

Hashtag Strategy Guide

A hashtag — written with a # symbol — is simply a searchable keyword.

Hashtags offer a powerful, simple way to track and curate topics, live events, breaking news and more. On a social platform, clicking or tapping on a hashtag in any message shows you other public tweets and posts that include that hashtag.

Our goal at King County is to use hashtags to make our social content more relatable, engaging, informative and easier for our community to follow.

Please use the Hashtag Strategy Guide as a conversation starter to help your teams determine how to best use a hashtag, or whether a hashtag is appropriate for your messaging.

Questions? Please contact the King County social media team at webteam@kingcounty.gov.

Using Hashtags

Your choice of platform should also influence your hashtag strategy. While Instagram and Twitter offer fertile ground for hashtags, Facebook is less hospitable. In fact, some studies have shown that Facebook posts with hashtags reach a smaller audience, due to how Facebook's algorithm prioritizes the posts in newsfeeds.

Use hashtags strategically — think quality, not quantity. Twitter recommends no more than two hashtags per tweet as a best practice (although you can use as many as you like, within the character limit). Instagram allows up to 30 hashtags on a single Instagram post.

Many live events — such as speeches or presentations — often have a hashtag. While covering an event that is using a hashtag, share quotes or photos alongside the event hashtag to add your experience, both to connect with others in attendance and people who could not participate in person. Make sure you use the hashtag promoted by the event and not your own!

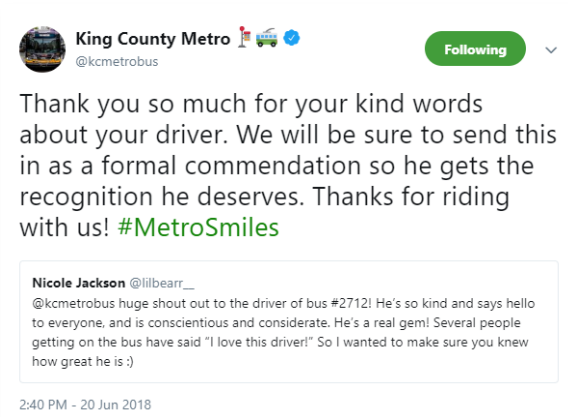
Creating a new hashtag

When creating a hashtag, search for potential hashtags on various social platforms to see if it's currently in use, how it's been used previously by other users, and whether your content will stand out if you decide to choose an existing hashtag.

1. **Be Specific:** Whenever possible, create a new hashtag that reflects King County- or agency-specific branding, to limit follower confusion. Localize your hashtag as much as possible.



2. **Avoid Jargon:** Use plain language when creating a new hashtag. Keep your hashtag short, simple and memorable.
3. **Format Accordingly:** Capitalize the first letter of each word in the hashtag. (This style is referred to as camel case.) It's easier for users to read, including individuals using a screen reader. Never use spaces or punctuation in a hashtag; it will not work properly.



4. **Promote Your Hashtag:** To encourage adoption of your new hashtag, use it on appropriate posts. Consider incorporating it into promotional pieces as well (i.e. event signage and handouts).
5. **Monitor Your Hashtag:** Once you've created a hashtag and used it on your social platforms, regularly monitor it to see if it's being used by others, and how. In some instances, other users can turn your hashtag into a form of criticism, also known as a bashtag. The New York Police Department's #myNYPD campaign quickly became a flashpoint for criticism after the agency encouraged residents to use the hashtag to show positive interactions with officers. McDonald's #McDStories campaign quickly turned into a (Mc)flurry of complaints.



Using existing hashtags

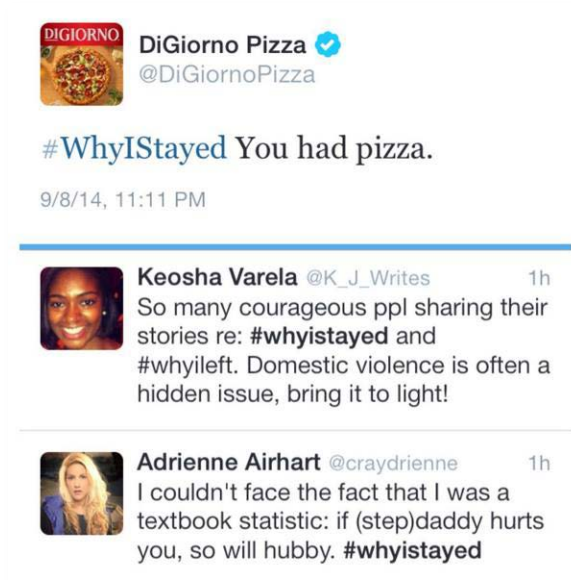
If you want to join an ongoing conversation, use existing hashtags as much as possible.



For instance, the National Weather Service's Seattle office ([@NWSSeattle](#)) will often create the hashtag for a major weather event, or use #WAWx when discussing Western Washington weather.

Hashtag Best Practices

Understand the Context: If you see a trending hashtag, check to see how it's being used before you join the conversation. In 2014, DiGiorno Pizza inadvertently made light of domestic violence by using a trending hashtag without checking its meaning.



Limit your hashtags

Be judicious about the number of hashtags you use, and where you use them. The recommended number of hashtags varies across platforms.

Social Media Platform	Recommended Hashtags
Facebook	0
Twitter	Up to 2 per tweet
Instagram	9-12 per post
LinkedIn	Up to 5 per post
YouTube	0
Nextdoor	0

On Twitter, for instance, one strategic hashtag is often enough. (Most Twitter accounts with many followers and high engagement use hashtags sparingly.)

On Instagram, a handful of hashtags — including your branded hashtag and a selection of carefully chosen complementary words/phrases — is most effective.

Hashtags and humor

Remember: Some people used hashtags ironically — and not for the intended purpose of tracking and organizing information. Before using a hashtag with which you're not familiar, please do some research to better understand the context.

Develop a hashtag glossary

Use your designated hashtags to curate a conversation around a specific word, initiative, phrase, individual or agency/department. (See examples below.)

Engaging Your Audience

Expand your audience.

Create a hashtag to accompany your posts, with emphasis on an awareness/discovery focus, to help educate potential followers about your department, division or program.

Engage your existing audience.

For posts targeted at existing followers, create a hashtag to ask for feedback or customer stories.

Examples

- [British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Hashtag Glossary](#)
- [Syracuse University Hashtag Guide](#)
- [University of Memphis Hashtag Hub](#)