

BACKGROUND PAPER:

2015 KLV Category D: Digital Presence

Joint Base Lewis-McChord

The Joint Base Lewis-McChord public affairs office manages a core digital presence consisting of the following core platforms:

JBLM Website: www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil

JBLM Facebook: www.facebook.com/JBLewisMcChord

JBLM Twitter: www.twitter.com/jblm_pao

JBLM Community Calendar: www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/calendar.html (Google calendar)

JBLM Interactive Map: www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/map.html (Google map product)

Northwest Guardian website: www.nwguardian.com

These presences are supplemented by complimentary digital presences on various media: Flickr (Northwest Guardian photo archive: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jblmpao/sets/>); Facebook (Northwest Guardian "brand" page: <https://www.facebook.com/NWGEditor>); Vimeo (video hosting: <http://vimeo.com/jblewismcchord>); Google + (local page: <https://plus.google.com/113046371215220137247>); Imgur (short-term image hosting for items displayed on JBLM Community Calendar); and the myMC2 smartphone app (available to download in iTunes for iOS and Google Play for Android devices).

Goals & Objectives:

JBLM PAO strives to maintain a digital presence that supports the following long-term objectives:

- Present an organized, professional public-facing presence to our customers and the general public
- Communicate the installation's commitment to its community - providing information, access to organizational leadership, and demonstrating responsiveness to community concerns
- Enhance dissemination of command messages to audiences while improving overall information and knowledge management processes related to accessing public-facing information maintained by various organizations on the installation.

In FY 2014, JBLM PAO's digital strategy focused on maintaining strong installation presence, supporting command messaging, and improving content and knowledge management across the installation's various digital platforms, after substantially increasing the number of platforms supported in 2013 (when the Community Calendar, Map, and myMC2 smartphone app were

introduced).

Some short-term objectives achieved during this period include:

- Cosmetic updates to look & feel of JBLM PAO-managed pages of www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil, including new graphics and responsive (non-fixed width) page design.
- Implemented GSA-developed Digital Analytics Program (Google Analytics, modified for use by federal agencies) and “USA Search” tools.
- Added Community Calendar and social media “tabs” to www.facebook.com/JBLewisMcChord
- Updated all digital presences with command-directed changes to installation “logo” (new logo reads: Service Members Defending America” and removes obsolete “Land Warrior” gear from uniform depicted in the original version).
- Northwest Guardian newspaper website was re-branded with an updated logo, banner, and templates to compliment corresponding updates to the print edition. The new site also includes a link to the new JBLM Community Calendar.
- During FY 2014, the installation posted 1843 individual items to Facebook. Typical posts average 1500 to 5,500 views.

Audiences & Command Messaging:

JBLM PAO’s priorities for its digital presences continue to be supporting command information efforts, community engagement, and media outreach. Different platforms address different audience segments – among the core platforms:

- The JBLM Website is an all-purpose “home page” providing a portal to information maintained by a diverse group of resident and tenant units and agencies, and affiliated organizations on Joint Base Lewis-McChord.
- The JBLM Facebook page is predominately intended to enhance dissemination of command information products while improving communication between leadership and stakeholders among our internal audiences.
- The JBLM Twitter feed serves predominately as an external communications tool for media engagement and community outreach.

Overarching themes include JBLM as an innovative organization led by professionals who are forward-thinking and responsive to its stakeholders and customers, offering a unique set of training and support capabilities to the military services, while promoting a joint-service ethos and culture.

Key themes in 2014 also included highlighting of cost savings and other efficiencies realized by military units and service providers in a difficult fiscal environment; transition services, planning and employer support; and environmental resource conservation / sustainability have been key

themes in JBLM's internal and external messaging throughout FY 2014.

Audience segmentation and targeting:

Facebook:

On Facebook, JBLM PAO information efforts focus on the needs of JBLM's internal audience – enabling access to services and other opportunities on the joint base, particularly those available to all members of the JBLM community, regardless of military service branch or affiliation.

Posts focus on sharing information about upcoming activities and events; communicating existing policies or changes; supporting or documenting military training, operations and overall esprit d' corps; and celebrating individual and team achievements for all personnel and organizations represented on the base.

Members of our internal audience make use of both comments and direct message features to request information they have been unable to locate on other platforms, providing ongoing feedback re: both our communication strategy and product improvements.

Facebook is an invaluable rapid-response tool to counter misinformation and rumors - for example, our March 27, 2014 post advising rumors prompted by an overheard radio message were related to a training event taking place in a computer-based simulation during an emergency management exercise, and there was no real-world "active-shooter" incident.

It also plays an important role in emergency communication to the JBLM Community, such as during the Dec.16, 2013 closure of all southbound lanes on Interstate 5 following a fatal collision and tractor trailer fire at a point a few miles south of most of the installation's access points along the interstate.

Twitter:

Our objectives for Twitter are improve accessibility to installation leaders for members of the public who wish to raise concerns or show support; maintain a "warm" presence for critical communication during emergencies, and demonstrate the true diversity and scope of our community and its involvement in our region to an audience that may have limited familiarity with, or understanding of a large, complex installation community like JBLM during periods of high-profile news coverage.

Because JBLM is a major military installation located in close proximity to a major metropolitan area, the base has traditionally served as a convenient point of entry for military coverage by local networks (using local affiliate content) and West Coast bureaus of national and international news organizations. This has had the effect of magnifying public impact of local news stories – with positive and negative effects.

We have previously been able to use Twitter to successfully counter negative or uninformed narratives among members of the journalism and opinion communities, and we continue to be pro-active in monitoring Twitter for active discussions or media reporting re: the installation or its units.

While overall tone of content and most interactions via our Twitter presence are positive, this

platform is also particularly useful as an early-warning system re: upcoming negative media coverage by alerting JBLM PAO staff to ongoing conversations among journalists, opinion leaders and bloggers. It is also a powerful tool for identifying individual community member concerns and identifying trends.

Twitter is a force-multiplier in efforts to remain engaged with local news media as their presence in this space has expanded, while newsroom staffs and their capacity travel to JBLM to cover training and events on base have decreased over the past 5 years.

Analysis using the Hootsuite link-shortener tool revealed underwhelming results for sharing of command information content (on average, 1-3 clicks per link), so we discontinued use of Twitter for most JBLM CI efforts in FY 2014. We continue to tweet stories and multimedia (primarily photo) content when potential for greater public interest exists. We also share content produced by members of our community and its partners.

JBLM PAO has also improved public perception among local members of our external audience by offering an easily accessible point-of-entry for communicating concerns re: traffic, noise, and other local issues directly to representatives for the installation.

Community Calendar and Map (Google):

While metrics are not generally available for these products, we've received positive feedback and continue to develop these tools as a "go-to" source for frequently requested information about the base.

The calendar and map tools have the potential to improve organizational efficiency across the installation by maintaining and disseminating information by providing distributed information management capabilities.

The map tool is co-managed by JBLM PAO and JBLM DFMWR. The calendar tool imports information already maintained by various Family & MWR divisions and, in one case, a private organization (Lewis Community Spouses Club), which the public affairs office consolidates, then adds items on behalf of other organizations and agencies on base.

Both the map and calendar products are Google social media tools, displayed on the www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil website using embeddable iframes made available by Google for this purpose. JBLM PAO also uses a 3rd-party XML app to host an HTML tab containing an embedded copy of the Community Calendar iframe on its Facebook page.

MyMC2:

Adoption of the USAF-developed myMC2 smartphone app also helps organize and distribute information already being maintained by installation organizations and agencies (by consolidating Facebook RSS data), and provides a useful "hip pocket" reference tool for service members and their families at JBLM.

Emergency communication:

The JBLM Base Operations Center supervisory staff have been entrusted with log-on information to key social media platforms in order to expedite critical information sharing via social media in the event of a widespread emergency, such as a natural disaster.

Social media presences are routinely used by the public affairs office to disseminate traffic and public safety alerts, service interruptions, and significant training activity advisories to internal and external audiences.

JBLM Website:

JBLM PAO operates www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil as a central “portal” to a diverse array of information resources maintained by other organizations on the base – while many pages on the domain are not managed by JBLM PAO directly, PAO provides a core presence that organizes links to the other resources.

JBLM PAO provides page design and content management for the “portal” and links to content managed by other organizations and content managers, while the JBLM NEC provides IT support and maintains the server.

Entering FY 2014, JBLM PAO implemented several mechanisms improving functionality and overall usability of PAO managed pages at www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil.

Basic improvements included a cosmetic overhaul, upgrading the page to a horizontally-responsive layout and better-organizing of site contents listed on “directory” pages.

USASearch:

JBLM PAO implemented GSA’s “USASearch” search bar in PAO-managed page templates, providing an additional capability for users and also providing valuable data to PAO re: key search terms, usage and frequency.

While search results are not hosted on the local domain, PAO is able to access non-identifying user history and behavior data via a web-based account management console. JBLM has also customized the search results tool to include a JBLM pages hosted outside the www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil domain (www.jblmmwr.com; www.mamc.amedd.army.mil; etc.) and customized the results page template to reflect our organizational branding.

JBLM is currently in the process of using Calendar Year 2014 search data to further refine search results by curating a collection of “Best Bets” – a feature within the search tool that allows administrators to highlight selected search results in response to specific search terms (enter “commissary,” “employment,” “shopping,” or “jobs” in the search bar at www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil for some examples of this tool).

Digital Analytics Program:

Prior to FY 2014, server-level website usage data was collected by the NEC but not directly accessible by public affairs office staff.

To collect its own usage data for PAO-managed portions of the installation’s public-facing website, PAO implemented GSA’s Digital Analytics Program, including a unique account ID that is currently used to track user activity on PAO-managed pages.

While this information is currently useful in providing basic data related to page views and user behavior on the main portal, the lack of ability to track user’s behavior as they are referred to

other sites, or other portions of the JBLM website, limits its utility for collecting detailed usage data or performing in--depth user behavior analysis at this time. Efforts encouraging other installation content managers to implement this script (and JBLM account ID) on their pages is ongoing.

PAO is also investigating options for a centralized content management system that would be compatible with local NEC security requirements, including page templates and browser-based design tools that would be configured to integrate the DAP account code automatically.

FY 2014 Campaigns:

Suspicious fires:

In Oct. 2013, we used Facebook and Twitter to share information and advertise an Oct. 2013 on-base town hall re: a series of suspicious fires in installation housing, and to follow up with concerned families 1-on-1, which helped mitigate public safety concerns during the period when the investigation was still underway and before the final results could be shared. We also posted a link to a video recording of the meeting (produced by the JBLM Enterprise Multimedia Center) to enhance public transparency and to make the proceedings available to community members who were unable to attend.

Virtual Town Hall:

In July 2014, we conducted an online community town hall via Facebook that drew 83 active participants (an archive file from that event can be reviewed here: <http://www.facebook.com/events/900470563314997/?ref=94> or here: http://www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/files/townhall_aug2014.pdf). This is the fourth Facebook Virtual Town Hall the base leadership has conducted.

Sustainable JBLM:

Although not produced by the Public Affairs Office, PAO's Facebook platform supported JBLM's Public Works - Environmental Division's Net Zero marketing campaign by serving as the primary vehicle for disseminating a series of environmental awareness videos to the installation's internal audiences.

These videos, featuring the installation commander and deputy commander in comic skits that promote the installation's sustainability goals, substantially increased the command teams visibility in the JBLM community and produced a generally favorable impression of the leaders among members of our internal audience while depictions of teamwork between senior representatives of the Army and Air Force (under JBLM's joint service leadership structure) reinforced overall command messaging re: JBLM's joint service culture.

Straight Talk:

The Northwest Guardian's weekly "Straight Talk" feature capitalizes on an active and outspoken internal audience presence on Facebook to engage this community on topics related to current events, subjects identified as topics of military leadership interest, or to preview upcoming events.

Questions are selected to provoke honest reactions and respectful professional or community dialogue: *“Is the military awards system fair?” “What impact do you anticipate the U.S. military drawdown will have on you?” “What changes would you like to see at DoD Commissaries?”*

Some questions are designed to raise awareness or highlight services: *“What do you think of the new, brick parking lanes along Pendleton Blvd. - have you used them? Why, or why not?”*

Other topics tie-in to ongoing command information campaigns or coverage for the following week: *“Last week, JBLM hosted Military Benefits & Compensation commission public hearings. What concerns you most re: proposed or potential changes to military compensation?” “March is Women’s History Month. Who is the ‘super woman’ in your life – and why?”*

Not all questions relate to hard news or controversial topics. Soft topics included: *“Share some of your favorite holiday traditions,” “What are your spring cleaning plans?”*

Selected responses (and the next week’s question) are published in the print edition of the Northwest Guardian. Not every topic prompts a significant response, but successful questions can produce several dozen of comments and provide valuable insight into our community and feedback about its concerns.

Increasing audience share via marketing and outreach:

The installation’s command information section has noticeably increased its internal audience reach by embarking on an aggressive marketing campaign for both print and digital products. The CI chief presents information about these products at the installation’s monthly Newcomers Briefing. Additional marketing opportunities at high-profile community events are provided by JBLM PAO’s Northwest Guardian “photo booth,” where JBLM’s digital presences are incorporated by tweeting selected photos, and making all photos available for download via Facebook following the event.

Where analytics are available, these outreach efforts appear to be effective. During the fiscal year, the primary external (non-Facebook) referrer to the JBLM Facebook page is Google (5-10 per day) - followed by static links on the JBLM Website and Northwest Guardian websites, which referred an additional 3-4 people per day to the social media site. Shared content within Facebook, and linking posts containing unit stories or photos to those organizational presences, provides further enhances the organic reach of individual posts and overall visibility of this presence.

During FY 2014 the organic audience for the JBLM Facebook page (as measured by page “likes”) increased at a steady pace from 18,576 on Oct. 1, 2013 to 27,438 on Sept. 30, 2014. Benchmark averages for likes, comments and shares increased 100% to 250% during the same period.

Page views for linked content on the Northwest Guardian website at www.nwguardian.com increase substantially when posted on the JBLM Facebook page or featured on the JBLM Website at www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil.