.

Channel Specific Programs and Focus

Each of these platforms has a unique audience and advantage. We've provided six options in the order of priority. (i.e. if only three can be managed choose the first three, and so on)



1. **Twitter** - *efficient, easy exchange of information and opinion*

This channel is geared towards the public. The general news, events, and happenings in addition to interesting things from the world of LMCC and the art world. It should be clear in the description that artist-focused content is available at Facebook. The goal is to be clear (and fun). On the website homepage, a twitter ticker will display the stream of tweets, retweets and replies from the LMCC twitter channel. The audience will be encouraged to enrich this live tweet stream with thought-provoking questions and insights. On the people profile pages, the person or collective's twitter handle will be displayed as part of their basic information.



2. **Facebook** - *community and discussion thrive*

The place for artist-focused news, events, community, etc. Everything here should be geared to develop artists. Even a private group of moderator approved artists that have connection to LMCC. Posts could highlight successful techniques being used by artists to connect with their audience over social media, perhaps even interviewing artists who are using facebook or other social media especially effectively.



3. **Instagram** #lmccMYLM (*My Lower Manhattan*) - *ease of visual sharing*

Users who tag their photos/videos with this hashtag will have the chance to have that photo "re-grammed" as one of the best. This content touches upon all areas of life in Lower Manhattan -- not just art. This requires a moderator to go through them on a regular basis and choose some that will inspire the community and build LMCC's brand. Instagram data can also be harvested later for new media projects, such as data visualizations of LMCC activity or a qualitative look at how "Downtown" or "LMCC" is perceived.



4. YouTube #lmccINSIDE - massive audience and video

This could be a place for vlog-type self-produced video to live that lets the audience in on what's happening in the Open Studios program. Possible content would include:

“Artist Raids” where an artist from one space would make an unannounced visit to another artist's studio and interview them about what they are doing (an LMCC staff member would serve as the camera person). These would be edited by video editing intern. Even a chance for live streaming of certain studios, rehearsals, and readings. There is a community here that includes the public and artists that are looking to learn their craft and be “on the inside.”



5. Pinterest Cultural Council Board - visually stunning and ease of sharing

Users will be encouraged to 'join the cultural council' by pinning photos/videos and links to a Collaborative Board to document culture in Lower Manhattan and beyond. Users can rate and “re-pin” their favorites. A moderator will approve submissions and choose some to “re-pin” to a highlight board that will inspire the community and build LMCC's brand.



6. Tumblr #lmccPROCESS - culture of sharing and appreciation of process

Curation of art and artist in process. This will take some digging to start, but could become a place for artists on Tumblr to showcase their process, and a place to highlight artists using the internet to document their process on other platforms. LMCC would find an intern to work on researching this topic to get it started by creating a list of examples. The best examples would be selected and used to guide other artists who wanted to document their process.

Possible Joint Project with The Drawing Center or other Arts organization: The Artist's process now and then - series of blog posts discussing process and various ways that artists have let the public in on their process through the history of art.

The LMCC blog would select the best posts from these blogs to highlight as well and would also highlight LMCC's own artists documentation on Youtube #lmccINSIDE

Some examples :

<http://www.utne.com/arts/process-blogs-peek-into-artists-sketchbooks.aspx#axzz2hhjqmDdc>

<http://www.saatchionline.com/feature/from-the-studio>

<http://vivianliddell.tumblr.com/#59588938869>

Response Guidelines

Guidelines for Online interaction

Responses to comments should be thoughtful and further the conversation if possible. All content originating from LMCC must be free of typos, misspellings and grammatical errors. Please be fastidious. LMCC will always be generous with information.

Basic Rules

While there will be variations and exceptions necessitated by the different structures of the various social media outlets through which LMCC will be broadcasting, there are some basic rules that are to be followed in all social media interactions engaged in on LMCC's behalf.

1) LMCC will designate certain people as being responsible for posting on each channel. Only those designated people will post as LMCC. When an artist takes over a channel they will sign their posts with their name e.g. " - Jane Dough " to make it clear that they are speaking for themselves not for LMCC in general.

2) When posting or responding to comments, LMCC staff or any artist taking over the channel will agree to abide by the following guidelines: "A user may not use someone else's identity or share someone else's private information. A user may not post or publish content (e.g. text, images, video) that is illegal, discriminatory, pornographic, harassing/cyberbullying, libelous; that promotes the use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco; or that creates a hostile online environment. Unacceptable behavior may include comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, color or disability; that are sexually suggestive, humiliating or demeaning; or that are threats to stalk, haze or physically injure another person."

3) - Response Time:

While these guidelines may change depending on the volume of responses necessary or the availability of staff to handle responses, we would like to establish a time limit within which comments on the blog will be approved for posting and by which we will respond to comments, @tweets, Facebook comments etc. that require response. If a longer, more carefully articulated response is called for, it does not need to be given within this time frame, but some response should be made assuring the commenter that a follow-up is coming.

Goals for comments to be posted:

Weekdays: During regular working hours (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) and during LMCC events: post comments and respond to messages ASAP, but no later than within 2 hours of receiving them.

At other times: post comments and respond to messages within 24 hours of receiving them.

4) In terms of effort, comments and messages should be responded to in kind. A comment or message that took a lot of effort to create should be responded to with a similar amount of effort, short comments and messages can be answered with shorter responses.

5) Credit where credit is due. LMCC will always be generous with references and links back to original sources.

6) Non-Censorship policy. LMCC will not delete anyone's comment or message unless it is explicitly hateful or offensive. Expressions critical of LMCC or its artists will be responded to appropriately and quickly.

Possible APPS

LMCC Culture Stream

An app bringing together all channels from social to blog to news and announcements. The place to see all that is happening in the world of LMCC. When you click on a particular post it will take you to the specific platform/user. One section for social channels, one for official events, one for gallery, etc.

Timeline: 6 months

Information Architecture: 6k - 9k

Design: 6k -9k

Development: 15k - 20k

Total: 27k - 38k

LMCC Artist's Contract Book

An app like "shake" but for artists with consignment agreements, studio rental agreements, etc. This App could aim to give the artist everything he or she needed to work as a professional artist, perhaps broken down by discipline, e.g. writer, visual artist, dancer, musician, etc.

Timeline: 6 - 12 months

Budget (assuming license from 'Shake' is possible and assuming legal help could be donated) 10k - 15k for research and content development, 7k -17k information architecture & design, 7-15k for development Total: 24k - 47k

LMCC Artist's Documenting Tool

This App would allow artists to create artworks, groups of artworks, and then document them and export them in a variety of formats including representing them on social media.

Timeline: 6-12 months

Information Architecture: 8k - 10k

Design: 8k -10k

Development: 20k - 25k

Total: 36k - 45k

Augmented Reality is also an area that we feel would be a good fit for a LMCC app. We could propose further ideas in this area upon request.



**Lower Manhattan Cultural Council
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Addendum
February 2014**

LMCC and R2R Channels

Ideally, the R2R channels would be folded into LMCC and all followers would move over as well. Then all R2R specific communications could be delineated with hashtags. This is clear and consistent. This transition, though, should be done slowly and methodically so as to bring as many followers along as possible. In the beginning there can be cross posting. Also periodically there can be announcement posts referring to the fact that most action is happening on LMCC channels with an encouragement to follow those. When the numbers move in a significant way the decision should be made to move completely over. The key to this process is not amount of time but attention to analytics.

*One key to successful campaigns is the “seeding” of posts and engagement from friends and colleagues. This gives the campaign a base to start from and takes away the stigma and apprehension of being the first to post or engage

Homepage Twitter feed should be dynamic and changed per campaign cycle. ie: can pull #R2R15 RSS during June, #ArtsGrants during August, #Pier42 in September or #WhyLMCC during a giving campaign etc.

The key to pacing and not over-saturating alumni artist news is to Retweet their posts. If they have an accomplishment or success ask them to post about it and LMCC can amplify it with a retweet.

Website and Social Interaction

One way to facilitate engagement on website and specifically on the blog is to enable Facebook comments. This feeds engagement back to the Facebook page and allows for a form of moderation and community accountability. There are also other creative ways to engage including polling (simple, direct questions that are easy to answer at end of posts).

In addition to the Twitter feed on the homepage that can change with hashtags per campaign, there is also the possibility of using the Instagram feed in a creative way. The key to this link is the maintenance and updating of that channel. If it is fresh and current it can provide a sense of immediacy and freshness to the website. It also drives traffic there and links the LMCC community together even further.

Analytics

Hootsuite does provide excellent analytics. The base plan provides one report per month, but more need to be purchased to get a complete picture. The most cost effective method at this point is Twitter analytics (analytics.twitter.com) and Facebook Insights. For Instagram there are still few tools but Followgram.me can give some of the best. Instagram analytics will evolve this year. Unless a significant increase in Hootsuite investment is possible using these native tools is the best way. See this article for more: <http://iag.me/socialmedia/reviews/7-reasons-not-to-use-hootsuite/>

Hashtag Possibilities

#lmccR2R
#lmccSPACE
#lmccOPEN
#lmccPARIS
#lmccASK
#lmccTKOVR

#lmccGRANTS
#lmccPIER42
#lmccWHY
#lmccINSIDE
#lmccPROCESS
#lmccMYLM

RSS to Email

Using MailChimp bringing blog and even calendar RSS feeds into email campaigns are simple. Each entry from a certain defined time frame can be featured fully or in excerpt form. More details on the "how": <http://kb.mailchimp.com/article/what-is-an-rss-to-email-campaign-and-how-to-i-set-one-up/>