

In Their Own Words: Tips, Challenges, and Lessons Learned from the Baton Rouge, Louisiana SPI

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The Baton Rouge SPI Initiative has two primary goals: 1) Decrease violent crime and 2) enhance community relations with law enforcement. A multitiered project is being implemented to achieve these goals utilizing emerging law enforcement technology and leveraging the power and influence of social media.

The COVID-19 pandemic began six months after the start of the grant term, which caused a delay in the implementation of the emerging technology component of the project. However, the social media component of the project provided a mechanism for the Baton Rouge Police Department to engage with residents in unprecedented ways. We offer the strategies below for any department wishing to enhance their engagement with community members via social media.

Year 1 Highlights

Community
Survey Participants

798

Negative Feedback

35.31%↓

Reach

201.2%↑

Engagements

301.8%↑

Hold weekly strategy sessions – With the exception of holidays, and a few extraordinary circumstances, BRPD executives have met with the media and research partners weekly since March 16, 2020. These meetings are the lifeblood of the project and provide a mechanism for implementing and adjusting the department's media strategy based on events, public perception, and current trends.

Leverage expertise within the department – Since March of 2020, BRPD has highlighted the work of several divisions through press conferences, livestreams, and curated content. As experts in their respective disciplines, BRPD executives wanted officers from the highlighted divisions involved in the planning of each activity. By leveraging the expertise of these officers, we have had the ability to showcase cutting edge technology, reduce misinformation given, and expose the community to the diversity within the department.

Highly produced content is nice, but it is not required for every post – The public does not need to be wowed by their police department. In fact, our data suggests the community would rather have authenticity than movie quality content. In 2020, Livestreams and iPhone quality videos from officers averaged 92% more views (3,774) than production quality videos.

Data. Data. Data – Knowing your audience is key when developing a social media strategy. By analyzing social media data on a regular basis, we have been able to determine the best time to post, the type of content preferred for different age ranges, and the types of posts that garner the most national attention.

Project Partners

