

# SOCIAL MEDIA: A CRITICAL TOOL FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

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# JAYME PIERCE

- Five-Year Staff Attorney at LOC
- Spent Five Years prior working at the Oregon Department of Justice.
- Loves working with and providing best-practices to our city officials.
- I'm an attorney, but I'm not \*your\* attorney.





# AGENDA

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Warm up

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What's the point?

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Legal considerations

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Public park scenario

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Wildfire scenario

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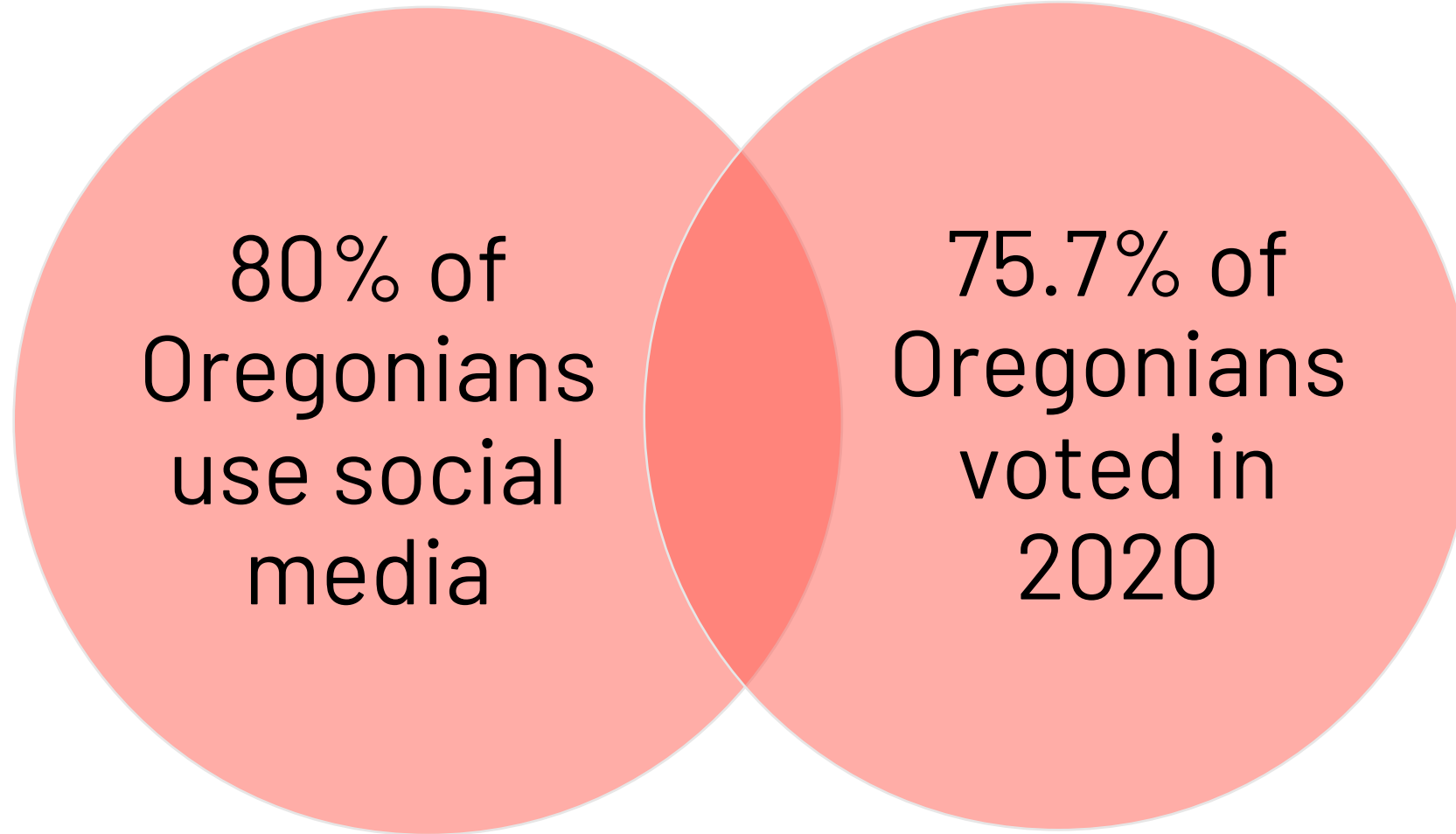
Questions

The image features a solid coral background. On the left and right sides, there are decorative vertical patterns of light-colored chevrons pointing towards the center. The chevrons are arranged in a staggered, overlapping manner, creating a sense of depth and movement.

**WHO ARE YOU?**



# OREGON VOTERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA



80% of  
Oregonians  
use social  
media

75.7% of  
Oregonians  
voted in  
2020

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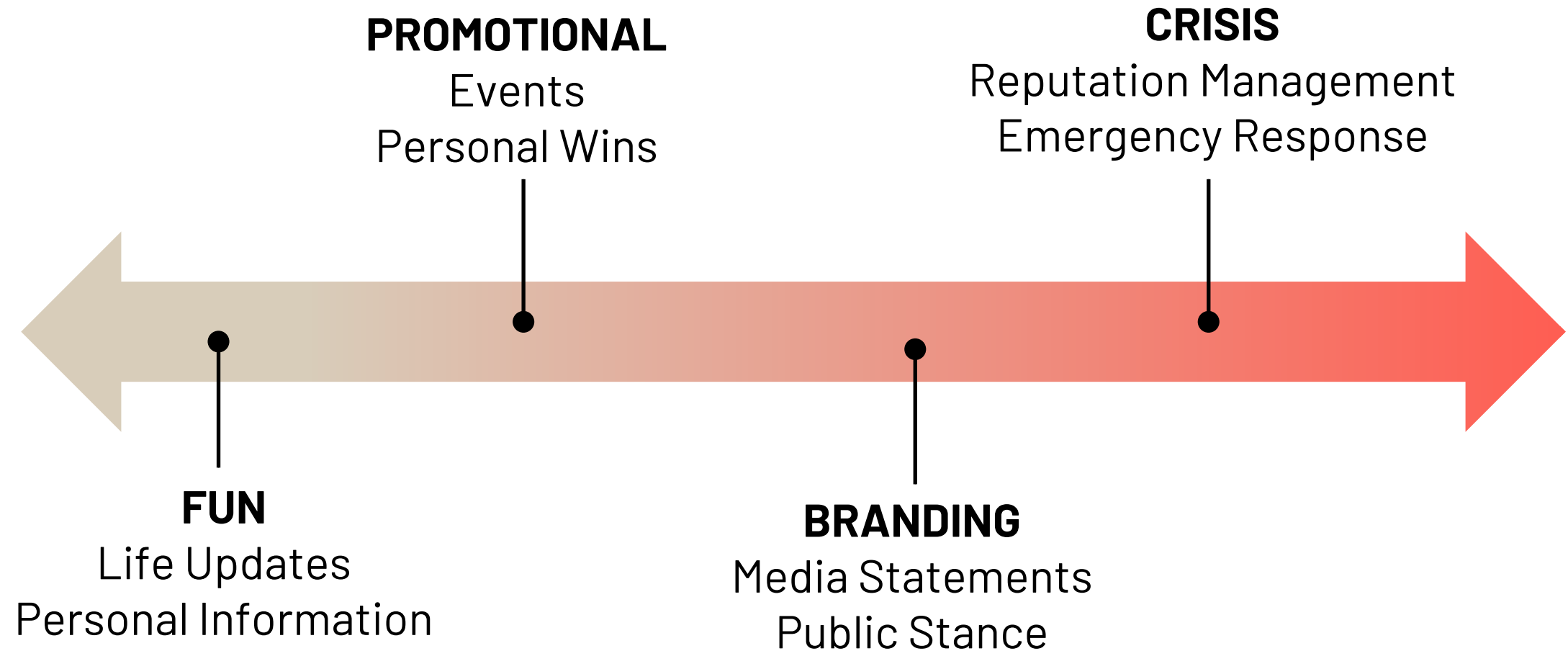
# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

First Amendment  
Public Records  
Public Meetings

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# SOCIAL MEDIA CONTINUUM





# CASE STUDIES



A photograph of a public park with a red overlay. In the foreground, a yellow exercise station with two blue buckets is visible. In the background, there is a blue circular play structure and several people walking around. The text "PUBLIC PARK OPENING" is overlaid in white on the left side.

# PUBLIC PARK OPENING



# AT ITS BEST, SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TOOL FOR PROMOTION.

Your local city is opening a public park that you worked on and would like to call attention to.

**How do you promote the opening and ensure your constituents are informed about the event?**

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- Matches the tone
- Includes an appropriate visual
- Tags partners/organizers
- Shows work + commitment
- Speaks to the larger benefit



- Incorrect information
- Lacks visual
- Confuses constituents
- Focus is on you
- Lacks community buy-in



# IN REALITY, SOCIAL MEDIA IS A NECESSARY TOOL FOR EDUCATION.

A week after the park's opening, local activist groups call attention to the water consumption of the main fountain.

**How do you educate residents and prevent more  
negative attention on the new park?**

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- Acknowledge the planning process
- Point to resources and experts
- Outline a plan to monitor water usage
- Create genuine responses
- Ensure cohesive message



- Respond to every comment
- Go solo
- Commit to anything you can't or won't follow through on
- Block comments



# OFTEN, SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TOOL TO DEMONSTRATE REACTION.

Despite your education efforts, your social media posts begin receiving negative comments and a local TV station is doing a story on the call to remove the fountain.

**How do you react to shifting public perception of the  
park and control the narrative?**

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- Reinforce the community benefit
- Amplify allies
- Create space for digital dialogue
- Showcase actions in response to concerns



- Turn off comments
- Publicly dismiss comments
- Issue a long statement
- Seem unsympathetic



# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Content Moderation
  - Record Management
  - Avoid an Unintended “Public Meeting”
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# WILDFIRE TEARS THROUGH TOWN



# **SOCIAL MEDIA IS A GREAT TOOL TO SPREAD INFORMATION.**

A summer wildfire spread from the mountains and into a local city. Many homes, businesses, schools and more were badly damaged or destroyed because of this natural disaster.

**How do you share key information with those impacted  
and those who want to support?**

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- Quickly share information
- Speak with compassion
- Video updates
- Partner with experts
- Acknowledge evolving information



- No response/presence / information
- Lack of sympathy
- Make commitments you cannot follow through on
- Blame others
- Use this as a political gain



# **SOCIAL MEDIA IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE GO FOR COMFORT.**

After the community has learned about immediate steps, the town is wondering what this means for the future.

**How do you showcase on social media the work that is being done to solve this current situation and avoid it in the future?**

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- Acknowledge the issue
- Restate genuine compassion
- Work with experts and highlight the findings
- Make tangible promises
- Show images and give detail of the work that has been done
- Elevate victim's experiences



- Make the situation about you and/or your platform
- Ignore key stakeholders (ex. first responders)
- Be silent
- Fight with online troll comments



# YOU WILL BE HELD **ACCOUNTABLE** ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Months after the fire, the community goes to social media to reprimand city officials for not doing enough in the past to avoid this situation.

**How do you address these negative comments and ensure it doesn't pickup traction with a larger audience?**

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- Restate good work that is being done
- Employ trusted partners to amplify your positive messages
- Reshare past content with progress updates
- Before and after photos



- Blame others for lack of action
- Engage with negative comments



# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Potential for defamation
  - Absolute privilege may not apply
  - Content moderation
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**Hubbell** 

@Thinkhubbell

 Portland, OR

 [Thinkhubbell.com](https://Thinkhubbell.com)

 Joined October 2003

Hubbell is an agency dedicated to creating progress on the PNW's most complex issues.

## **Pause Before You Post**

Basic social media guidelines for the public sector.

Choose a clear profile image, without others, to ensure you are easily recognizable.

Make your profile name relevant, concise and easy to remember.

Write a succinct bio that includes priority issues, title and description.

# Four Considerations Before Posting

1. Confirm the content is accurate.
2. Double check already scheduled posts or events.
3. Ensure the post aligns with your public stance and promises.
4. Think about the material being tied to your identity forever.

## Remember to Connect with:



Reporters



Community  
Leaders



City  
Departments



Elected  
Leaders



QUESTIONS?

