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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Handwritten signatures in blue ink, including a signature above a circular stamp containing the initials 'DGO'.

COMPARING GOALS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Objective

This comprehensive strategy aims to enhance the Cape Coral Police Department's engagement with the community and improve internal communications. It focuses on leveraging social media to build trust and transparency externally, while internally fostering a more informed and cohesive department.

The strategy has been met by strengthening community engagement through social media and improving internal communication. Social media fosters trust and transparency with the public by providing regular updates and direct interaction. Internally, enhanced communication tools and practices have created a more cohesive and informed department, improving overall effectiveness and public perception.

Goals

External Communication Goals:

- **Build Trust with the Community:** Through authentic storytelling and highlighting the human aspect of policing.
 - **Our use of Body Worn Camera footage accelerates transparency by providing a first-person perspective of police interactions, allowing the public to see events as they unfold. This firsthand view helps build trust by offering an unfiltered account of actions and decisions, reinforcing accountability and fostering a clearer understanding of law enforcement activities. The PAO uses Body Worn Camera to highlight human, positive moments, as well as important events, crimes, and tactics. This also helps us give our followers a better understanding of officer safety measures.**
- **Provide Transparency:** By sharing insights into department operations and decision-making processes.
 - **Our podcasts have been a key tool for promoting transparency and sharing department processes. Multiple episodes feature the Chief discussing current strategies, future plans, and the decision-making behind them. For example, the first episode of the Cape CopCast addressed traffic concerns, enforcement efforts, and plans for addressing ongoing challenges. Our weekly "Chief's Chat" explains more topical issues and strategies.**
- **Increase Engagement:** Using interactive and diverse content across multiple social media platforms.
 - **Our police department has utilized diverse content on social media to boost engagement by tailoring posts to appeal to a variety of audiences. The PAO shares public safety tips and community events, highlights officer achievements, provides real-time updates during**

emergencies, and uses humor or relatable content to connect on a personal level. By varying the type and tone of posts, we've created a dynamic online presence that encourages interaction, builds trust, and fosters stronger relationships with the community.

- **Strive to be Ahead:** The PAO team will publish on a daily basis, when feasible, content that informs and educates the public on the department's crime prevention efforts, community outreach programs, and police matters of concerns to the public.
 - **Our basic statistics show that we were able to successfully adhere to a daily publishing schedule by prioritizing relevant topics with current department events, ensuring timely dissemination of information for both the media and social media. When current events were not feasible, the PAO team was able to compensate with pre-scheduled content or evergreen content.**
- **Media Relations:** Coordinate with media outlets regularly to maintain a positive relationship and share important updates. The media can help to amplify our message to a broader audience that the Public Affairs Office may be unable to reach through traditional social media outlets.
 - **Beat the Media:** Take a proactive approach to informing our community, rather than waiting for the media to ask us about a particular incident or situation. We are our own "news agency."
 - **The PAO team continued to have productive relationships with our legacy media outlets that included consistent communication. We also took our efforts to the next level by intentionally providing visual mediums to the outlets to improve the chances of our story being taken on by reporters.**
 - **Additionally, the PAO team used these visual mediums more than ever before to enhance our social media presence and post our press releases directly to Facebook, etc. for the community to see directly from the source. This encourages more of a following to our page because the community knows the information will be correct directly from the source.**

Internal Communication Goals:

- **Improve Information Flow:** Ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information from the Chief's office to all department members.
 - **The internal department newsletter involved the Chief's Office as well as all department heads. The newsletter consolidates all upcoming and important information that is disseminated directly to all department members. The internal newsletter was completed and on-time each month.**
- **Gain Buy-In on Department Initiatives:** Foster a culture of involvement and feedback, ensuring that all staff are aligned with department goals and initiatives.
 - **By fostering trust with all different bureaus and department members, the PAO team was able to effectively represent the department with buy-in from all sides. Without having to ask, the PAO team was sent key information, event details, and photos from every day occurrences. The PAO team also recently asked for volunteers for upcoming projects and had a lot of responses.**
- **Encourage Officers and Professional Staff to be Involved:** Send in photos, communicate positive interactions with the community, and participate in projects the PAO Team puts together to give the community an inside look.

- By attaining department buy-in, the photos/event invitations sent to the PAO team allowed for community buy-in/“coins in the good will bank.”
- Specifically, the PAO team held a Q&A ride-along with Officer Stempel to give the public some insight as to what it’s like to be a Patrol Officer. This could be more frequent, as it seemed popular and engaging. It meets the direction of giving the community an inside look and gives us the opportunity to highlight more officers.

Key Strategies

1. Tailored Content Across Platforms: Utilizing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn to reach different segments of the community and department.
 - **Facebook:** With the Facebook side of social media, we focused on community-building and information sharing. We shared updates on community events, arrests, and general storytelling through engaging posts, photos, and videos. Posts were designed to encourage interaction through comments and shares, targeting a broad audience including families and local community members. We also posted informational/educational flyers to reach a broader audience.
 - **Twitter/X:** X should focus on real-time updates and concise communication. The PAO team did not push out as much engaging material on X at the beginning of the year. Once we recognized that X was once again picking up speed in popularity, we began posting more, to include posting time-sensitive information on traffic/road closures and missing endangered alerts. Our goal is to utilize this platform more and continue to grow a following using concise content.
 - **Instagram:** Our Instagram content focuses on visual storytelling and appeals more to youthful engagement. We maintained visually appealing content, including behind-the-scenes photos and infographics. We excelled in promoting reels highlighting officers, programs, and initiatives. Stories and interactive features, such as Q&A’s, were effective. One of the biggest benefits we found was the ability to use Instagram stories to help identify suspects. While we need to track these statistics more effectively, we were able to successfully bring charges on suspects derived from social media identifications. One of the most successful examples was the case involving TikTok Influencer Marlana Velez.
 - **YouTube:** On YouTube, we were able to use long-form informational content. Utilizing the Cape CopCast, we produced videos covering topics such as crime prevention tips, community program highlights, and interviews with department members. The Chief’s Chat editions of our podcast focused on topical strategies and initiatives. Our podcast is most successful on YouTube.
 - **LinkedIn:** Our LinkedIn presence has focused on recruitment and departmental achievements. This is another area the PAO team fell short on at times. Looking at the statistics, the beginning of the year only had a few posts on LinkedIn each month. Content was increased during times of heavy recruitment. However, July had no posts and this was quickly remedied. We have decided that when appropriate, LinkedIn should share some of the same content with Instagram and Facebook. LinkedIn should highlight posts about career opportunities, employee recognition, and partnerships, targeting professionals and people looking to network for a career in law enforcement.

2. Interactive and Diverse Content: Engaging the community through Q&As, live videos, polls, and featuring real stories of officers and community collaborations.
 - **Throughout this year, we have implemented more BWC into social media than ever before. BWC gives the audience an inside look into an officer's perspective. One major highlight features officers putting out a fire/carrying a paraplegic man out of a building. Another major highlight features officers successfully de-escalating a situation involving hatchets; instead of a justified shooting, officers utilized a taser to take the subject safely into custody. The footage serves as a powerful way to educate the community about the realities of police work, including the challenges and split-second decision-making required during incidents. It has also been used to share positive community interaction and helps us achieve our departmental goals of fostering public trust.**
 - **We did a Q&A ride-along with a Patrol Officer to give people some insight into a "day in the life." This was highly successful and received good engagement, and the PAO team plans to do this more frequently in 2025.**
 - **We posted a Department Survey to social media platforms to allow the public to offer real-time feedback.**
3. Regular Internal Updates and Feedback Mechanisms: Establishing clear communication channels within the department for sharing information and receiving feedback.
 - **The newsletter has been a vital source of information to pass through past, current, and future department endeavors. The newsletter also assists the Chief by allotting him a place to put out specific messaging/intentions. We also send out emails when necessary to communicate specific information, such as requirements for Movember.**
4. Crisis Communication and Rapid Response: Developing protocols for timely and accurate information dissemination during critical incidents.
 - **The PAO team attended several training courses designed to assist with crisis communication. PAO Basics and the NIOA Conference were helpful in further developing our communication strategy during times of crisis. The PAO team developed a good foundation for an active response and have been put to the test several times, one of which while the PAO team was out of office during training. We utilized a short form video with updates during a suspected school bomb threat, which was well received by our online community that felt informed and protected.**
5. Employee Advocacy and Engagement: Encouraging staff to participate in and share departmental initiatives and successes.
 - **The PAO team has highlighted the positive impact of officers' work on the community through internal communication channels, such as newsletters and awards. They are also highlighted on social media. When employees see the tangible outcomes of their efforts, they feel more motivated to share and support the department's initiatives. Our officers continue to send us possible content that further supports our mission/vision/values directly relating to the community we serve.**

Implementation

- Content Calendar & Consistent Messaging: To maintain a regular and strategic flow of content.
 - **The PAO team maintained consistency throughout social media and determined an appropriate content schedule that incorporated everyday police activities, special unit highlights, and posted news releases directly to social media.**
 - **Some content was directly incorporated into a content planner/scheduler. The PAO team ran into issues with Hootsuite because of formatting concerns. Posts were scheduled as feasible, but regardless, a calendar was kept to keep track of content that needed to be posted.**
 - **As a possible solution, the PAO team is looking into the option of switching to Sprout Social to avoid formatting concerns while being able to schedule out evergreen content as appropriate.**
- Independence: Posting content that marks our department as its own source of news that does not consistently rely on surrounding media agencies to disseminate news.
 - **The PAO team can successfully say that news was disseminated to the public independent of any legacy media sources. News releases were published directly to social media to share the unadulterated facts of arrests and cases. This allowed the PAO team to control the narrative of the police department.**
 - **The podcast, specifically starting “Chief’s Chat” episodes, was the best way to control the narrative and “steer the ship” in the direction we are trying to go. Utilizing these episodes weekly allows for current updates, explanations on hot topics straight from the source, and pushing the agenda for ideas that the department intends on executing.**
 - **Instagram/Facebook reels featuring a PAO going into further detail on a news story were also utilized. Also, we frequently used reels of BWC from an incident or other images to tell our own story.**
- Training & Analytics: Regular training for the team and use of analytics to track performance and adapt strategies.
 - **The PAO team attended NIOA, Podfest, Podcast Movement, PIO Fundamentals, required FEMA ICS 100, 200, 700, and 800. All of these courses equip the team with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively communicate, manage crises, and promote the department's goals and initiatives.**
 - **See below extension for Analytics Section**
- Regular Review and Adjustment: Continuously assessing both external and internal communication effectiveness and making necessary adjustments.
 - **Data-Driven Insights: Metrics like engagement rates, response times, and audience reach helped measure effectiveness and identify trends.**
 - **An external survey was conducted this year that gauged communication and its effectiveness. We received 114 responses with a 100% completion rate. 90% of the responses were either very good or somewhat neutral. Most of the individual comments were related to concerns with traffic control and red light running. Over 90% of responses agreed that the Cape Coral Police Department works to develop relationships with its community members. This can directly reflect on the Public Affairs Office because the content posted shows a high level of engagement with the community.**

- ADA Compliance: Posting content and pictures described to serve special populations.
 - **Most of the PAO team's videos have captions on them for the hard of hearing. All platforms used have compatibility with AI software to describe pictures and read captions. The PAO team does not post screenshots/PDF's of news releases, which enables software for the deaf to interact with content.**

Conclusion

This strategy is designed to position the Cape Coral Police Department as a leader in community engagement and internal communications within law enforcement. By effectively using social media and internal communication tools, the department can build stronger community relations and a more unified, informed internal environment.

- **In conclusion, the PAO Team's comprehensive strategy effectively supports the Cape Coral Police Department's goal of being a leader in community engagement and has stepped up their game with internal communications by utilizing a newsletter that communicates new/upcoming information monthly. By embracing regular reviews leveraging social media as a primary source of content and up-to-date information, the PAO Team has been able to get the department's message across without leaning on traditional media sources. Humanizing the badge with brand control has allowed the community to come to a new appreciation that ensures consistent, transparent, and impactful messaging. This approach not only strengthens trust and collaboration with the community, it reinforces the department's position as a trusted and forward-thinking law enforcement agency.**



SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

Facebook: The PAO Team's Facebook performance highlights significant achievements in community engagement. Over the past year, the page has seen a steady increase in followers, reflecting successful efforts to deliver relevant and appealing content. The introduction of consistent video posts has dramatically boosted engagement, with videos proving to be highly effective in capturing attention. The team has used Facebook to deliver dynamic content that resonates with the community, maintaining a steady posting schedule throughout the year. The comment sections further showcases strong community support and positive interaction, making Facebook one of the PAO Team's most valuable platforms for communication. These efforts underscore the platform's critical role in achieving the department's broader communication and engagement goals.

The PAO team gained 10,045 followers. The mean number of posts each month was approximately 65 posts. Every month was reasonably consistent with the number of posts. Engagement is consistent. Some months had a high spike in engagement due to content that was favored by the algorithm.

Twitter/X: The PAO Team's analytics for X/Twitter showed variability due to inconsistent usage earlier in the year. However, efforts to revitalize the platform in the latter part of the year aimed to align it with modern needs and goals. Moving forward, the PAO Team will prioritize monitoring and enhancing engagement on X to better connect with audiences distinct from other platforms.

The PAO Team gained 1,394 followers in 2024. The number of posts varied each month, with an average ranging from 2 to 26 posts a month. This variation represents a need to focus on consistency and usage as the PAO team grows this platform. The level of engagement was highly variable due to a different numbers of posts every month. However, the platform showed consistent progress and growth despite the inconsistencies.

Instagram: Our Instagram content focuses on visual storytelling and appeals more to youthful engagement. We maintained visually appealing content, including behind-the-scenes photos and infographics. We excelled in promoting reels highlighting officers, programs, and initiatives. Stories and interactive features, such as Q&As, were effective. One

of the biggest benefits we found was the ability to use Instagram stories to help identify suspects. While we need to track these statistics more effectively, we were able to successfully bring charges on suspects derived from social media identifications. One of the most successful examples was the case involving TikTok Influencer Marlana Velez.

YouTube: In 2024, the PAO Team's YouTube analytics reflected new usage driven by the launch of the Cape CopCast. Prior to this, YouTube had been largely inactive for several years. While the platform is primarily used to host the department's podcast, it also provides opportunities for long-form videos exceeding Instagram's 90-second limit. The PAO Team's consistent posting schedule contributed to steady follower growth throughout the year. Although YouTube is not the department's largest social media platform, it has become the preferred platform for audiences to watch or listen to the Cape CopCast, solidifying its role in the department's communication strategy.

In 2024, the amount of views the Youtube channel received had a steady growth with the launch of the podcast. In February, there were 1,842 views documented. By December, there were consistently over 3,800 views per month on the videos/podcasts released. The Youtube channel gained an average of 30 viewers per month, which appeared to directly affect the views the channel received.

LinkedIn: The PAO Team effectively utilized LinkedIn to advance the department's goals, particularly in recruitment efforts. By focusing on more consistent posting, the team boosted engagement and increased the page's follower count. LinkedIn proved to be a valuable platform for sharing recruitment materials, highlighting career opportunities, and showcasing the department's professional environment. To maximize its potential, LinkedIn should continue to be consistently leveraged as a key tool for attracting top talent and engaging with a professional audience.

In 2024, the department's LinkedIn account gained 227 followers. While this may not seem like a lot, the platform is not as popular for overall content and engagement as Facebook and Instagram. The number of posts was directly linked with a growing number of followers and engagement. It is a goal of the PAO Team to ensure LinkedIn is being utilized and growing proportionally to other platforms.