

Social Media Snapshot



[PREPARED FOR]

Texas Exes Chapter Leaders

[OVERVIEW]

Thank you so much for attending the Texas Exes Chapter Conference! Social media is one of the most effective ways for chapters to connect with members, journalists, potential members and their local community in an efficient and effective way. It's not just about having a good Facebook page anymore (although that helps), it's about becoming a resource for local Texas Exes and finding opportunities to create visibility in your local market. But, where should you start? Below please find a few quick ideas for ramping up your digital strategy.

[BLOG]

Of all the social media tools available to Texas Exes chapters, a dynamic blog is one of the most important and underutilized resources. For those reading this and thinking "yeah, we tried that," the key is having the right strategy for your blog. Most chapters who have blogs use them only to update members on upcoming events—a duplication of information members already receive via chapter emails or your Facebook page—which makes them both ineffective and boring. We want you to think about your blog as a relationship-builder within your community—in many ways it your chapter's media outlet (think of it like a "Texas Exes Dallas Chapter" newspaper) and the best way to approach it is to consider how you can provide value to both current membership and others in your local area. The best sign that you are providing value is when people want to share the link to your blog with others in their network. So, how should you approach your blog?

- Work with the leadership team in your chapter to create an editorial calendar that allows you to plan ahead for upcoming posts and keep the blog fresh. If possible, assign one person as the blog's editor.
- As you create your editorial calendar, think about the following ideas as potential posts:
 - **Interviews.** Never underestimate the power of interviews as a relationship builder. Are there local community leaders (business, political, sports, etc.) you could interview as part of a Texas Exes interview series? The topics could focus on higher education and a look back at their time at UT. These interviewees could be members or not—the important thing is that you target those who the chapter wants a better relationship with. Think about it...how many times have you been asked to do an interview for a blog? It doesn't happen very often and, when it does, we are very appreciative and look for ways to reciprocate. Another way to target interviewees is to think about upcoming events in your local area and interview those putting on the events—from bands coming to town to a big high school football game. The more frequently you update your blog, the better search engine optimization it will have. The higher profile the people you interview have, the more traffic you will drive to your blog. The better the interviews are, the more likely people are to share them. It works on so many levels and, best of all, these interviews are a great networking tool for whoever heads them up for your chapter.
 - **Texas Exes Spotlight.** Ever read *Esquire*? Aside from "The Answer Man," the "what I've learned" series is one of the best parts of the magazine. Think about having each member of your chapter write a "what I've learned" post, which would essentially be a look back at their life since graduating and what they have learned since. One post could hit the blog a week (would be a nice series) and each time someone's "what I've learned" piece posts, they are going to paste the link in an email or add it to their Facebook page and share it with their entire network. Again, because most people don't get a lot of blog coverage, this provides great value and visibility for your members.
 - **Think local.** Sure, it's great to talk Texas football on your blog, but is that really going to outrank other sports-focused websites in a search? Your goal is not to rank highly on a national level, it is to build better visibility within your local community. A great community-focused blog expands the reach of your chapter beyond simply a networking group into a community resource. Be a place local citizens

can go to see a rundown of local events, read tips on preparing their teenager for college, see pictures of local events, etc.

- **Be interesting. Be different. Have fun.**

[Twitter]

Are you rolling your eyes? Ok, we get it—on the surface Twitter seems superficial, crass and even silly and we know that while many of you may have set up a chapter Twitter account, few seem to view it as a viable channel. Here’s the thing with Twitter—if used correctly, it is the second best resource for building relationships on behalf of your chapter (behind your blog). So, how should you approach your Twitter feed?

- If you haven’t yet signed up for Twitter, please make sure your username includes the Texas Exes and the name of the chapter. Since there are limits to the username, abbreviations are fine. (Example: @SanAntonioTxExes)
- Your Twitter feed should have both a local and national content strategy. Nationally, it makes sense to connect with other Texas Exes chapters (share ideas), higher education resources and perhaps even UT football players. Locally, you’re looking to use the Twitter account as a chance to create and build relationships with local political leaders, companies, leaders and citizens. Unlike Facebook, where people go to interact with people they already know, Twitter is all about meeting new people and it can be a great way to connect with both current members and others you want to know.
- Twitter has its own language to it. Spend your first two weeks “listening” before you begin pushing out content. Learn how to use @ replies to your advantage and make key connections along the way.
- We are building a chapter “list” within the Association’s Texas Exes Twitter account (@TexasExes), so if you have an account, please let us know what it is.
- Lean on others and you’ll have ready-made posts at your fingertips. RT (retweet) posts from @TexasExes, @TheAlcalde, and @UTAustin.

[Facebook]

Most of our chapters are well-versed on the benefits that Facebook can provide, both in terms of communicating with current members and giving those who visit chapter events a place to connect with the chapter over the long-term. Here are a few quick ideas for Facebook:

- If you currently have a page (of course you do), make sure it is frequently updated and not static (if you don’t have a page, go to <http://Facebook.com/pages>).
- To avoid frustrating your community, don’t connect Facebook with Twitter—what works in one doesn’t always work in the other.
- Get visual—add pictures, videos and other content outside of just text to up your rankings. People love images and fly right by long text.
- Grab a custom URL. Once your page has 25 “likes,” you can go to <http://Facebook.com/username> and grab a custom URL (for example: <http://Facebook.com/texasexesdallas>). Again, when naming your Facebook group make sure to include the name of the Chapter and the Texas Exes.
- Use “tagging” to your advantage. If you are writing something about a member, other chapter or local business, tag them in your post by putting “@” before their name (Facebook should auto-populate). This will post your post to that person or business’s wall and increase impressions for your page.
- When choosing Pages vs Groups, it really comes down the goal of the Facebook presence. Pages are better fits if the goal of the presence is to be marketing-focused (focused on growth). Groups are great if the goal of the presence is to create a community and communication platform.

[LinkedIn]

Many who join Texas Exes do so for the networking opportunities that come along with it and no social media site is more focused on business networking than LinkedIn. If your chapter doesn't have a LinkedIn group established, this can be a great way to connect your members to each other in a more professional environment.

[Misc.]

Social media is constantly evolving and it's important to try to stay as well-versed as you can with the latest trends and best practices. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you get more active within social media:

- **Here comes Google.** Expect to hear a lot about Google + during this panel discussion next year. The recently launched social network is growing rapidly (more than 25 million users in two months) and will become a bigger and bigger part of our online life. Check it out if you get a chance: www.plus.google.com.
- **Online brand audit.** Ever searched "Texas Exes Denver" or "Texas Exes Tyler" on Google? If not, type in your chapter's name on Google and as you review the results, think about a potential member doing the same search and ask yourself "how easy are we making it to connect with us online?" If you don't dominate page one, the tips in this sheet will help.
- **Video?** Video is as easy as breaking out an iPhone during a chapter event, so don't underestimate how effective great video (coupled with a bit of editing) can be in raising your chapter's profile.

[SUMMARY]

Our intention in providing this social media overview is not to add stress or pile work on your plate, in fact, our motivation is to make your chapter more efficient and more effective in communicating with members. A solid social media presence is a great way to drive attendance, membership and awareness. Need help? We're here to help you—just contact Sally Bage at Bage@alumni.utexas.edu.