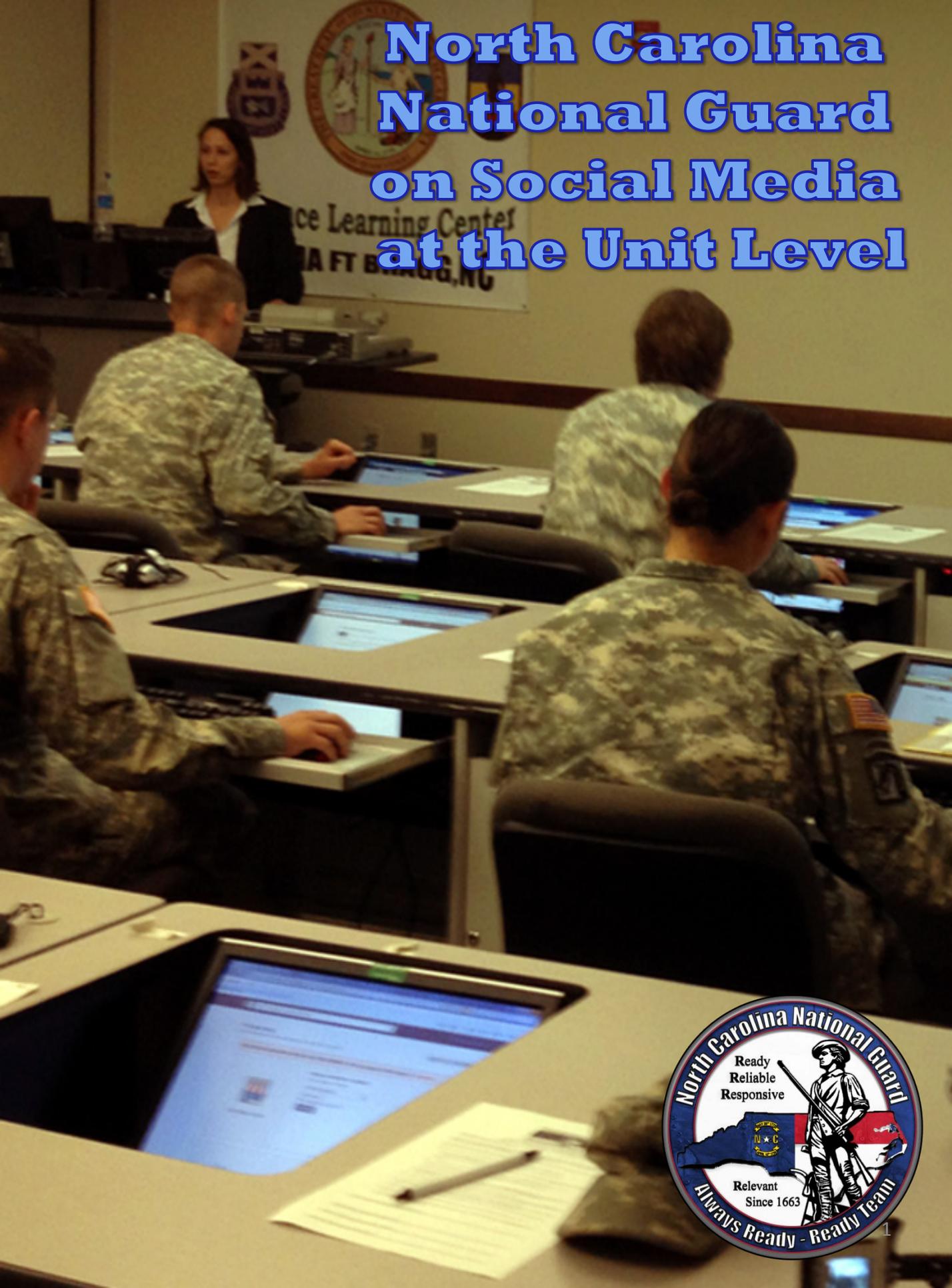


North Carolina National Guard on Social Media at the Unit Level



Category D: Outstanding Initiative in New Media

Background Information

On July 2013, the North Carolina National Guard Public Affairs Office created the first yearly Unit Public Affairs Representative training, with the one of the objectives being training Guardsmen at the Unit Level on managing their own Social Media site (specifically a Unit Facebook page) and learning about our other Social Media tools/Resources we use to tell our story.

Mission Objectives

The North Carolina National Guard and Senior Leaders were well established within our Social Media platforms but still felt that our message was not getting to the lowest level, our Citizen Soldiers and Airmen. So in the summer of 2013, the Public Affairs Office conducted a UPAR training, with an ultimate goal of bridging the communication gap not only between N.C National Headquarters and the Units but between the Units and the community they live and work in everyday.

One segment of the NCNG Social Media mission is to utilize the valuable media technology outlets to deliver the National Guard's message and share the NCNG's strategic objectives:

- Provide ready forces to support Federal and State requirements, while providing the community with real-time information and timely updates on what measures the NCNG is taking to meet these objectives:

For example:

- Reports on NCNG troops Mobilizing or demobilizing is produced via our Social Media outlets to gain support of friends, family members, and fellow Soldiers at home via posts to encourage morale at home and abroad.
- When the NCNG is called upon for state duty (Ex. Mountain climbers rescues with the HART team), our program was able to keep the community informed with updates on the situation.
- Develop and participate in programs that add value to our Service Members, families, employers and communities.

For Example:

- The Unit Facebook pages allow Service Members abroad to send products and share messages with NCNG, via posts, photos or video messages and keeping us and followers all informed.
- By-weekly strategic meetings within the Public Affairs office are conducted to identify key NCNG Units or programs to highlight capabilities of NCNG.
- The social media accounts highlight regularly a certain function of the NCNG such as Mob/De-Mob ceremonies, yearly training, missions, Family Programs, Tarheel Challenge Academy, etc.

Target Audiences

Each of our Social Media accounts has a different target audience. We look to connect with Soldiers and Airmen, their families, stakeholders and partner organizations interested in the NCNG story on Facebook and/or Twitter while using our other Social Media platforms like YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Tout, and Pinterest as resources to distribute products more effectively.

External Audiences

We have been able to connect with military enthusiasts/support groups, media and military organizations via our different Social Media accounts, like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr and Instagram.



www.facebook.com/NCNationalGuard



www.facebook.com/5113thFieldArtillery



www.facebook.com/210thMPDetachment



www.facebook.com/211thMilitaryPoliceCompany

The NCNG Public Affairs office launched its official Facebook page in 2010 and since its launch it has had a steady increase of followers each year. In the early part of 2013 we developed an initiative to start training Unit Level Public Affairs Representatives with the goal of creating more active lines of communication via Social Media between NCNG Headquarter, Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) and individual Units. The objective was to make sure that our command message was reaching even more of our general public, including family members and military support organizations in the Units' local community. After completing the Social Media training, Units either created or updated their Facebook page profiles to meet regulations and making NCNG a manager to monitor content and followers.



<http://tinyurl.com/l84zjsa>

Unit Pages update their followers of their training, community involvement and deployments (retrospectively) and provide their Soldiers necessary information regarding family support programs, and more. We've encouraged and received a lot of participation from our Units on their Social Media presences and seen exponential increases not only to their Unit pages but our NCNG and Senior Leaders pages as well.

This has not only brought out a sense of more personal interaction between Soldiers/Airmen and their leadership but given Soldiers Another source to communicate quicker. Units tag NCNG Facebook on any local events they may be doing giving us and the Leadership opportunity to give those Units a shout out on our own Facebook pages and increase the awareness and exposure to what we do on a local level.



I would like to give a shout out to the 630th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB). We are very proud of you and hope to come see you soon!

With Donald Bentley and 2 others.



<http://tinyurl.com/m85wj8e>



Facebook has become an important platform for sharing pictures of our Soldiers & Airmen leaving or returning home from deployments, but what followers really enjoy seeing is when our Units provide update posts from downrange. These posts are particularly popular increasing virality and engagement while helping boost the morale of friends and families at home.



<http://tinyurl.com/m85wj8e>

During the UPAR training Soldiers were also taught how to take pictures and shoot video suitable for socializing on Facebook which tend to be the most popular. Messages like the 211th MP Company short 5 second messages from many of their Soldiers compiled into a video post on their Facebook page which brought the over 14,000 views to the one post.



<http://tinyurl.com/ox5szzf>

Or posts like the 30th Brigade Special Troops Battalion that provided a bit of relief during uncertain times. Where a few minutes to reassured Soldiers and their families that make up drills would be an option after the Government shutdown makes all the difference, as the Commander of the 30th STB did easing some of the anxiety during a very difficult time for our Guardsmen.

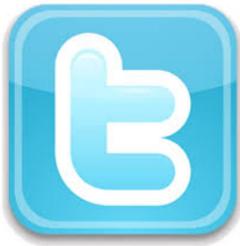
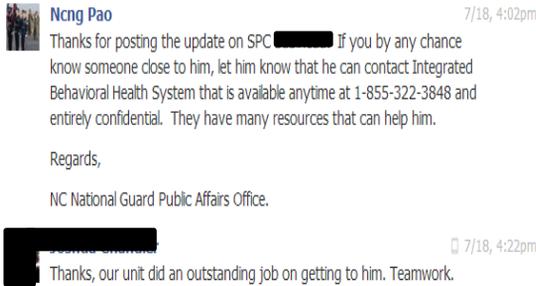
Facebook is such a powerful tool of communication with our Soldiers at Unit level to the point that it played a critical role in A difficult situation. In early July of 2013, we had a Soldier that looked up our Public Affairs number on our Facebook page and called to let us know another Soldier had posted a suicide message on his Facebook profile. The Soldier who reported the incident sent us a print screen of the post and from there we were able to friend request the Soldier with the suicide post And send him a private message encouraging him to seek help. Since he did not respond right way, but did friend us, we were able to contact a family member from his profile, while our PA Office contacted his Unit to inform them of the situation.

(Continued on Page 5)





The Soldier's family member made contact with him and posted a message on his page stating "he is with family now, taking care of him", and few minutes later a Platoon Sergeant from his Unit Posted "We have him. A few guys from our unit are with him now. Thanks for the help". In all, the situation thankfully resolved itself and later the Soldier posted a message thanking everyone who intervened and made a difference in his life. Without social platforms like this to establish a rapport with our Guardsmen the situation could have played out quite differently.



Since the NCNG Public Affairs office took the initiative to create our own Twitter in 2010 we have increased our following by 367% with a 2013 year-end following of 3,269. Our account is updated on a daily basis and frequently with content that is not only relevant to our Soldiers and Airmen, but to news and military organizations. Twitter was initially created with correspondent accounts attached to it, where our correspondents use their Twitter handles to share content of missions while on-site.

Giving us the opportunity to be at different missions and share information while it's happening like many news organization do, thus allowing our media followers and military organizations to pick up our stories.

As the @NCNationalGuard, we also share content with organizations that we work closely with such as the North Carolina National Guard Family Programs (@NCNGFamily), North Carolina Air National Guard (@NCAirGuard), The NC Governor's Office (@PatMcCroryNC), and more. But the effectiveness for Twitter can be more quantified during situations of emergency operations or inclement weather where we create a point of contact with the N.C. Emergency Management (@NCEmergency), The N.C. Department Of Public Safety @NCPublicSafety, and the N.C. Department Of Transportation @NCDOT by using hashtags such as #ncwx and #readync.

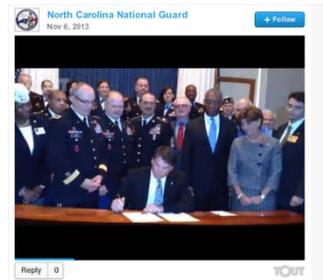
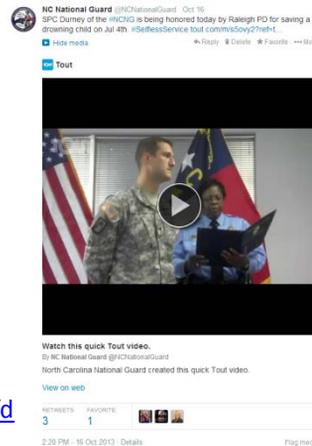


Social Media Platforms as product distribution resources



Tout is an online social and “microbloggin” networking service that enables our Public Affairs correspondents to broadcast 15- second clips directly to our followers. Like Twitter, Tout is about a real-time conversation-but in video, rather than words. This allows us to capture remarkable footage of our missions/Units and instantaneously share it, providing our Soldiers, Airmen, families, media and/or military organizations with more of sense on being live on scene. When sharing the clips, much like Facebook and Twitter, we would tag organizations or Units as well as use hashtags when necessary to help create awareness. Since we launched Tout in May 2013, we’ve uploaded 300 clips and gained 311 followers on the Tout platform.

<http://tinyurl.com/m5vptfd>



<http://tinyurl.com/n2mymji>



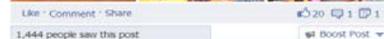
As another resource to communicate with our Units across the state is through our YouTube video uploads. When our Public Affairs Office covers Units’ missions/Annual Trainings, official visits, and videos that illustrate our command message; YouTube is the most efficient method to allow our Service Members, media and the community at large to view the entire events. Sharing these videos on our Facebook or Twitter pages allow our followers and individual Unit pages to share the video in a seamless way. One of the most effective ways to share these videos and making sure that the Unit it pertains to sees it, at least for Facebook, is to copy the share link and use it in your post which allows you the opportunity to mention the particular Unit.



<http://youtu.be/URcC6eAEDzw>



Since Flickr’s launch in 2010, we’ve uploaded 526 sets, and received 2,293,503 all-time views. When photographers go out on a mission, it is standard operating procedure to upload their photos on to Flickr, and create a set. Since Facebook and Twitter have historically had pictures be the most popular posts, we’ve found, a more effective way to get our views up would be taking the most eye catching picture of the set, sharing it on Facebook and Twitter and adding the link to full set. We also share the sets on our public website - nc.ngb.army.mil and as a slideshow.



<http://flic.kr/s/aHsjNGGMem>

Marketing Strategy

The North Carolina National Guard Public Affairs team developed Social Media business cards that lists the URLs to all of the organization accounts and QR code to our Facebook page on one side. On the other side, we feature the URL to our public mobile site launched in the summer of 2013 and its corresponding QR code as well with our contact information for any questions. These business cards were distributed on missions, and special events hosted or attended by the NCNG as a simple resource for anyone looking for information, pictures etc.

Stay in touch with your Soldiers and Airmen



facebook.com/NCNationalGuard
 twitter.com/NCNationalGuard
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 Tout.com/NCNationalGuard
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 pinterest.com/NCNationalGuard
 flickr.com/ncngpao



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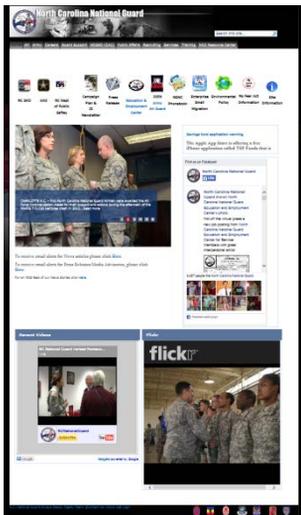
<http://www.nc.ngb.army.mil/>



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The Public Affairs team and Senior Leaders continue to promote our Social Media sites on their e-mail signature block. Each one of the accounts promotes one another by providing links, and cross promoting on each network.



The Public Affairs team has also embedded the links to our Facebook, YouTube and Flickr sites to the public website - nc.ngb.army.mil for immediate updates on the website. As an added strategy, we've also implemented the use of the NCNG Logo on pictures that are shared on Facebook and Twitter for continued visibility and awareness of the N.C National Guard.

Twitter Post from Dec. 19th - 1-130th ARB Aviators performed the flyover for 114th Army-Navy Games.



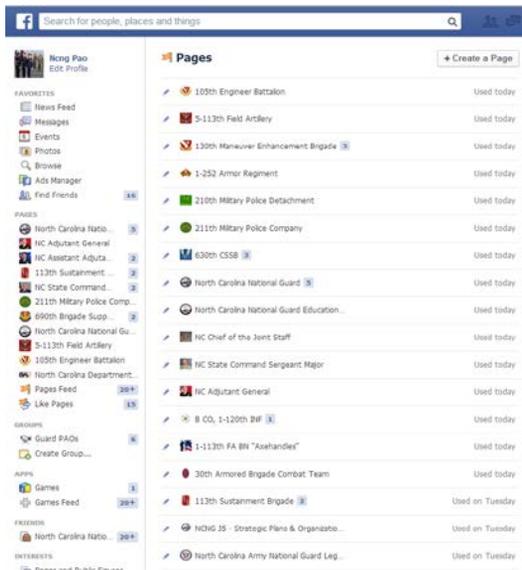
Posting and Monitoring Tools

All of our Social Media outlets work together to help support the NCNG's command messages. To best accomplish this, and assure we get the best value for each, we use a few tools to assist with content posting and monitoring.

Tweetdeck allows us to monitor the many different accounts, mentions, keywords, hashtags and events associated with the N.C. National Guard, our Units and Senior Leaders accounts. Also, all accounts are connected to the smartphone device for immediate updates on any posts/tweets while also easing timely postings.

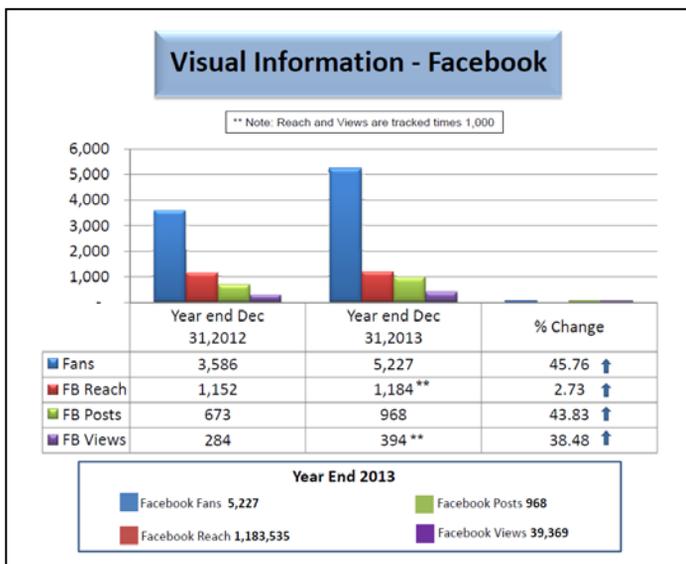
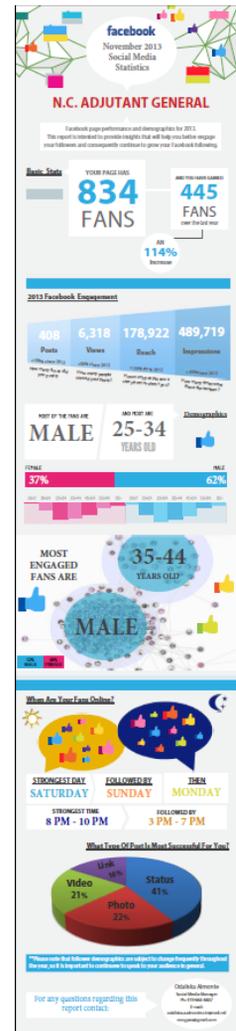
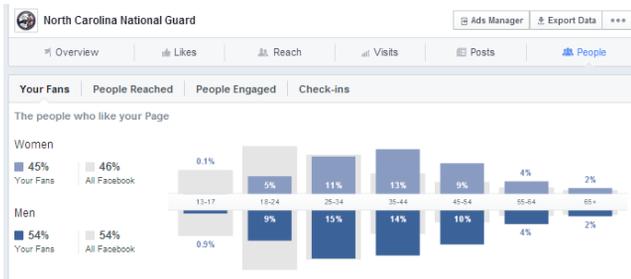
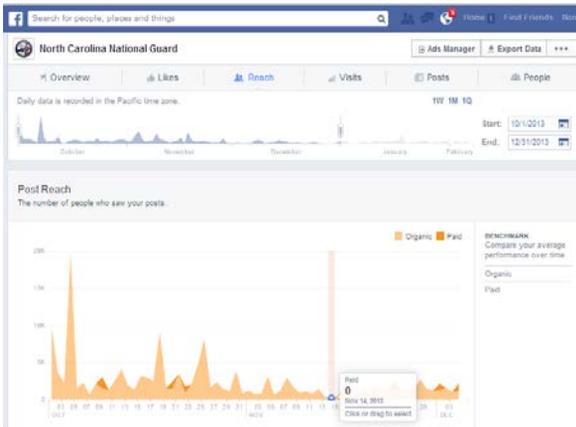


With the new addition of NCNG as backup page managers to the Units' pages in 2013, we are able to monitor pages' posts and comments not only during work hours but at any given time with the smartphone updates.



Metrics

Social Media statistics continue to be the most effective way to determine our progress and gauging our audience and interaction, not only for NCNG but for our Senior Leaders. With the new Facebook analytics updates made available in the later part of 2013, we have been able to create more specific reports. We can now know who our demographic is, who is the most engaged and when, and what our audience is most interested in seeing. Which we use as a way to determine our planning schedule, looking at what was most effective and vice versa. As Social Media evolves, so does the justification for our Units to have a presence.



Conclusion

The North Carolina National Guard's Social Media efforts consist not only on communicating the Command message but making sure it connects with our Soldiers, Airmen, friends, families and community at large.

With the ever evolving world of Social Media, we are constantly looking for ways to improve our approach to getting the NCNG's command messages out to the public . Our Social Media efforts work hand-in-hand with the Command message to:

1. Be a **Ready Team** of Citizen Soldiers and Airmen who are **Always Ready, Always There** to protect and defend our nation and secure our American way of life.
 - Illustrated through the Unit's missions and operations and the collaboration with our emergency management organizations streamlined by our strategic communications with developed hashtags, etc.
2. The more than 12,000 Soldiers and Airmen of the North Carolina National Guard are ready to deploy and have deployed all over our State and abroad.
 - Shown through the many Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) and Unit pages, Senior Leaders' pages, and our promotion of them.
3. The North Carolina National Guard is the best bargain for our state and nation.
 - Social Media is a "free" outlet we've used to tell the story of the NCNG Soldiers and Airmen. Our efforts to embrace new technology by introducing Units all over the state to Social Media keeps us relevant in regards to military organizations and Social Media.

NCNG has constantly evolved our strategy, for example, educating our Units on how Social Media can help them communicate with the community with a well composed message, while cautioning them not pollute their followers newsfeed consequently causing their audience to shut down. We've also change the way we interact with our audience on Twitter with the additions of platforms like Tout to assist with the Twitter character limitations. In turn, we have been able to more effectively get our message across to our audience through video messages, improving not only our interaction but have also provided a more diverse and dynamic communication with our community.

NCNG has developed ways to communicate back and forth with our community on each network, sounding authentic and professional at all times, and generally, creating a self-sustaining communities that we continue to share our story with, monitor, and grow. This is done by keeping a positive relationship with Units, rather than by creating fabricated messages from the public affairs office. There's no better way to tell our story than having those Units that live and interact with the community where the stories are happening. The Units' following, like ours, are not as big as other pages with larger organizations may be, the pages growth is organic. Those involved with the Units' pages tend to have a better established relationship with their local community giving it a certain authenticity, therefore, followers tend to have a genuine interest in what they have to share on Social Media.

The numbers on our NCNG and Senior Leaders pages are on an upward trend, and as we continue to keep the lines of communication open with our Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) and Units the momentum we have developed will carry us forward. The North Carolina National Guard Public Affairs office looks ahead to numerous growth opportunities for our Social Media efforts and communications strategy as whole, for 2014 and for year's to come.