

The Chairman's 2010 Social Media Strategy

Background

In April 2009, the Chairman's Public Affairs office launched itself into the social media world with the creation of a twitter account for Admiral Mullen. The focus over the past eleven months centered on creating an online presence that: expanded the Chairman's audience; made current public affairs products more relevant; increased awareness about events involving the Chairman; and improved traffic to the official Joint Staff website (www.jcs.mil).

With the internet being the primary source of information for individuals born after 1987, social media is quickly becoming mainstream media. Facebook is now the second most popular website in the United States behind Google. In January alone, Facebook attracted 134 million unique visitors and Twitter another 23.5 million. People are increasingly turning to these sites as their primary source of news and for sharing information with others. This follows the larger trend of demanding content be pushed to the user rather than users seeking it out on a website. The numbers alone demonstrate the necessity of engaging on social media platforms. With this in mind, the chart below depicts the Chairman's current internet footprint:

Site	Launch Date	Current use	FEB 2010 Stats
Joint Staff Website www.jcs.mil	Apr 2009 (new look Jan 2010)	Official online presence. Contains AFPS stories, speech & interview transcripts, quotes by topic, Flickr photo box, videos, and general information about the Joint Staff.	40 – 55,000 Page views/day
Twitter Twitter.com/thejointstaff	Apr 2009	Send 140 character messages from Adm. Mullen to followers about his and world events. Pictures and links to other SM sites are attached. Not interactive with followers.	16,000+ Followers
Facebook Facebook.com/admiralmikemullen	Jul 2009	Post stories, pictures, transcripts, and videos of the CJCS at different events and functions. Fans comment on each post, but the CJCS does not answer questions or respond.	8,600+ Fans
YouTube Tinyurl.com/p1vrxf	Jul 2009	Chairman's Channel is a video category in the Pentagon Channel YouTube Page. It contains videos of the CJCS & viewer comments.	1,300+ views/month
iTunes	Jul 2009	Downloadable versions of the Chairman's Podcast in Audio & Video format.	16,900+ downloads/month
Flickr Flickr.com/photos/thejointstaff	Sep 2009	Photo sharing page that displays all the photos of the CJCS taken by his official photographer at events and functions.	31,000+ picture views/month
Chairman's Corner Blog Dodlive.mil	Nov 2009	Blog hosted on DoDLive as a separate category for the CJCS. Opening statements, letters to the services, and speeches are repurposed as blog entries. Comments on each entry are not answered at this time.	35,000+ page views/day

Currently, these social media sites are used primarily to replicate content on the Joint Staff website, official releases, and Pentagon Channel videos. The content posts

almost exclusively after the event concludes and does not lead the discussion going into it. While great effort is made to repurpose existing products and Joint Staff processes into content for the social media sites, it is a fairly stove-piped operation. Overall, the Chairman uses his social media sites to transmit information and gather the resulting commentary to provide a snapshot or anecdote on the effectiveness of the message as well as track trending issues or public opinion.

The lack of official engagement on the Chairman's sites limits their effectiveness and ultimately defeats the purpose of the medium. Two main issues have prevented him thus far from engaging in the conversation occurring on his sites. The first is how to interact without impersonating the Chairman online, which will destroy the credibility of the sites and the authentic nature of his posts. The second is the investment in manpower and time necessary to deal with the volume of comments, inquires, and questions that are posted to the sites. While both represent unique challenges of a public figure on social media, they are not insurmountable.

Goals for the next six to 12 Months

Having looked at how the Chairman got to this point and identified some of the shortcomings of his existing social media efforts, the following four goals will guide our efforts over the next six to 12 months.

1. **ENGAGE** – Begin engaging in interactive conversations with our followers and post more personalized content about the Chairman.
2. **ALIGN** – Align the content creation process for social media with the Chairman's Top 3 Priorities, assimilate social media content creation into existing Joint Staff processes and products, and involve the entire public affairs shop, speech writers, editors, CAG, and Aides.
3. **DRIVE** – Use social media content to get in front of events, trips, and testimony to lead the discussion and focus questions.
4. **EXPAND** – Continue to grow the Chairman's online audience and identify new social media platforms to engage from.

Strategy for Achieving Social Media Goals

Now that the Chairman's social media footprint is established with a significant audience, efforts need to shift towards utilizing these assets more effectively. Achieving these stated goals requires a mindset change in the Joint Staff to begin treating social media as main stream media and public inquiries. It will also require altering some legacy products for online publication and distribution.

ENGAGE

The two sites that currently demand some level of two-way dialogue are Facebook and the Chairman's Corner blog. While not adhering completely to our audience's expectation, Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) can answer questions while still preserving the authenticity of the sites. This does not apply to Twitter since Adm. Mullen himself tweets and the conversations occur too quickly to staff answers.

To start, the Director of Social Media and the Outreach staff will create professional Facebook profiles (Rick at the Joint Staff) that identifies them as representatives of the Chairman. The Director of Social Media will sort through the comments, questions, and queries daily and distribute them to either Outreach or create a Chairman's Active Response Tracker (CART) to pass on to the Action Control Branch of SJS for a formal answer. Answers will post on the Chairman's page under the staff members professional profile or as the Chairman's profile if it was staffed through the CART process. Likewise, Defense Media Activity (DMA) will post blog responses.

To reduce the number of queries, PA will build a Frequently Asked Questions page on JCS.mil to quickly refer queries of the same topic. We should also explore beginning "Facebook Chats" where we post a topic like DADT and designate a PAO or subject matter expert to answer questions for an hour on the site with Fans. The feasibility of these chats will ultimately depend on the subject and manpower restraints.

While we begin this two-way conversation on our sites, we must do a better job of mixing in personalized content. The Chairman's goal should be to send two Tweets a month about books he is reading, leisure activity on the weekend, or some other non-work related topic. We also must develop a video capability for trips to start filming short behind the scenes clips, allowing the public to virtually embed with the Chairman. These clips could then be used to conduct outreach events with schools and organizations that would send questions over the social media platforms at the conclusion of the event or trip.

Engage Objectives for September 2010
1. Create professional Facebook profiles for OCJCS PA Outreach and Operations.
2. Develop formal response procedures with Action Control Branch of SJS.
3. Incorporate formal Social Media queries into the existing CART system.
4. Post responses to comments and queries on Facebook and the Chairman's Corner.
5. Build a Frequently Asked Questions page on JCS.mil.
6. Initiate "Facebook Chats" with a PAO on Adm. Mullen's Facebook page.
7. Send two personal tweets a month.
8. Develop a video capability for trips and events.
9. Develop video outreach events that allow schools to Virtually Embed with the CJCS.
10. Modernize the Podcast (New graphic, music, TV on set, questions from SM sites).

ALIGN

Integrating social media into existing trip and event planning processes is vital to ensuring these sites are aligned with the Chairman's Top 3 priorities. Determining what effect public appearances, speaking engagements, and trips should have on our internet audience will drive the type of content we need to generate before, during, and after it occurs. To this end, social media will need to be incorporated into Chairman's Action Group (CAG), Speech Writer, Public Affairs (PA), and the Front Office planning processes and coordination procedures.

This alignment will also ensure we incorporate proposed tweets, blogs, and other content into pre-event products, policy rollouts, and speech preparation. Including these items in the prep also allows the Chairman to see them prior to posting to the web.

As the internet becomes the primary source of information and public communication, we should begin moving some of our legacy products online. We must begin writing and publishing our products with embedded links to other content, pictures, and videos to meet the expectations of our online audience (think iPad and Kindle friendly). Birthday letters for the Services is an example of a product that could be posted exclusively as a blog entry and shared with the services via social media and websites instead of an e-mailed PDF file. This would ensure quicker and larger distribution of the product as well as creating links between the Joint Staff and the Services web presences. Similarly, there are several other legacy products distributed via email and hardcopy that could migrate to the blog and distribute through our new web architecture.

Align Objectives for September 2010
1. Incorporate social media into Chairman's Travel planning process and meetings with CAG, PA, Aides, Speech Writers, and the Front Office.
2. Conduct PA trip coordination meetings 10 to 14 days prior to the event or departure.
3. Transition service birthday letters and other "pronouncements" to blog posts.
4. Develop an online distribution network with the services and other stakeholders.
5. Identify legacy letters, emails, and products to become blog posts (or online only).

DRIVE

Aligning the social media structure with existing Joint Staff event preparation will allow the Chairman to start driving the online conversation. Posting tweets, blogs, and podcasts can shape the discussion and highlight key points prior to speeches, events, testimony, and press availabilities. We can leverage our online audience to focus discussions and establish a framework for important topics. An example of this is posting a blog entry on “Integrity” prior to the DADT hearings. Another is the Chairman tweeting that he is hoping for a good discussion on Afghanistan at a think-tank speech, etc. These online discussions will also allow the PA staff to refine talking points and Response to Query (RTQ) prior to the event.

Drive Objectives for September 2010
1. Identify pre- and post- social media content requirements during planning meetings.
2. Provide proposed tweets on Speech Writer Scene Setter cards.
3. Provide social media content requirements on Scene Setter cards (video after, article, pictures, tweet with picture, blog prior, Op-ed prior, tweet question prior, etc.)
4. Submit pre- and/or post- blog drafts with major speeches.

EXPAND

Continuing to expand our online audience and increasing awareness about the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs should remain a primary focus of our efforts. Based on our growth rates since July 2009, the following are goals for the next six months:

Site	Goal for September 2010 Stats
Joint Staff Website	75,000 Page views/day
Twitter	25,000 Followers
Facebook	13,000 Fans
YouTube	2,000 views/month
iTunes	25,000 downloads/month
Flickr	50,000 picture views/month
Chairman's Corner Blog	45,000 page views/day

Achieving these goals will require continued promotion of the sites and posting of "viral" or "newsworthy" content. It will also require the Chairman to mention his online presence during All Hands Calls and incorporate them into appropriate speeches. Our PA Outreach section, Speech Writers, and Aides will also need to send these sites to units, organizations, and media when conducting initial planning and coordination. These emails should identify the sites as the official source for information about the Chairman and request their distribution to audiences prior to the event.

Embedding "share" buttons on all stories, transcripts, and videos posted to JCS.mil will also fuel our expansion by facilitating the spread of our content on other social media platforms. We must also develop a mobile version of JCS.mil so that it will display properly on mobile devices like Blackberry and the iPhone. Finally, to maintain our current position as a leader in this field, the social media director will identify new or emerging platforms to create a presence for the Chairman and the Joint Staff.

Expand Objectives for September 2010
1. CJCS mention online presence during All Hands Calls and appropriate events.
2. Provide social media business cards at all events as a source of more information.
3. Aides, Speech Writers, and PA send emails explaining CJCS online presence (bio, pictures, etc.) during coordination for events and request distribution to the audience.
4. Incorporate JCS.mil and social media into Joint Staff Officer initial training course.
5. Advertise JCS.mil on Info Link Kiosks and flat screen picture displays in the Pentagon.
6. Embed "share" button on all stories, transcripts, and videos on JCS.mil.
7. Develop mobile compatible version of JCS.mil.
8. Identify new or emerging online platforms for development.

The Social Media and Online Strategy for 2010 is effective March 23, 2010. The stated Objectives will be included on the monthly Social Media Statistics in order to monitor progress over the next six months. The Chairman's Public Affairs Office will conduct a review of the four goals and adjust the corresponding objectives in September 2010.

The point of contact for this strategy document is MAJ Kevin Bradley, OCJCS PA at 703.697.4272.



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Chairman's Social Media

Joint Staff Website

Admiral Mullen on Facebook

Admiral Mullen on Twitter

Chairman's YouTube Channel

Joint Staff Flickr Photostream

Chairman's Corner Blog

www.jcs.mil

www.facebook.com/admiralmikemullen

www.twitter.com/thejointstaff

www.tinyurl.com/p1vrx

www.flickr.com/photos/thejointstaff

www.dodlive.mil/index.php/category/chairmans-corner/