

SPECIFICS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND CIVIL SERVANTS**Larisa Borisovna Kostrovets¹,
Evgeniya Igorevna Fomenko²**

¹Donetsk Institute of Management – branch of the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education «Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration», Russian Federation, Donetsk People's Republic, 283015, Donetsk, 163-a Chelyuskintsev str., e-mail: kostrovets-lb@ranepa.ru, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0170-9468>

²Donetsk Institute of Management – branch of the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education «Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration», Russian Federation, Donetsk People's Republic, 283015, Donetsk, 163-a Chelyuskintsev str., e-mail: fomenko-ei@ranepa.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8913-0861>

Abstract. In the contemporary global context, social media have evolved beyond mere venues for personal communication, transforming into a potent instrument for institutional communication and stakeholder engagement. This article explores the unique aspects of social media use by government agencies and their employees. It analyzes how digital platforms are reshaping traditional modalities of interaction between governance and the public, thereby unlocking new opportunities to enhance transparency, expediency, and information accessibility. The study examines both the advantages and the inherent challenges associated with the presence of state structures in the online sphere. Particular emphasis is placed on matters concerning the formation of a positive institutional image, the prompt response to citizen inquiries, and the effective dissemination of socially significant information. Such risks as the potential for disinformation, the need to comply with ethical standards and legal restrictions, and information security issues are also explored. The article offers practical recommendations for developing a coherent strategy for government agency presence on social networks, emphasizing the critical need to tailor content to the specific characteristics of each platform and its designated target audience. The investigation of this aspect is paramount for augmenting the efficacy of public administration and fortifying citizen confidence in governing institutions amidst contemporary challenges.

Keywords: social media, government agencies, civil servants, citizen engagement, online platforms, effective communications.

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СПЕЦИФИКА ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ В ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ОРГАНОВ И ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ СЛУЖАЩИХ

Лариса Борисовна Костровец¹,
Евгения Игоревна Фоменко²

¹Донецкий институт управления – филиал федерального государственного бюджетного образовательного учреждения высшего образования «Российская академия народного хозяйства и государственной службы при Президенте Российской Федерации», Российская Федерация, Донецкая Народная Республика, 283015, г.о. Донецк, г. Донецк, ул. Челюскинцев, 163-а, e-mail: kostrovets-lb@ranepa.ru, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0170-9468>

²Донецкий институт управления – филиал федерального государственного бюджетного образовательного учреждения высшего образования «Российская академия народного хозяйства и государственной службы при Президенте Российской Федерации», Российская Федерация, Донецкая Народная Республика, 283015, г.о. Донецк, г. Донецк, ул. Челюскинцев, 163-а, e-mail: fomenko-ei@ranepa.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8913-0861>

Аннотация. В современном мире социальные сети перестали быть просто площадкой для личного общения, превратившись в мощный инструмент коммуникации и взаимодействия. Данная статья посвящена исследованию уникальных особенностей применения социальных сетей в работе государственных органов и их сотрудников. В ней проводится анализ того, как цифровые платформы трансформируют традиционные методы взаимодействия власти и общества, открывая новые возможности для повышения прозрачности, оперативности и доступности информации. В работе рассматриваются как преимущества, так и вызовы, связанные с присутствием государственных структур в онлайн-пространстве. Особое внимание уделяется вопросам формирования позитивного имиджа, оперативного реагирования на запросы граждан, а также эффективного распространения социально значимой информации. Статья предлагает практические рекомендации по выстраиванию грамотной стратегии присутствия государственных органов в социальных сетях, подчёркивая важность адаптации контента к специфике каждой платформы и целевой аудитории. Изучение данного аспекта является ключевым для повышения эффективности государственного управления и укрепления доверия граждан к институтам власти в условиях современных вызовов.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, государственные органы, государственные служащие, взаимодействие с гражданами, онлайн-платформы, эффективные коммуникации.

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Introduction

Currently, information technologies are rapidly advancing, accompanied by the active digitalization of public processes. This development directly impacts the relevance of the role of social media in the activities of government agencies and civil servants [17, p. 84]. However, not all representatives of state structures perceive social networks as an effective instrument for public

interaction. Furthermore, not all entities implement contemporary approaches or methodologies on online platforms, or they experience difficulties in content formulation, which ultimately affects the quality of published information and, consequently, leads to a low level of public trust in the activities of government agencies.

Research objective

To determine the specifics of the

use of social media by government agencies and civil servants aimed at enhancing the efficiency of their communication with citizens, shaping public opinion, and ensuring prompt responses to the current needs of society.

Research methodology

The research employed a combination of theoretical methods (systematization, analysis, and synthesis) and empirical methods (comparison, observation, and content analysis).

Results and discussion

Currently, the interaction between government agencies and their employees with citizens via social networks is regulated by legislation. The primary regulatory instruments are represented by the following documents:

Federal Law No. 8-FZ dated February 9, 2009, "On Ensuring Access to Information about Activities of Government Bodies and Local Authorities", mandates that government agencies establish and maintain official pages on social networks for the purpose of disseminating information regarding their operations [14].

Federal Law No. 79-FZ dated July 27, 2004 (as amended on September 29, 2025), "On the State Civil Service of the Russian Federation", specifically Article 20.2, obligates civil servants to submit information regarding the placement of data on the "Internet" information and telecommunication network [12]. Pursuant to this article, citizens applying for a civil service position are required to report all social network accounts active within the three calendar years preceding their application date. Furthermore, currently employed civil servants must submit annual reports detailing their internet activity, except in instances where publicly accessible information was posted in the execution of their official duties.

Federal Law No. 59-FZ dated May 2, 2006, "On the Procedure for Considering Citizens' Appeals in the Russian Federation" [13], stipulates the methods for directing citizens' appeals, as well as the requirements imposed on their content.

Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2560 dated December 31, 2022 [16], approves the regulations governing the posting of information by state bodies on their official pages, the process for accessing this information, and user interaction protocols.

Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2523-r dated September 2, 2022 [15], is related to the obligation of government agencies, local government authorities, subordinate organizations and courts to maintain official accounts on social networks. According to this document, starting from December 1, 2022, government agencies were required to create and manage official pages on social media platforms "VKontakte" and "Odnoklassniki". This requirement was introduced to implement amendments to the Federal Law "On Ensuring Access to Information about Activities of Government Bodies and Local Authorities" [14]. The document aims at providing citizens with access to complete and reliable information about the activities of government authorities.

It is important to note that the use of social media by government agencies and civil servants has a predominantly positive orientation. For example, social networks make it possible to implement the principles of transparency and openness through informing the public about decisions made, plans, and results of activities in an accessible and convenient form [1, p. 200]. Online platforms are focused on receiving feedback in the form of reviews, suggestions, and comments from citizens, which provides an opportunity to take into account their

needs and expectations. Social media contribute to the rapid identification and subsequent resolution of difficulties and problems faced by the population. Such interaction between citizens and representatives of federal and municipal services is an effective tool for engaging residents in expressing active civic positions and initiating public discussions. In addition, active maintenance of social networks and transparent reflection of the activities of public authorities and officials directly affects the level of trust towards them.

However, notwithstanding the objectively positive aspects associated with the management of social networks by government agencies and civil servants, there exists a constellation of challenges stemming from the specific operational nature of state institutions:

1. Personnel allocation deficit: Typically, the organizational structure lacks a dedicated position for fulfilling this function. This deficit results in a high workload intensity for the employee who is additionally tasked with managing the official page (or channel) of the organization/institution [20, p. 68].

2. Inadequate incentive structure: There is a low level of formal remuneration or reward (if any is provided) relative to the time, effort, and energy expended by the employee.

3. Deficiency in content creation expertise: State budgetary organizations and officials frequently encounter challenges related to the insufficiency of specialized skills among SMM personnel required for producing high-quality content and effectively developing the institutional brand. A common difficulty lies in the appropriate framing of informational topics (news items). Despite the abundance of such topics inherent to government agencies, their transformation into finalized

publications necessitates specific competencies. For instance, the creation of content in formats such as infographics or brief instructional guides, alongside the curation of factual data, demands particular expertise from the specialist [9, p. 988].

4. Elevated accountability in social media management: The allowance of an error or the dissemination of unsuitable material, including photographic or video content, carries the potential to negatively impact the entire organization, its leadership, and/or specific officials.

5. Resource constraints in account maintenance and development: There is a demonstrable lack of allocated resources concerning the funding necessary for the ongoing maintenance and strategic growth of social media accounts.

6. Stringent content regulation and mandated disclosures: There is a necessity to post information regarding the agency's activities and those of subordinate organizations on the official page. This includes, but is not limited to, event announcements, reports on accomplished work, commentary on current issues and challenges, and requisite contact data.

7. Mandatory pre-publication approval and top-down directives: All published material is subject to mandatory clearance by superior management. Furthermore, personnel must adhere to directives issued "from above," even if these directives conflict with the established channel orientation or the interests of the target audience. This often requires integrating unscheduled content into the feed while preserving the core meaning of the message and justifying the communication strategy employed.

8. Imperative for continuous monitoring and tool adaptation: There is a requirement for constant auditing and monitoring to facilitate

the adoption of novel methods and tools for social media management. Simultaneously, this monitoring must ensure the preclusion of prohibited or provocative information posted by subscribers on the official channels of the government body.

9. Instability in public feedback mechanisms: Generally, comments and user reactions are either disabled or severely restricted, which suggests an organizational inability within government structures to respond adequately to criticism. Difficulties in handling citizen appeals arise because a clear operational algorithm for the "Question-Answer-Action" format is absent, and there is a lack of control or filtering mechanisms for duplicate submissions [4, pp. 854-855].

10. Difficulty in performance evaluation: Assessing the effectiveness of implemented initiatives (or disseminated information) is challenging due to the complexity in defining objective and quantifiable metrics.

The enumerated aspects, among others, appear to reflect the inherent specificity and goal orientation required for the effective management of social networks by public servants, rather than constituting independent, intractable problems. Integrating these specific characteristics into the operational practice of government agencies and their personnel will facilitate the advancement of citizen communication, bolster trust in governing institutions, and contribute to the cultivation of a more transparent and open information environment. This approach does not only ensure the efficient conveyance of official information but also permits a responsive reaction to public inquiries and sentiments, thereby establishing the crucial two-way dialogue necessary for modern public administration.

For the effective management of social networks, it is crucial for

government agencies and civil servants to incorporate the development of a strategic framework for the authority's social media presence into their operational practice [2, pp. 29-30]. This process can be delineated into the following key stages:

1. Development of a unified action plan is characterized by the requirement that the strategy must constitute a comprehensive plan oriented toward resolving specific mandates and achieving established objectives.

2. Goal and objective definition focuses on the precise articulation of what is to be accomplished through the organization's presence on social networks.

3. Target audience identification involves establishing a clear understanding of precisely whom the government authority seeks to communicate with, and whose interests the disseminated information is intended to serve.

4. Content plan formulation constitutes the development of a detailed schedule and specification of publications that align with both the audience's interests and the overarching strategic goals [7, pp. 68-69].

In the direct implementation of the outlined strategy, the following actions are mandatory:

considering the experience of "competitors" or analogous institutions/organizations and their content to facilitate the implementation of positive practices and minimize potential negative repercussions;

systematically tracking and regulating the process to ensure prompt responses to comments, as well as to materials or publications containing impermissible content;

analyzing and evaluating key performance indicators (KPIs) that demonstrate the extent of the achieved (partially achieved / unmet)

results.

Furthermore, for the effective management of social networks, government bodies must adhere to specific communication protocols, employing a distinct style and language in their publications:

information must be concise, unambiguous, precise, and objective;

the use of a cordial, simple, and transparent style of publication is encouraged;

short sentences should be employed; complex topics must be segmented across multiple publications;

it is inadvisable to complicate information comprehension (requiring the avoidance of complex terminology and bureaucratic circumlocutions) [8, p. 3].

Attention must also be paid to the regularity of posting, the promptness of responses to citizen comments and messages, and the adaptation of content to the specific nature of each digital platform.

Equally significant is the orientation toward visual content. In this context, this refers to the deployment of both static content (such as images, infographics, and various information cards) and dynamic content (including video clips, video messages ("stories" / "rounds" / "reels", clips), etc.) [11, p. 61]. Furthermore, attention must be paid to interactive formats, such as polls, quizzes, and live broadcasts, which contribute to audience engagement and stimulate active participation in the dialogue [5, p. 76].

It is also essential to ensure format diversity to reach the broadest possible audience and satisfy the varied preferences users have for information consumption. However, the use of existing online trends, various forms and tools of artificial intelligence, and rapidly spreading internet memes must be approached with caution. Such elements hold the potential both to attract an audience

to the official public page and to inflict irreparable harm. It is important to remember that any information published through official channels must undergo rigorous verification for authenticity and legal compliance to preclude the dissemination of disinformation or provocative materials. The competent application of modern digital communication channels requires not only creativity but also a profound understanding of the target audience, its interests and values, as well as the ability to anticipate the potential risks and consequences of every action taken.

The personal image of a public servant remains as important today as it has always been. To highlight their activities, many representatives of state and municipal authorities maintain their own channels on social networks and messengers, primarily in Telegram, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, with Max gaining popularity recently.

A personal image is a fundamental element for creating a positive perception of an official, which is directly linked to his professional activity and position held. The significance of the personal image also manifests itself through its direct impact on citizens' trust in the relevant authority. Key aspects of the personal image are presented below.

1. Inseparable connection with workplace. By highlighting their work performance, achievements, or ongoing projects, a civil servant shapes the organizational image of the institution they represent, thus reinforcing society's confidence in governmental bodies.

2. The image of a civil servant being formed should be easily perceived and understandable for all categories of citizens.

3. Maintenance and distribution of one's image occur through various open-access communication platforms.

4. High demands are placed upon

officials. High expectations from the general public influence the image that officials project.

5. Regular and constructive interaction with citizens is an essential condition for maintaining a positive personal image [3, p. 41-44].

It is important to note that sometimes public servants focus more on presenting their personal image rather than their professional one on their social media pages. The main difference between them lies primarily in their objectives: the professional image aims to create an impression that emphasizes individuality and links a person to a specific organization or field of expertise; whereas the personal image constructs perceptions about an individual within the context of their private relationships.

Thus, the specific features of using social media in the activities of government agencies and public servants at present determine the following recommendations for managing social network accounts:

1. Managing social networks of government agencies and public servants should aim to deliver complete and reliable information about their activities to citizens in clear and accessible ways.

2. It is necessary to search for and select specialists responsible for community management and regular content publication.

3. Systematic efforts should be made regarding content planning creation, timely response to changes in both external and internal environments.

4. The primary goal should be to generate unique content and maximize the spread of messages related to the implementation of projects concerning the activities of a particular government agency or region.

5. In order to reach a wide audience and elicit responses, distinctive

approaches and formats should be found and utilized to establish effective dialogue and maintain feedback loops with citizens, including leveraging available tools such as articles, stories, polls, storylines, text broadcasts, flash mobs, etc.

6. Comments should be systematically moderated (removing spam, inappropriate comments, preventing posts containing prohibited information).

7. Monitoring the activity of similar government agencies' and public servants' social networks should be conducted regularly to gain positive experience and apply it subsequently in practice.

8. Analyzing the effectiveness of monitoring social networks among workers of government agencies by defining key indicators and metrics should be carried out.

9. Up-to-date and useful information should be maintained, accurate and sought-after data should be promptly published during crisis periods.

10. Recommended security measures should be used to protect official accounts against hacking or misuse.

Conclusion

In today's world, the effective presence of government bodies and officials on social networks is crucial for enhancing governance quality and building citizen trust in power structures. A well-thought-out strategy that takes into account both advantages and potential risks will allow full usage of digital platforms to achieve these vital goals. Open dialogue, prompt response to requests, and transparency in decision-making processes communicated through these channels shape a new paradigm of interaction, where feedback becomes an integral part of administrative procedures, and citizens become active participants in shaping their social environment.

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Информация об авторах

Лариса Борисовна Костровец – доктор экономических наук, доцент, директор Донецкого филиала РАНХиГС

Евгения Игоревна Фоменко – кандидат экономических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры теории управления и государственного администрирования

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Information about the authors

Larisa B. Kostrovets – Doctor of Economics, Associate Professor, Director of the Donetsk Branch of RANEPA

Evgeniya I. Fomenko – Candidate of Economics, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Management Theory and Public Administration

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