

Standing Strong Against Social Media Posts

Barbara McKerrow
ICMA Conference Presenter

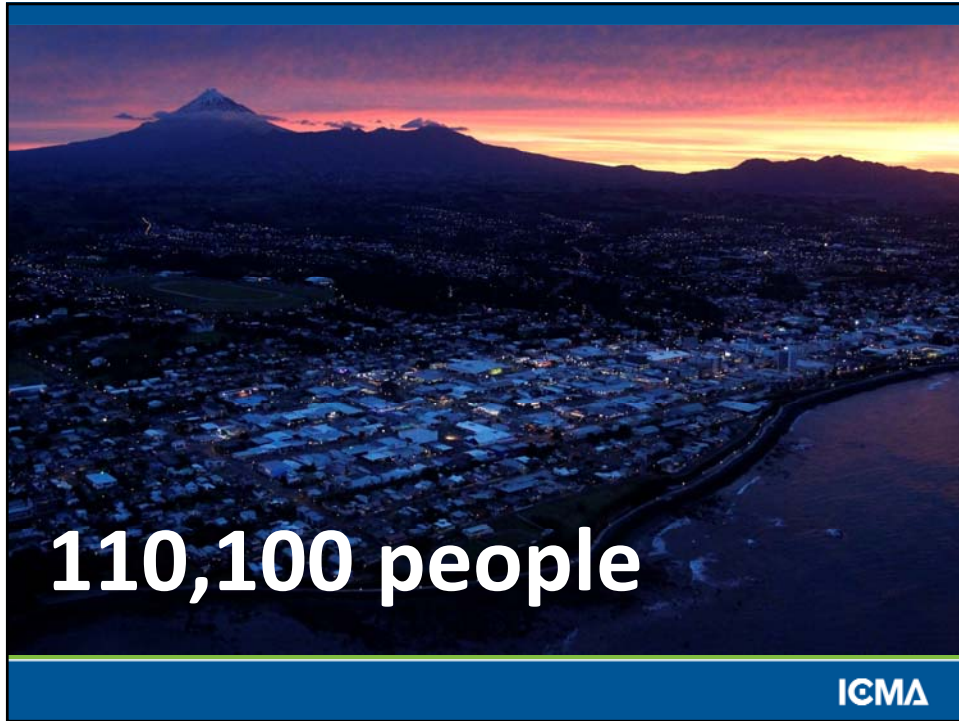


Introduction

- President, New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers 
- Chief Executive New Plymouth District Council
- A New Zealand local government perspective
- Some tips
- Some personal experiences

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14,900 businesses

All of New Zealand's oil and gas production

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**New Zealand's highest GDP
per capita: \$80,000**

TSB Bowl of Brooklands, New Plymouth

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Social Media in New Zealand

- Significant uptake
- 2.5 million Facebook users (56 per cent of the population)
- 2.4 million use YouTube
- 697,000 on LinkedIn
- 368,000 Twitter
- 252,000 Pinterest
- 218,000 Instagram

Our social media stats

- Facebook 26,500 likes across our pages
- Twitter 4,000 followers (council and art gallery pages only)
- YouTube – 30,000 views of our latest video
- We're one of the most social media-active councils in the country

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Our social media philosophy

- To have an established, trusted social media presence and active dialogue with our citizens
- We have a responsibility to post regularly, moderate comments as appropriate, and check regularly for messages that require a response
- We are in a stronger position to manage negative posts through our own active participation

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Our social media tips

- Expect criticism but don't tolerate abuse
- We don't have to be the whipping boys
- Use negativity as an opportunity to inform and bust myths
- Let the social media beast work its magic: the community will often discuss, correct and answer questions on your behalf

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Our social media tips

- Post regularly
- Respond quickly
- Be accurate, fair, honest, professional
- Know when to walk away
- Remember at all times that you are a public servant speaking on behalf of government

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Look after your people

- Care for your social media team that responds to the negativity on the organisation's behalf
- Don't take negativity personally
- Steer threads away from discussions about individual Council staff

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Don't be afraid to come out fighting!



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New Plymouth District Council
September 25, 2013 · 48

Statement on Big Wave Cafe

Big Wave Cafe will not be offered a new licence to trade at East End Reserve.

The company's current licence, which has no right of renewal, expires on Monday 30 September – the end of its three-year term.

In an attempt to reach an agreement that would see Big Wave Cafe continuing to operate from the reserve, NPDC Chief Executive Barbara McKerrow, Councillor Craig McFarlane (Parks portfolio councillor) and Manager Parks Mark Bruhn met with the owner of the cafe, Michael Welsh, yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting it was agreed by all present that Mr Welsh's accountant and NPDC's would meet to review the cafe's financial information and assess what fair rental payments might be if a new licence were to be issued.

Mr Welsh has said that the current rental payment, as set out in the existing licence, is too high. This payment is approximately \$13,000 per year, equating to four per cent plus GST of his declared turnover (approximately \$278,000 excluding GST) from the previous year.

The Council has asked on a number of occasions to see more detailed financial information, in order to properly assess Mr Welsh's request for a reduction in payments, but this has never been forthcoming.

This morning Mr Welsh sent an email advising he had reconsidered the agreement made at yesterday's meeting at the Civic Centre.

"We thought we had reached a positive outcome," says Mrs McKerrow. "We offered him the opportunity to continue trading for the month of October while the accountants sorted out the financial details, with a view to drafting a new licence with agreed rental payments.

"But now he has come back and said he is no longer interested in talking to us. Instead he demands that we agree to his terms for a new agreement without providing any information on which we can consider those terms."

The cafe has a poor history of paying its rent. In April this year outstanding payments were close to \$7,000 and the company was issued with a cancellation notice requiring all outstanding payments by close of business on 23 April 2013. The outstanding amount was received by the Council on 24 April.

Angela Amaru Does this really need to be broadcast over facebook in great detail?
Like · Reply · 7 · September 25, 2013 at 3:23pm

Gordon Burnside Yes it does, because you can bet every two bob candidate is going to be all over it grandstanding. He brings this on himself. Imagine turning up for the meeting with a clueless newbie candidate as support person? I know both Andrew Judd and Shaun Bessek have also personally interceded to try and help him.
Like · 7 · September 25, 2013 at 5:19pm

Louise Godfrey And the fact that Mike brought this into the public arena to start with and is not being open and honest and acting with integrity.
Like · 1 · September 25, 2013 at 6:37pm

Write a reply...

Emily Hayward As much as I enjoyed stopping there for coffee, I think the council have done the right thing here. Here's hoping someone will fill the space left.
Like · Reply · 17 · September 25, 2013 at 3:25pm

Susan Lucas Once again this is a social media and NOT the place for council business.
Like · Reply · 3 · September 25, 2013 at 3:27pm

Kris Vaughan This isn't Council business. It's a statement to inform people as to why the establishment is closing down. Making it very well suited for a social media website.
Like · 6 · September 25, 2013 at 5:40pm

Wendy Wood why NOT????? who made that rule Up...you?
Like · 1 · October 1, 2013 at 5:54pm

Write a reply...

Charlotte Ward Sadly I think it does Angela, as I am sure the cafe will start meaning all over social media that the council has been unfair and I think the council sensibly has just got in first this time around. Such a shame that a great and loved business has been ruined by bad business - pay rent on time, easy
Like · Reply · 22 · September 25, 2013 at 3:30pm

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What do you do in this kind of situation?

Lawyers called in Facebook fallout



Chief executive Barbara McKerrow was called a "piece of skirt" by outspoken councillor.

But the renegade councillor yesterday stood by his Facebook words and said a proposed Code of Conduct change to include social networking sites would not stop him posting what he wanted.

"I can say what I like," he said. "This is a democracy. They can say what they like about me on Facebook, I really don't care. "If they changed the code of conduct I would still do it and they are well aware I would still do it."

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Look after yourself

- Retain a professional distance and dignity in public - do not respond in *any* media
- Retain a sense of humour
- Encourage your Mayor and Council to address the behaviour of their member without embroiling yourself in the situation
- Try not to give your critic a platform
- Stand up for yourself in a professional way - you owe it yourself and your staff

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Achieve positive notoriety

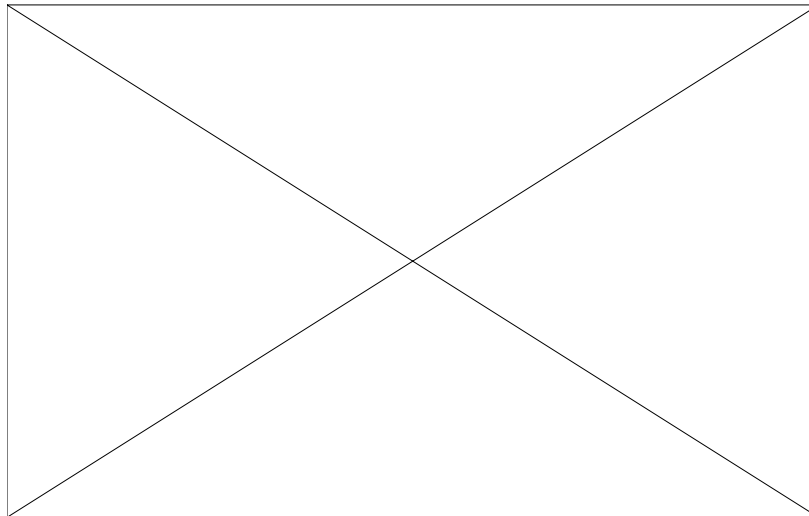
- Social media provides great opportunity to promote the value of local government and the good that we achieve for our communities
- Taking some risks and having fun with a powerfully positive message is possibly the most effective way we can stand strong in social media

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What has the Council ever done for us?

- Our 'viral' YouTube video – 3,500 views
 - enormous for a local government video in NZ.
- Local 'celebrities' starred alongside locals.
- Made completely in-house
 - no awkward questions regarding cost!
- Demonstrates value of local government.
- Humour can help get your message across.

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Questions/Comments?

Additional Information...

