

GENERATION STRATEGIES

Why Republicans are Ideal for Social Media

How Republicans Can Advance Our Cause with Story

As a Millennial small business woman who has worked in state and local politics since 2003 and who currently works in the social media and marketing field, with confidence I can say the following.

Republicans have shied away from mastering social media and the art of launching our narrative into a vision of the future. Without recognition of what our story is, and the knowledge and willingness to learn how to deliver the message using the right machine - we will continue to be behind and our vision lost. We will not obtain the desired outcome if we do not redeem our weaknesses and master the trade.

Republicans have a long way to go to maximize our use of social media. I am not sure yet what is worse, the fact that we do not understand how to use it or do not yet realize how far we are from using it effectively. To the leaders who say *"I am on social media: I have a facebook page with 1000 likes"*, this is simply putting a mailbox outside your front door. It is not engaging, growing, serving or communicating to your audience. To put it bluntly, if this is your metric for defining success then you are using the wrong metrics to truly be relevant in the market.

Republicans are the best party to bring the most good through the tool of social media. We have the most truth on our side and the best hope-filled stories. Our fundamental values make up the best stories that define the American dream: love of life, willingness to work hard to achieve our dreams, redemption and so much more. Our message speaks to the soul and potential of human nature. This type of content is what does well with consumers on social media platforms.

Before we can master social media, we also need to understand the message that needs to be conveyed on that platform. We have yet to master how to tell the conservative story. We need to tell our points in ways that convey emotion, demonstrate passion and reveal authenticity. This must be done in person, via video, to crowds of people, and on social media.

If you choose to embrace this endeavor - mastering the social media and online industry - and conveying our naturally compelling message - consider yourself the explorers of uncharted territory. To those of us who work this arena, we can testify to Republicans and conservatives: We are Americans. We can do better.

We Love People. People Love Social Media

Politics is all about people. Social media is all about people. Republicans are all about people. So why are Republicans not all about social media?

Take a few minutes and review Republican pages of leaders across the nation. Assess how significantly or insignificantly their audience is engaging with their content. If a Republican leader claims to serve a region of 5 million people but only has 10,000 Facebook likes that means they are only potentially reaching less than 1% of their constituents (given Facebook algorithms, far fewer of those people are actually seeing their posts). Sad, right? The good news is that challenges like these can be - and should be - overcome.

People connect through emotion, common interests, shared experience, and authenticity. Consider these aspects for why Republicans will excel at telling our story, both in person and on social media.

- We are passionate and want to bring others along for the ride.
- We are innovative, therefore no problem is too big.
- We are optimistic. We are driven by an internal moral code that is founded on Someone Bigger than our current affairs. Therefore, we have hope.
- We are hard workers, and we love to show our accomplishments. We also love to celebrate one another's victories.
- We are independent and individual. We like to prove our capabilities to peers.
- We love our community: family is our first priority. And taking care of animals with kindness, and being responsible earth-caretakers is natural to us. We do not need government to mandate or require our actions.
- We are generous. Americans will give the shirt off our back if it will help someone. These stories are at our fingertips waiting to be told. (The world needs to hear the truth about the generosity of Republicans - we have been branded as the opposite for too long.)
- We believe in aiming for the best, and therefore competition is good. This is why school choice is a priority for us and why we are such passionate champions for the free market.
- Justice is a priority. We have a conscience and want to make right when we have wronged fellow man. When we are wronged, we want to know the perpetrator is met with fair consequences. We aim for order when it is deficient.

These are just some of the ways to describe us. These type of perspectives shared can and will be energizing and successful on social media!

We have every piece necessary to tell millions of wonderful stories that connect with people - on their terms, with appealing human elements. If we improve in our communications we will recruit and grow our movement by massive measures but also do something bigger. Our efforts will revitalize the ability to understand and explain why we love to be Americans.

Our eyes are not open to the fact that social media is a world that is *always changing*. It is not like reading a good book with a beginning, middle, and an end. Social media is turning into a noun. It is a country, a process, a journey, an art, and an entity. It is daily growing and changing. Therefore, effective users must keep up with the constant advancements.

In major league baseball terms, we currently act as though we are in the game of our lifetime on the Major league field. We are oblivious of the size of the industry and its potential. In truth, Republicans are in our first season of little league both when it comes to telling an applicable, relatable and contagious storytelling and social media delivery. We need to look at the industry itself and ask are we utilizing every means possible to accomplish our mission as a party?

By considering social media as less than urgent, we are bypassing the most significant tool that will give us the easiest, fastest, most reliable, and consistent way to connect with those we not only need, but we want. We need their votes at election time but they are the people that we are serving and they are the reason we chose to do politics in the first place because we want to help them - *people*. Social media is where citizens are at, so why are we not the best of the best using this tool?

Why Story

Every human enjoys story. However, it is no secret that Republicans need to discover the art of conveying our message in this format. Every policy that has to do with Republicanism, or any other party for that matter, has to do with a page in someone's story. For too long, we have communicated these things in bland emotionless delivery. Why give a tantalizing, enthralling call to action in 60 seconds when we can write a complicated white paper? (Please note the sarcasm.)

Republicans are "guilty" of wanting to back up what we say. We want to be fact-filled and to prove what we are delivering, by dumping all sorts of data on our audience. This is a noble intention and our ambition should not change, but our delivery and format must improve. We have let some of our greatest strengths, and most honorable badges, become a weakness. It has prevented our audience from hearing the soul of our message. Our audience has been cheated from truly seeing the beauty and value of who and what we are and what we believe and aim to achieve.

The way we have communicated is as though we are trying to sell a whole body of ideas. In truth, the audience needs to first hear the heart - before they want to hear about the whole structure of our principles and values. The heart, emotion, and passion is where we have missed it for a long time. When emotion is conveyed, and relatable experiences are engaged with by the listener, they will come closer to our cause. Story form allows us to do this.

Why Social Media

Social media is the water cooler of the 21st century. It is where people are communicating to one another. They are hanging out waiting to be communicated with. It is the largest country in the world. With over 2 billion residents it exists as the largest field of potential.

Communication is successful when it is conveyed with optimism, clarity, brevity, genuine kindness and integrity. This can be done in person (and it should be) but also on social media platforms. Social media tools, used well, can help foster a plethora of opportunities for the Republican party to connect using emotions, convey kindness, and provide human elements of relationships.

Democrats have done superb at getting on the airwaves, rattling and prattling lies and twisted truth (not all Democrats, and yes some Republicans too) delivering any message that benefits their end goal. We have let the emotion of the sensational headline and drama of the tantalizing rumor distract us from - at times - the truth. Social media can be used as a tool to spin the liberal's false narrative, or it can be used winsomely to plant, grow, and multiply the Republican message of vision and success and the American dream.

Social media is tangible. Due to our connection to our phones, and our almost constant presence online, effective users can reach every person at the drop of a hat. In a strange way, present and active profiles online give the user the experience of a one-on-one relationship. A newsletter your grandma received in the mail 30 years ago would give her an update from a far off entity that was already a few days old. But having access to someone through our handheld devices (and social media) has the potential for making the experience more real. It is here and now, not "days ago".

Social media allows us to tell our story in real time, using emotion, engaging directly with our audience, showing them visually our experiences, speaking to them in different formats (not just written lengthy updates). It gives them access to us. It gives us easy access to them. It provides a way for us to make our connection tangible, not vague. It connects them directly with the process of everything we do in politics and shows our audience that the political process is not hard to reach, but it is easy to influence.

[\(Click here to read my White Paper on Why Social Media\)](#)

Who Are We - Really?

Perception creates reality. If the public is not connecting with our accurate and truthful story, they are forming their opinions on what they see, feel, and hear from other sources. We have no one to blame but ourselves.

If we do not like the story being told about us, why are we not changing the story being told? We have the ability to deliver a more dynamic and positive story that will revolutionize people's vision for their future. Through the stories we can tell about our efforts, we can catch attention, garner enthusiasm, and stir hope that Americans are craving for (some more than others). And it can be easily served to the consumer - using the brilliant mediums of social media.

Based on our party's track record, the public view of Republicans is probably that we are cranky old men and boring old women. For too long we have been "mad" at the audience for not understanding who we are. But really, we are the fools. We have not spoken in the language our audience understands, shown up where our audience is in a notable way, or offered alternative talking points to the lies of the left. The liberals have passion and drama going for them. They catch our attention and they keep our attention. We however have facts, and truth. Why are we not conveying them in creative, tangible ways that the public can connect with - using passion, excitement, and the thrill of truth? Where is our passion and joy in those facts - on the platform where every citizen resides?

Sadly, Republicans do not communicate much (on social media or otherwise). When we do attempt to convey our message, oftentimes it is easily perceived as negative, harsh, bland, boring and mechanical. We

take too long to say what could be said in a moment. And in the meantime we lose their attention. There are always the exceptions: the riveting speaker who has captured national attention because of their leadership, or their particular story. Yes, there are some of the finest communicators in our ranks. Those who do it well are not enough. As a Republican culture, we have squelched this skill. And I am confident (and optimistic!) that we can do better.

We tend to operate by the rule “speak only when necessary.” In principle that is fine but in implementation it is hurting us. We do not brag on our own accomplishments enough. We do not celebrate one another’s victories. We do not praise individuals enough in our communities. When we write, often we say too much. We need to be speaking consistently with the public - not just when we want something. Good relationships have ongoing and regular dialogue. No one enjoys the friend who only surfaces when they need something. We would be wise to improve in this area.

To really excel through the use of social media, we need to communicate *with* our audience, consistently and frequently and not just at or to them. They need to see, hear, and feel that we are listening. They are people with lives, stories, passions, hurts, joys, and a desire to help preserve our American society just like those of us who have chosen to serve in the political sector. We can be sure that for every one person posting a comment on our social media page, there are many more who do not engage but are watching the interaction (or lack thereof). If we are staying silent and disengaged - that in itself is sending a powerful message.

Our silence is communication (bad communication) - especially on social media. Ignoring their comments, avoiding posting updates, averting sharing our positions on issues, etc we can easily be perceived as believing that we are better than everyone else, that the “underlings” are not smart enough to handle what we know, and that we are just too busy for them. By our absence, we are providing bad customer service, and civil rudeness. I am assuming that these perceptions are far from the truth and that we have a heart of gold who is working beyond all measure to do our best for our community. But if we do not give them something else to believe, they will run with what they know and perceive.

Our Republican Stories - Waiting to be Told

We have so much to be excited about as Republicans! Right now, every American in every corner of the nation should be experiencing our enthusiasm. As we deliver a balanced budget - the nation should see us excited. As we are saving jobs, and creating jobs, we should be rejoicing at every turn. Rule of law judges are being nominated, small towns are having corruption exposed, education discrepancies are being corrected, roads are being addressed, families are saving their homes, and communities are coming together!

The question remains: what is our story? And how do we convey it? I suggest using social media - not in a piddly way but in a way that knocks the ball out of the park. Start with these ideas:

- Republicans and Democrats do get along! Let’s tell those stories, and show those selfies.
- People are being held accountable. Let’s put a blogpost up and share it on all our social media platforms.
- Industry leaders in our camp have cutting edge ideas - let’s tweet some secrets of their success using trending hashtags.

- People's lives are being saved from abortion, or through crucial medical treatment, so let's do short videos on vimeo and YouTube to share the good news
- People are becoming legal citizens - let's SnapChat and tweet this like crazy as we work to become an even BETTER America.
- America is being respected again on the international front - let's post quotes from world leaders on our Facebook pages.
- Our military and police heroes are being restored to the rightful spots of honor: we should we setting a world record for every image, post, video, and Instagram post we share celebrating them.
- New members are coming to the Republican fold: let's hear their stories and why they joined our ranks.
- *We are Republicans. We are Americans. From every corner of the globe, people should feel our Republican pride, sense our excited, be attracted to our hope, and be relieved at our solutions.*

Every point here, and more, can be told in riveting ways using social media tools. Isn't it exhilarating to consider?!

Conclusion

As Republicans, and Americans, are we proud of who we are - or not? Do we believe in our ideas or are we ashamed of them? Do we believe they work, or are they a sham?

We either need to up our game, step up to the plate, and proudly tell our story - hitting our cause out of the ballpark in a way that works, on the platforms (and places) where our audience is, delivering with excellence, where people are already at. Or we need to shut up and go home and stop having pity parties for why people are not buying into our ideas or turning out in droves to support our candidate and cause. If we want to hit it out of the ballpark setting a record for the history books, we have to *master, excel and advance rapidly in the social media and storytelling cause.*

Why not create a plan for success now? At election time, we can be sure we will see the results whether good or bad - based on how we deliver in the departments of communication and social media. Let's hire the best of the best, make room in our budgets, identify the pest pieces of our narrative, and get every member of our party equipped, and fully operational in the art of communication and use of social media.

To continue on the trajectory we are on, we will fall short on maximizing our potential of growing (and restoring) an American Republican movement and culture. But to do things with excellence - both in telling our story as Republicans, and on platforms that are relevant to today's culture - we will change the world.

Amy Hawkins is the owner of Generation Strategies. As a conservative Millennial, small business woman, she is passionate about assisting Americans in using social media to better tell their story that will create change for a better America. © 2017 Generation Strategies | Jackson, Michigan | www.generationstrategies.com