The smart way to control social media risk

Case study: Police

Social media is an extremely useful communications channel for the police, offering the opportunity for direct conversations with the public and a cost-effective way of building relationships with important stakeholders. It also allows forces to put out incident alerts, monitor situations and people.

A recent European Union report showed that forces with a strong media presence had a better relationship with members of the public in their policing areas, emphasising the importance of social media in conveying the human face of the police. However, as with all large organisations, the risks associated with social media need to be carefully managed.

Challenges

The lack of a central overview of social media activity can place a police force's accounts at risk of spamming and malicious postings from external sources as well as mistakes and rogue postings internally. It is time-consuming for a police force to check every social media account centrally, but without some clear overview, accurate evaluation, reporting and prompt response to any issues arising is impossible.

Keeping track of usernames and passwords is another important issue when multiple users have access to social media accounts. The risks involved in sharing passwords can lead to loss of control over an organisation's accounts and put its reputation at risk. Information governance and compliance issues can arise as a consequence of not having an audit trail of who posted, what they posted and when may lead to major problems.

Case study: West Midlands Police

West Midlands Police (WMP) is a social media pioneer among the UK's police forces. As early as 2009, it had redesigned its public website to integrate better with its social media activity, and was using Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to build closer relationships with local communities.

In August 2011, the force had 20 Facebook and 79 Twitter accounts, representing the force as a whole, community teams, local policing units and special interest pages, including 'Smithy' the police dog.

Anyone can post on the WMP's Facebook pages, but officers had to keep an eye on the pages for inappropriate comments or spamming links. In one case, the English Defence League posted dozens of links on WMP's pages, effectively clogging the communication channel. Although officers monitored the pages and deleted or blocked inappropriate content or spam, WMP didn't have the resource to monitor the pages manually around the clock.

The force also realised its actions were going to be discussed on social media, whether they were listening to the conversations or not. Given the huge volume of conversation, monitoring everything that was being said would have proved a daunting task.

"We started out with a handful of accounts and users, all within the comms team," said Stuart Davis, digital services manager at West Midlands Police, "As the number of accounts and amount of activity increased, keeping track of who was engaging and in what way became a priority. As the channel was becoming more popular, we knew we would have to increase the number of users with access to our accounts. As we work in shifts, we had to find a solution to stop the sharing of usernames and passwords."

How CrowdControlHQ helped

With CrowdControlHQ, each authorised officer can post or tweet by logging in to the system, but the central communications team retains the passwords for all social media accounts. This eliminates the need to change passwords every two months. Tracking is easy, as each action delivered through the system is tagged with the username of the individual who actioned it. By plugging all social media networks into the CrowdControlHQ dashboard, the central communications team now has visibility over the entire posting and engagement activity and is able to drill down on chosen accounts or content.By setting up keyword dictionaries, accounts are monitored constantly by the system and offensive or abusive content is either removed automatically or sent for review by key members of the team.

"West Midlands Police has control over its social media."

CrowdControlHQ's Buzz Monitor allows communications teams and officers engaged in social media to listen and respond directly to conversations across blogs, Facebook, Google+, news sites and Twitter. In a crisis situation, such as a terror alert or a natural disaster, social media is the fastest channel for mobilising the public. With CrowdControlHQ, messages can be pushed out at the same time across all channels.

CrowdControlHQ's specialist team provided key support throughout the implementation. They helped map all of WMP's requirements, setting up tiered permissions and access to accounts in a way that mirrors the forces organisational structure.

About CrowdControlHQ

CrowdControlHQ is the leading social media risk management and monitoring platform. We are a UK company with a prestigious client list, which includes many organisations in the public and private sectors.

Our deep understanding of social media and the impact it can have on an organisation's reputation and brand enables our clients to implement an integrated environment across the entire organisation from marketing to customer services. This approach allows organistions to manage multiple social media accounts centrally, protect passwords, monitor conversations and buzzwords, schedule posts, analyse data and engage with fans and followers. We provide marketing and operational teams with efficient tools, while ensuring IT compliance and information governance.

If you would like further **information** or a **demonstration** call **0845 686 5044** or go to **www.crowdcontrolhq.com**