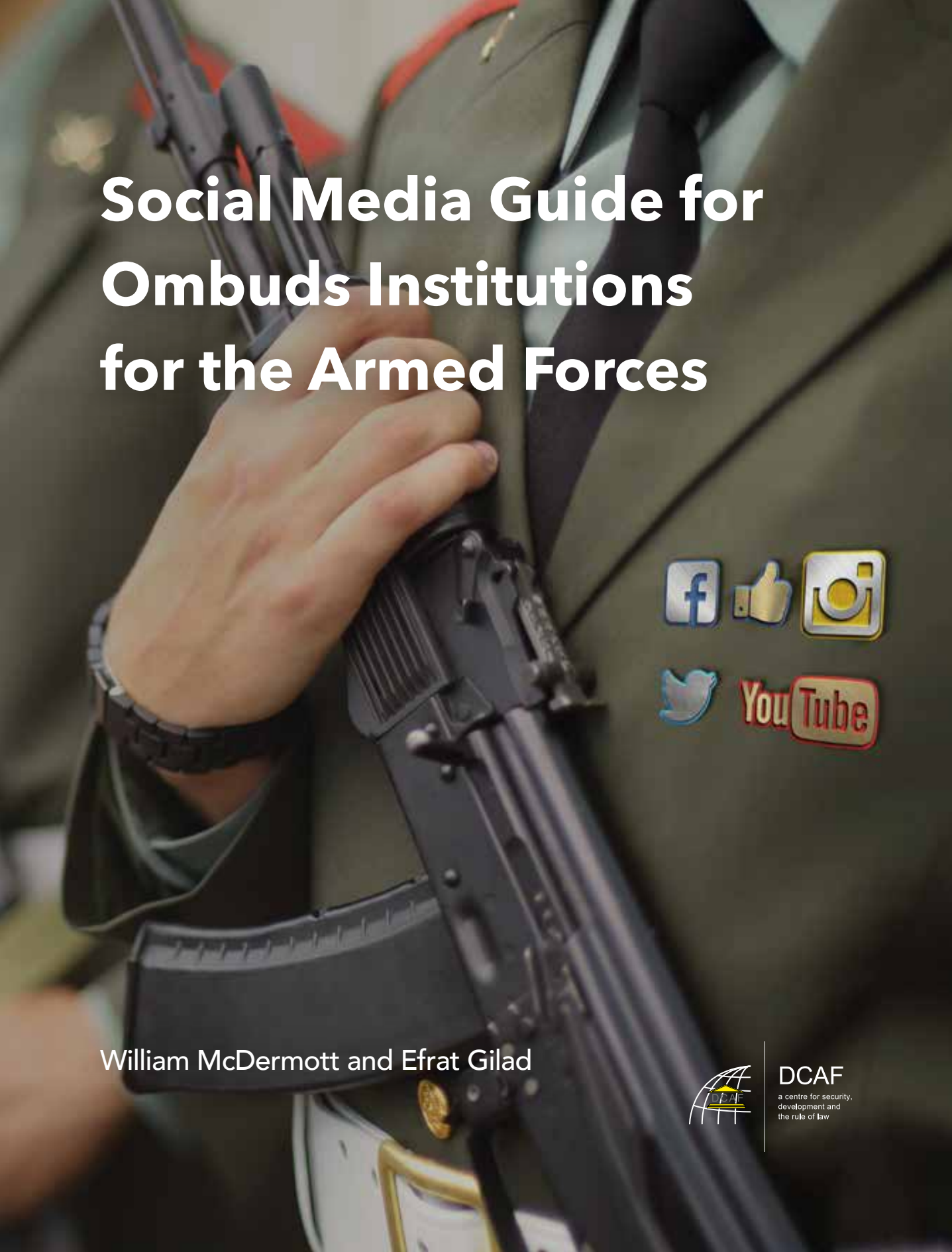
Social Media Guide for Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces



William McDermott and Efrat Gilad

DCAF
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The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is an international foundation whose mission is to assist the international community in pursuing good governance and reform of the security sector. The Centre develops and promotes norms and standards, conducts tailored policy research, identifies good practices and recommendations to promote democratic security sector governance, and provides in-country advisory support and practical assistance programmes.

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Authors: William McDermott and Efrat Gilad
Design: Ohad Shalev (http://www.ohadshalev.com/)
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social media in the 21st century has revolutionised many aspects of modern life. It can refer to a large and diverse array of platforms and services. While social media is often associated with large social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, this is just one type of platform. Social media has also contributed to collaborative projects, such as Wikipedia, or smaller scale collaborations that include blogs and microblogs, such as WordPress or Tumblr, and content communities like YouTube or Reddit among many others. Consequently, social media offers unparalleled opportunities for organisations beyond simple communication. It is also used to share content, and build relationships, identities and reputations.

Audiences now have more means and channels available to create, comment on and share content than ever before. This has challenged organisations to engage in conversations with audiences in new and different ways from their traditional approaches. As social media promotes greater engagement and transparency, so too has opinion and criticism become commonplace in what is called "a democratisation of knowledge". These processes have, positively and negatively, influenced the ways in which governments and state officials communicate and do business with members of the public.

Social media applications also allow sharing across one or more platforms, thus extending the reach and breadth of information beyond the users of a specific application. The level of users' engagement is voluntary; some choose to create content, others share it or comment on it, and some can simply view content without contributing to its creation or promotion. Likewise, the level of engagement of institutions using social media can also vary, from passively engaged to actively engaged. The speed with which these processes occur allows for the rapid sharing of information, and facilitates communication during real-time events either between two individuals or amongst many.[1]

Aims

The main aim of this guide is to promote and support ombuds institutions in adopting and competently using social media as part of their broader business and communications strategy. Social media can be used as a safe and effective tool through which ombuds institutions do business, communicate, connect, engage, inform and listen to the public, as well as members of the armed forces under their jurisdiction. In addition, by using social media to raise awareness about the work of ombuds institutions as well as raise their profile, this guide aims to support and promote the values and objectives associated with such institutions, within the larger message of good governance.

The nature of social media and the market they compete in means that they are constantly evolving to keep up with the dynamic changes involved, such as new platforms

1 According to Brandtzaeg users can be differentiated in five types: sporadic users, lurkers, socializers, debaters, and advanced users. See: Peter Bae Brandtzaeg, "Social Networking Sites: Their Users and Social Implications – A longitudinal study", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 17 (2012), 467-488.

being created, and existing ones updating their interface. In light of this reality, this guide is not intended to serve as an exhaustive user manual of every social media channel. Nor should it be seen as a "how to" guide on managing social media, as considering the pace of change, any manual would almost immediately become obsolete.[2]

This guide, however, examines the effects, processes, and opportunities prompted by the advent of social media, and provides strategic guidance to ombuds institutions for the adoption, adaption and application of good social media practice, in the sectors within which they operate.

In this guide, there are practical examples of the positive use of social media by ombuds institutions, as well as lessons learned from the armed forces in the adoption of social media. There are illustrations of good practice in later sections, drawn from the experiences of diverse military and police services. It is important to note that armed forces are relevant to this guide not only due to the jurisdiction of ombuds institutions for the armed forces, but also because they share similar concerns and responsibilities for information and personnel security, and good reputation management.

This guide will therefore highlight the benefits of social media, in the context of the work of ombuds institutions, including:

- opening a channel to connect directly with constituents;
- raising awareness about, and the profile of, the ombuds institution;
- interacting proactively with stakeholders in a transparent and responsive manner; and
- conducting work more effectively and efficiently.

It is intended to be read as a standalone document, but can also be seen as part of a series that began with the comprehensive DCAF publication, *Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces: A Handbook*.[3]

2 Based on an interview with officials from the South African Military Ombud, 22 April 2016.

3 For more information on this series of publications, see: www.icoaf.org/publications

Because this guide is written for ombuds institutions in varying stages of implementation of social media - explained in more detail in the following section on 'Audience' - not all chapters may be of particular relevance to each reader. Thus, individual chapters can be read independently, or as part of a whole. Cross-references to related topics between chapters are provided where appropriate.

The guide is roughly divided into two sections. The first section – Chapters 2 and 3 – will explore the overarching themes and lessons learned from the military and police, and examine the reasons why social media is ideally suited to the role of an ombuds institution. The second section – Chapters 4, 5 and 6 – will examine practical applications of social media for ombuds institutions in their daily work.

Audience

This guide is aimed at ombuds institutions with jurisdiction over the armed forces in their respective countries. In addition, a broader audience may find the examples discussed useful, including: armed forces personnel, civil servants, academics and ombuds institutions of all types. In particular, this guide should serve ombuds institutions that:

- have yet to adopt social media;
- are reluctant to any engagement via social media;
- have started to create their strategy but are still contemplating the best use of these tools; and
- currently use social media but are interested in improving its use.

Rationale

Many organisations have invested in creating and publishing guidelines on how to incorporate social media into their broader communications strategy. These guidelines regulate rather than prohibit the safe and effective use of social media by the organisation, according to its values and objectives. As for ombuds institutions for the armed forces, there is a general lack of such guidelines, as well as significant apprehension regarding the adoption of social media. However, the qualities of social media are compatible with the role of ombuds institutions. The UN Commission on Human Rights (now the UN Human Rights Council) identified five attributes of good governance: transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, and responsiveness.[4] According to the Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces: A Handbook, an ombuds institution encompasses the attributes of good governance, namely:

- Responsiveness (in that it receives complaints directly from its constituents and has the ability to handle them);
- Responsibility and accountability (in that it makes recommendations to rectify problems);
- Transparency (by publishing reports and thematic studies on different topics relating to the armed forces).[5]

Social media can assists ombuds institutions in promoting the above mentioned attributes of good governance. For example:

- Responsiveness and participation – few communication tools are as easy, inexpensive, and popular as social media. Using social media, ombuds institutions increase their accessibility and responsiveness, not necessarily by allowing online submission of complaints, but by opening a direct channel with the public;
- Responsibility and accountability – staying informed on the day to day habits and activities of personnel and other constituents via social media, ombuds institutions can make relevant recommendations to rectify problems, and hold the armed forces and other government institutions accountable; and
- Transparency – social media serves as an outlet to publicise reports on, or developments in, the work of an ombuds institution.

4 For more information on this subject: Heiner Hanggi, "Making Sense of Security Sector Governance," in Heiner Hanggi and T. Winkler, (eds.) *Challenges of Security Sector Governance* (Geneva and Munster: DCAF and Lit Verlag, 2003), 11.

5 Benjamin S. Buckland and William McDermott, *Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces: A Handbook* (Geneva: DCAF, 2012), 5.

Methodology

This guide is a result of discussions at the 6th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF), which took place on October 26-28, 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland . During this conference, representatives of ombuds institutions from 37 participating countries explored the role of social media for ombuds institutions. The following three main points arose from their discussions:

1. In light of the rising prominence of social media use, it should be a key priority for both the armed forces and ombuds institutions to identify the advantages and challenges posed by social media. Furthermore, we acknowledge that there is a need for further guiding policies for the increased use of social media in the armed forces.
2. We note with positive interest that a number of ombuds institutions have begun monitoring the implementation of social media policies in the armed forces. In general, ombuds institutions should be encouraged to develop their experiences of using social media, and addressing complaints where social media plays a role.
3. Acknowledging the need to further analyse the role and potential impact of social media for ombuds institutions for the armed forces, we request that DCAF develops a guidance note on this topic, which can be used in future capacity development events by both new and established ombuds institutions.[6]

6 6th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces Conference Statement, 28 October 2014.

This guide draws upon numerous sources of information such as academic literature and articles as well as studies conducted regarding social media and the armed forces. In addition, extensive desk research has been conducted in order to evaluate and analyse public platforms, such as websites and social media accounts of ombuds institutions and a variety of armed forces. In addition, private communication (i.e. WhatsApp, direct messages on Facebook and Twitter) have also shown to be useful to support dialogue between organizations and individuals. While access to these types of communication is restricted, we will still examine how they can be used by ombuds institutions in order to fulfil their mandates. This guide is inspired and informed by policies and handbooks written and published by armed forces, such as military and police.

Furthermore, in order to accommodate the audience of this guide, specific attention was given to social media uses and concerns of participants of ICOAF. Thus, a number of ICOAF participants and social media experts participated in a workshop on the role of social media and ombuds institutions, where presentations and extensive discussions were conducted, and a draft of the guide was reviewed.

Finally, a questionnaire was sent out to all ICOAF participants to gather valuable information from all ombuds institutions regarding their use of social media and their expectations from this guide. The results of the questionnaire were used to conceptualise the structure and objectives of the guide.

Cross-Cutting Social Media Concepts

There are a number of concepts that are fundamental to social media. Here we show some cross-cutting concepts pertaining to social media that will consistently re-emerge throughout the guide:

- **Social media is here to stay** - the use of social media is not a temporary trend. New applications are developed daily, generating more users and larger interconnected networks of individuals and institutions. As this guide will show, even fierce initial adversaries of social media such as militaries and departments of defence, have come to understand that banning or ignoring the use of technologies that are so widely available is unsustainable.
- **The internet remembers** – events and communications that are documented publicly on social media create storable, searchable online records.[7] As stated by The Toronto Police Service (TPS), "the internet is forever" as screenshots, search engines and browsers "make it virtually impossible to take something back. Be sure of what you mean to say, and say what you mean."[8]
- The permanent imprints of information accessible online have provoked legal discussions concerning **the right to be forgotten**. According to the European Commission, the right to be forgotten means that, "individuals have the right - under certain conditions - to ask search engines to remove links with personal information about them. This applies where the information is inaccurate, inadequate, irrelevant or excessive." However, the Court also clarifies that the right to be forgotten is not absolute, and always needs to be considered against other fundamental rights. Furthermore, while Google already implements a system to handle these types of requests, it is not yet clear how exactly the right to be forgotten will be implemented in the future.[9]

7 Milton L. Mueller, "Hyper-Transparency and Social Control: Social Media as Magnets for Regulation" *Telecommunications Policy* 39 (2015), 804.

8 Community Oriented Policing Services U.S. Department of Justice (COPS) and Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), "Social Media and Tactical Considerations for Law Enforcement", (2013), 6.

9 European Commission, "Factsheet on the "Right to be Forgotten" Ruling" (c-131/12) http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/files/factsheets/factsheet_data_protection_en.pdf

- An example of fundamental rights often conflicting with traditional media and social media, are **the right to privacy** (set in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 7 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights), and **freedom of expression and information** (set in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights).[10] Exemptions or relaxations of the right to privacy exist in a wide spread of cases, both with regards to private persons or state confidential information. In general, posting information about other individuals could be seen as a violation of these regulatory frameworks, even if the information seems mundane or harmless by those posting. In Sweden, for example, a church worker was fined by the European Court of Justice for posting information about church members without their consent, such as the fact that one member injured her foot.[11]
- **More than "common sense"** - in 2011 the Australian Department of Defence published the *Review of Social Media and Defence*. The authors of the review claimed that when describing the appropriate use of social media, too often "sound judgment" or "common sense" is used as unofficial or semi-official guidelines. Relying on such terms, which are relative and depend on personal interpretation, systematically expose the Department of Defence to a level of risk. According to the report, "common sense" alone does not inform personnel of their responsibilities towards the organisation and towards their community.[12]
- For these reasons, the report stresses the **importance of education and training.** Social media training, as stated in the report, needs to be "tailored to different stakeholder groups, according to their requirements, their level of understanding of social media, their rank and position within the organization."[13] All staff need to be trained in how to use social media in line with their responsibilities and the guidelines of the institution. The *Responding to anti-social use of so-*

10 European Court of Human Rights, "European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)", 1950.

11 Linklaters LLP, "Social Media and the Law: A Handbook for UK Companies" (Linklaters LLP, 2014), 19. http://www.linklaters.com/Insights/Social-media-law-A-handbook-UK-companies/Pages/Index.aspx

12 George Patterson Y&R, "Review of Social Media and Defence: Reviews into Aspects of Defence and Australian Defence Force Culture" (Canberra, A.C.T.: Department of Defence, 2011), xii, 112. http://www.defence.gov.au/pathwaytochange/docs/socialmedia/

13 Ibid., 191-192.

cial media and the internet by the New South Wales Ombudsman provides clear guidelines on how staff should respond to harassing behaviour on social media; how to determine when conduct has become unreasonable; a step by step process on how to manage and defuse the situation; and how to provide support to staff who handle this harassment.[14]

- **Hyper-Transparency** – while it is important to be aware of inappropriate and reckless posting, our constant exposure to bad behaviour online could be distorting our perception of most conventional online engagements. This is because users share mostly extraordinary stories, not mundane interactions, using a variety of social media applications which amplify the reach and the emotions stirred by the story. Thus, social media makes events and human interactions hyper-transparent. It might seem for example that military personnel are engaged in more wrongdoing than we traditionally associate with them, but what has changed in reality is our exposure to such misbehaviours, not their occurrences.
- Due to hyper-transparency, social media applications have attracted attention as a form of precarious technology that should be restricted by law, policy or an outright banning.[15] However, while the medium might have changed, human interactions, whether positive or negative, have remained essentially the same, or inclined to entail the same predicaments. Just as militaries are equipped to deal with misconduct in any space be it online or elsewhere, existing legal frameworks can and have been used to resolve legal challenges posed by the use of social media. Although these frameworks were not initially designed to deal with social media related disputes, as the underlining issues tend to be familiar, i.e. privacy rights, freedom of expression, defamation etc., there is little need for revolutionising legal systems.
- Finally, one of the problems in trying to restrict the use of the internet and social media applications by state or government policies has to do with the very nature of **the internet as a space of user-generated content and unrestricted sharing of information.** Providers such as Google and Facebook have already

14 New South Wales Ombudsman official website, "Responding to Anti-Social Use of Social Media and the Internet" Factsheet https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/fact-sheets/state-and-local-government/responding-to-anti-social-use-of-social-media-and-the-internet

15 Mueller, "Hyper-Transparency", 807.

taken regulative responsibilities upon themselves in restricting hate speech and copyright violations. Imposing political pressure on companies such as these may lead to aggressive and unnecessary policing in a space designed to promote easy communication and free exchange of information.[16]

- **Social media strengthens accountability.** Public institutions, like ombuds institutions, the armed forces and police services, are beholden to their constituents. By establishing a presence on social media, it makes these institutions more accessible and therefore more responsive and accountable. Additionally, one of their key objectives is to hold other government bodies accountable, and social media also has the power to strengthen ombuds institutions' ability to do this. Social media can strengthen the voice of ombuds institutions, which thereby strengthens ombuds institutions' power to hold the armed forces accountable for their actions.

16 Mueller, "Hyper-Transparency", 809.

Chapter 2: Social Media and the Armed Forces: Learning from Related Fields

This chapter will draw upon the experiences and lessons learned from the adoption of social media by the military and police. These case studies are particularly relevant for ombuds institutions for the armed forces, as they face similar operational challenges.

Social Media and the Military

Until recently, the communication ability of military personnel was restricted. Personnel were only permitted to communicate through fixed platforms such as the telephone or post, which were easily regulated by the military. During deployment and overseas missions, these restrictions amplified the sense of separation from home and loved ones. Studies have shown that separation from family is one of the first causes of stress and mental health issues among deployed personnel.[1] With the emergence of social media, the ways and means through which individuals could communicate was radically altered. As a result, these new forms of communication were met with suspicion by the military. However, over the course of the last 5-7 years, the military has embraced this new practice, and it has been met with varied success and valuable lessons learned. Emails, instant-messaging, real-time picture and video exchange for example, have improved the ways in which service personnel can maintain contact.[2] More recent studies show that this has had positive effects on soldiers' morale.[3]

In addition to communication with loved ones, writing blogs became increasingly popular amongst military personnel as a form of self-expression. As articulated by one corporal deployed to Iraq, "I first started my blog because I felt bad that I didn't write enough to my family. It kind of transformed itself from a desire to convey my personal experience into letting people know the real story."[4] As military personnel's perspectives on their missions are rarely told by the media or by politicians, taking to social media is a way for personnel to share their experiences, and feel as if their voice is being heard. In this way, they participate in creating "real" narratives of their missions, and partake in the revolution from mass to personalized media.

The emergence of social media did not come without its share of challenges within military leadership, though it was not unique to this realm alone. Initially, legislators and

1 Institute of Medicine, Committee on Gulf War and Health, "Physiologic, Psychologic, and Psychosocial Effects of Deployment-Related Stress", *Gulf War and Health*, Volume 6 (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2008), 31.

2 U.S. Military on Facebook, Staff Sgt. Dale Sweetnam's Facebook Story, 7 November 2011 https://www.facebook.com/USMilitary/videos/10100435521752747/

3 See: Delphine Resteigne, "Still Connected in Operations? The Milblog Culture", *International Peacekeeping* 17 (2010), 521; Pat Matthews-Juarez , Paul D. Juarez & Roosevelt T. Faulkner, "Social Media and Military Families: A Perspective", *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 23 (2013), 769-776.

4 Elizabeth L. Robbins, "Muddy Boots IO: The Rise of Soldier Blogs", *Military Review* (2007), 110. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/robbins.pdf

governments expressed apprehension with regards to social media, resulting in various restrictions. The United States Congress, for example, suggested banning social media applications in schools, and the Canadian government blocked the use of Facebook in its offices.[5]

Within the military, the most notable concerns pertained to safety, information security, and operations security (OPSEC). For more information on this, refer to Box 2.1. Using social media, armed forces personnel challenged the military in its ability to control and censor their external communications, as they had traditionally. As an institution, the military became increasingly uneasy about this lack of control, and due to the risk of compromising OPSEC, banned or severely restricted the use of social media.[6] In this way, the military was trying to maintain its control over soldiers' communications by imposing traditional barriers to new and emerging technologies.

From "Risk Averse" to "Risk Aware"

Since initially banning social media, ministries of defence and armed forces have undergone a major paradigm shift leading to adopting and incorporating social media tools into their overall communication strategies. While concerns regarding OPSEC are still eminent, officials seem to agree that the benefits of social media for the armed forces outweigh the security risks.[7] From the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) perspective, Pippa Alldritt, digital communications specialist and former Head of Digital and Brand Strategy at the MoD, explains that the UK military had experienced a culture shift from being "risk averse" to "risk aware". This meant that instead of banning social media for reasons of OPSEC or personal security (PERSEC), the military embraced new social media applications but within certain limitations, supported by appropriate education and training. Alldritt insists that, given the right guidance, MoD personnel can learn what to share and what not to share: "if we can train ordinary soldiers to fire weapons we should be able to train them to use Facebook."[8]

5 Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (2008), 219.

6 Sean Lawson, "The US Military's Social Media Civil War: Technology as Antagonism in Discourses of Information-Age Conflict", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 27 (2014), 231.

7 Ibid., 238.

8 Mark Piesing, "Tweeting the Taliban: Social media's role in 21st century propaganda", *Wired*, 20 March 2012.

The concept of "risk awareness" as opposed to "risk averseness" also means that in order to enjoy the advantages of social media, the armed forces have to accept and understand, at least to some degree, the meaning and impact of the democratisation of knowledge. In fact, the numerous opportunities brought to armed forces and ministries of defence outweigh the challenges that social media presents, and motivated the course towards adopting social media.

Box 2.1

Fear of new technologies: a historical perspective

A historical perspective into the uses of new technologies might provide a broader framework to the apprehensions that social media raised within the armed forces.

Recent articles on the risks of social media usage by military personnel have rehashed a US Navy slogan from WWII. During the war, "Loose Lips Sink Ships" was intended to warn individuals from sharing sensitive information when talking on the phone. The fear of information "spilling" through the telephone wires shares some similarities with the fear, and often the reality, of the misuse of social media. Recently, the US Air Force picked up on this debate and released a meme: "Loose Tweets Destroy Fleets".

Lessons Learned

Here we explore some of these key motivations, which may serve as useful lessons for ombuds institutions:

Use of personal narratives – marketing strategies show that an individual voice, expressed in a blog for example, is more effective in drawing consumers' attention than a generalised polished message. Military blogs are in most cases pro-military, and offer personal narratives which often seem more credible than official military statements. They discuss the reasons to join the military, the values, the camaraderie and the personal growth as a result of military service. Anecdotes, colourful descriptions and photos offer the general public an unfiltered window into military values and realities that can positively translate into more support for armed forces and their missions.[9]

In addition, banning social media means silencing these positive voices and eliminating their constructive influence (i.e. those who follow the rules). The only voices left would be those of personnel who are dissatisfied, resentful, or impostors (i.e. those who do not follow the rules or are not bound by them).[10] By adopting social media, the military regains control over personnel communications, and finds an outlet to promote its message.[11]

Communicating directly with the public – In 2009, two official reports produced by the United States Army War College and the National Defense University acknowledged the value of social media as a communication tool. Using social media, according to the reports, the Department of Defence and the military could convey messages directly to the American public without the involvement of mainstream media.[12]

In their social media presence, military personnel provide more "uncensored, unmediated, intimate, [and] immediate" information about the war and the military than either the mainstream media or the government does.[13] Personnel, who are often quicker to

9 Robbins, "Muddy Boots IO", 112.

10 Ibid., 112, 117.

11 Aleksandra Dermanović, "Pippa Norris: A Woman that Managed to Overcome Traditional Ways of Communicating", *Netokracija*, 12 April 2013 http://www.netocratic.com/pippa-norris-1155

12 Lawson, "The US Military's Social Media Civil War", 237.

13 Ibid., 232.

respond than officials and spokespersons, often defend the military in the face of media misrepresentation.[14] As argued by military blogger *Blackfive*, the honest voices of personnel are too valuable to be silenced in an information war.[15]

The power of imagery - Visuals are powerful tools that are easily shared via social media. Up to 250 million photos are uploaded daily to Facebook, and posts which contain photos generate 120% to 180% more engagement from users.[16] The reasons why in fact 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is that "visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text by the human brain and 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual. Humans evolved over millennia to respond to visual information long before they developed the ability to read text."[17] According to Pippa Alldritt, "visual narratives are a great way to tell our soldiers' stories."[18]

Public Relations and Recruitment - as one US military official expressed regarding online recruitment efforts, recruiting on social media is equivalent to "fishing where the fish are."[19] The fact that social media applications are virtually free is another important reason to use them for recruitment and public relations purposes.

14 Robbins, "Muddy Boots IO", 116.

15 Lawson, "The US Military's Social Media Civil War", 234.

16 Ekaterina Walter, "4 Businesses Leveraging Storytelling with Images", *Social Media Examiner*, 14 January 2013 http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/storytelling-with-images/

17 Ekaterina Walter and Jessica Gioglio, *The Power of Visual Storytelling*: *How to Use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand,* (McGraw Hill Education, 2014), 16.

18 Piesing, "Tweeting the Taliban".

19 Scott Campbell Mackintosh, "Social Leadership: Exploring Social Media and the Military – A New Leadership Tool", in: John P. Girard and JoAnn L. Girard (eds.) *Social Knowledge*: *Using Social Media to Know What You Know* (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2011), 132.

Social Media and the Police

The process in which police services adopted social media is also of special relevance for ombuds institutions. For one, both ombuds institutions and police services are mandated to closely interact with and be responsible for large segments of the population.[20] Since they are both responsible for rectifying problems, a high degree of trust is required for the institutions to operate effectively. Actively engaging with the public via social media can assist in building and maintaining that trust, and even increase the level of cooperation with the public. These elements will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this guide. In addition, both institutions rely heavily on their own ability to conduct in depth and thorough investigations. Chapter 4 will discuss the opportunities that social media hold for investigative purposes, as well as how police services have taken advantage of those opportunities.

As is the case with militaries, police services have initially expressed apprehension and even scepticism of social media for law enforcement purposes, given that the most documented and controversial aspects of social media have been its use in organising and facilitating riots, violent demonstrations, and other criminal activities. However, it is important, especially in the face of such events, that police services obtain the skills to effectively monitor and communicate on social media in order to gather information, assess threats, and if need be, identify key perpetrators and witnesses, in order to react effectively to crises.[21] The Toronto Police Service (TPS) may serve as a useful example, which is explained in more detail in Box 2.2.

20 For more information on the different constituents of ombuds institutions, see Section 6.2 "Accessing Complaints Procedures" in: Buckland and McDermott, *Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces,* 59-71.

21 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 1.

Box 2.2

community. In 2007, one constable felt that their traditional outlets, such as televised public service announcements and newspaper ads, were missing a broader audience of young people who could potentially provide a lot of information. As these young people receive and share the majority of their information via social media, the TPS experimented with a video posted on YouTube, and the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Information flowing into TPS increased exponentially, and the Toronto Crime Stoppers have since expanded into popular Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Following this success, the TPS Traffic Unit also started engaging with the public via YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, realising that members of the community expressed their concerns and dissatisfactions via social media. By maintaining the dialogue, the TPS could continue to monitor and engage with the community when it came to traffic-related safety issues.[22]

22 Ibid., 4.

Lessons Learned

Here we provide key lessons from the adoption of social media by police services to serve as further lessons for ombuds institutions:

Old business, new ways – social media cannot fight crimes on its own, but used wisely it may facilitate monitoring, investigations and prevention of crimes or wrongdoing. As expressed by TPS Deputy Chief Peter Sloly: "Social media is not a silver bullet, it enables us to do old business in newer ways, but we still have to do old business".[23]

It's a conversation – prior to creating an official social media presence, the TPS Traffic Unit observed and listened to the statements made by community members on social media, understanding that complaints and dissatisfaction were an opportunity, not a threat. When it was time to engage, reply and participate in a conversation, the unit's accounts did not serve as one more media outlet or "megaphone", but rather a platform for exchange with the public. [24]

Identifying problems – keeping a finger on the pulse of the community by using social media, the police service amplifies its abilities to identify problems before they escalate into crime and violence. If a problem does escalate, however, skilled officers trained by the department to use social media, are quicker to read and understand online communications that cause a stir or reflect disruptions, and are therefore quicker to respond.[25]

Social media champions – much like the constable in the TPS Public Information Unit in Box 2.2, it is likely that within an organisation there are employees naturally suited to work with social media, and are passionate about the work of the organisation. Their natural attributes along with their readiness to acquire new skills will position them to effectively represent the institution. These individuals will be more prone to experiment with new tools, study the experiences of other institutions, and implement guidelines without losing the outgoing attitude intrinsic to using social media. By sharing their enthusiasm with their colleagues they may create a positive environment facilitating

23 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 5.

24 Ibid.

25 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 5.

effective social media engagement.

Rewards outweigh risks – the TPS experience shows that in adopting social media, the rewards far outweigh the risks. By placing too much focus on the potential risks, organisations may lose sight of the wealth of benefits that are provided by social media.[26]

26 Ibid., 9.

Chapter Highlights

- The emergence of social media has transformed communication abilities for military personnel, enabling them to maintain connections with their families.
- Using social media is a way for personnel to share their experiences and feel as if their voice is being heard.
- The benefits of social media for the armed forces outweigh the security risks.
- Since ombuds institutions are responsible for rectifying problems, a high degree of trust is required for them to operate effectively.
  Actively engaging with the public via social media can assist in building and maintaining that trust and even increase the level of cooperation with the public.

Chapter 3: Social Media and Ombuds Institutions

As the former National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman put it, **"Social media tools are ideally suited to the ombudsman's role."**[1] Social media can allow ombuds institutions to operate more efficiently and effectively, often at little or no additional cost.

1 André Marin, "Old Watchdog, New Tricks: How Social Media and New Technologies are Transforming the Modern Ombudsman", Ombudsman of Ontario, Canada, for the 10th *World Conference of the International Ombudsman Institute* http://www.theioi.org/downloads/u3qv/Wellington%20Conference_56.%20Working%20Session%20M_Andre%20Marin%20Paper.pdf.

In order to encourage individuals to come forward with their complaints, ombuds institutions must ensure they communicate effectively the rights and responsibilities to complain, and build the trust in the institution's ability to handle them effectively. Since the fundamental purpose of an ombuds institution is to receive and investigate complaints, they should endeavour to make sure that the correct communication avenues through which to file a complaint are available and easy to use. This means that new social media channels must be included in the modern toolkit, reaching out to audiences in the channels they prefer to use, thereby enhancing both of the awareness of the institution and build greater trust in the effectiveness of the institution.

The following chapter will examine some of the advantages provided by integrating social media into an ombuds institution's work in tangible ways, most notably how the use of social media can enhance the institution's visibility, enable it to reach new or ignored audiences, increase transparency and trust, remove barriers, and make it easier for people to make complaints, thus saving time and money by making tasks and responsibilities easier and cheaper to accomplish.

Greater Visibility and Exposure to Its Constituents

Because armed forces personnel are already using social media to communicate with family and friends, as well as a source of information and entertainment, ombuds institutions should also be present where their constituents are. By proactively reaching out to one's core audience – armed forces personnel – ombuds institutions are ensuring that their message and services reach them.

Ombuds institutions for the armed forces can have varying mandates with regards to who may file a complaint, and therefore, who its constituents are. Every ombuds institution for the armed forces may receive complaints from armed forces personnel, while most may also receive complaints from family of armed forces personnel and veterans, and many may receive complaints from civilians as well.[2] As a result, ombuds institutions have a rather large constituency whom they are responsible for. Because this constituency is rather diverse, ombuds institutions should be careful that their message

2 Buckland and McDermott, *Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces*, p. 59-62.

reaches all their constituents, not simply those armed forces personnel currently on duty and exposed to traditional communication methods, such as posters explaining soldiers' rights to complain in barracks, the inclusion of information in training sessions, or advertisements in military publications. Reservists, veterans, family of personnel, and any others mandated to file complaints should be aware of their right to do so but may not be accessible by traditional advertising and outreach methods. Social media, however, is not used by just one segment of society, and is therefore a tool that can facilitate reaching out to new audiences, engaging with them, and gaining their trust.

Social media can also be used to advertise one's own ombuds institution. It can provide accurate and specific targeting and reach that other forms of media cannot offer. Facebook, for example, allows users to advertise their products to specific demographics, such as age, gender, location, and interests; therefore, if an ombuds institution were to advertise on Facebook, it could be sure that the target would be reached more systematically.[3]

By engaging with the public, social media allows ombuds institutions to communicate their unfiltered message and not rely on intermediaries to do so. Social media also has a multiplier effect in that information can reach beyond those actively engaged on social media. Because of the "social" nature of social media, information can be shared and discussed, and be spread far beyond its original audience.

The COMPOSITE project for example, found that "even citizens who are not directly subscribed to a police service's information can also receive the updates through their friends. By using social media in this way, police services become more independent from the press, and open an immediate connection to the general public."[4] This, too, has implications for ombuds institutions. For example, an elderly veteran, who may not know how to nor be interested in using social media, could still learn of the ombuds institution through his children in this way.

In a more general sense, by enhancing the visibility of the ombuds institution, it increases its power and effectiveness. Because ombuds institutions' recommendations are very rarely binding, they are only as strong as their ability to ensure acceptance of their recommendations. A public that is more aware of and informed about an ombuds institution makes it harder for recommendations to be ignored by Ministers of Defence or Chiefs of Defence. So while the general public may not be an obvious audience for all ombuds institutions, it is nevertheless important that they remain informed of an ombuds institution's work. Without their interest, ombuds institutions may find that those responsible for implementing its recommendations are equally uninterested.

Greater Transparency and Communication about its Work

In addition to enhancing the visibility of the institution, social media can also better inform the public on what exactly an ombuds institution does. Often because of the confidential or sensitive nature of their work, they may not seem ideally suited to publicly broadcast their work. While this may be true in certain circumstances, there is still considerable space for an ombuds institution to advertise and promote its work (see Boxes 3.1 and 3.3). For example, the Zurich Police Department engaged in a 24 hour Twitter campaign to tweet all official police activity in one day. While they were bound by similarly restrictive concerns as ombuds institutions on personal privacy and data protection, they were still able to produce hundreds of tweets without compromising anyone's rights. For more information on this, refer to Box 3.2.

Box 3.1

The National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman on YouTube

The Canadian military ombudsman has produced a series of informative videos that explain some common problems faced by Canadian soldiers and their families. For issues such as "What is a board of inquiry?" and "Making the transition to civilian life", the video provides guidance to armed forces personnel in a way that is interesting and easy to understand. One video, "Other Complaints Mechanisms", outlines the services that are offered by the Ombudsman, as well as some of its limitations.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtVNYBL9e64

Box 3.2

The Zurich City Police "tweet-a-thon"

The Zurich City Police teamed up with the University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration (Zurich) to launch their "tweet-a-thon" titled #stapo24. For 24 hours, 8 police officers tweeted 400 tweets, broadcasting all of the activities and operations of the police department according to incoming calls. These ranged from the mundane – a report of a police officer picking up a dead bird – to the more serious – reports of an attempted break-in.[5]

The "tweet-a-thon" gained considerable attention. The story was covered in dozens of reports by local, national and regional television, radio and print media outlets, and over the course of the day, the police Twitter account gained several thousand followers; some followers even brought croissants to the police station to express their gratitude. Others created a fan club for a particularly popular patrol car.

The Zurich Police also analysed the results of the engagement. They found that over 50% of the tweets were in response to questions posed by citizens, the rest reported the activities of police officers on patrol. Citizens' reactions to the campaign were evaluated as either neutral (60%) or positive (40%), with a very marginal number of negative responses.[6]

Zurich Police Twitter: https://twitter.com/stadtpolizeizh

3 Facebook Business, "Reach All the Right People" https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads/ad-targeting/

4 Sebastian Denef, Nico Kaptein, P. Saskia Bayerl, Leonardo Ramirez, *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation.* COMPOSITE Project (2012), 18. http://www.composite-project.eu/tl_files/fM_k0005/download/COMPOSITE-social-media-best-practice.pdf

5 "Zurich Police on Twitter", *Zurich 4 You*, 5 December 2011.

6 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation,* 21.

In addition, using social media to promote the institution can have the effect of informing the public of the work it undertakes. In the above case of the Zurich Police, the public may not have previously been aware of all of the responsibilities and tasks that the police did in the course of one day. As evidenced by the creation of a fan club and croissant delivery, the public clearly gained a new appreciation for the police. The same lessons could be applied to ombuds institutions as these are often over-worked and under-staffed, and can be prone to suffer from negative publicity, wherein those who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint are far more likely to voice their displeasure than those who that received a positive outcome.

By promoting the institution's activities, such as the number of cases handled each day, of any visits it conducted, or of any reports it issued, it can combat misinformation, while demonstrating just how hard the ombuds institution is working. Studies have shown that official accounts on social media can be important in dispelling rumours during crisis communication.[7] Official social media accounts may also have the effect of reassuring plaintiffs that their complaints are being taken seriously, and that any delays are more understandable, thereby enhancing the public's and individual complainants' trust in the institution.

Police departments have found that social media has had a significant and tangible effect in building greater relations between the institution and their constituents. A large majority of police departments surveyed indicated that social media has improved community relations.[8] Moreover, by engaging in a dialogue with its community via social media, police have found that they can engage on more diverse topics, rather than traditional, narrow focused topics related to policing operations. This has, in turn, added a personal touch to the police services, and enhanced the public's trust in their police services.[9] An excellent example of this is the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police's (Lögreglan) use of Instagram (refer to Box 3.4 below for more details). Through clever and often humorous use of photos and videos, the *Lögreglan* have been able to reach audiences thus leading to extraordinarily positive exposure and good-will from the public, which can have considerable knock-on effects.

7 Cynthia Andrews, Elodie Fichet, Yuwei Ding, Emma S. Spiro, Kate Starbird, "Keeping up with the Tweet-dashians: The impact of 'official' accounts on online rumoring", *Proceedings of CSCW Conference* (San Francisco, 2016) http://faculty.washington.edu/kstarbi/CSCW2016_Tweetdashians_Camera_Ready_final.pdf

8 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *2015 Social Media Survey Results*, IACP Center for Social Mediahttp://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/Portals/1/documents/FULL%202015%20Social%20Media%20Survey%20Results.pdf

9 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 26.

Box 3.3

National Ombudsman of The Netherlands: "A Day in the Life of a National Ombudsman"

The Dutch National Ombudsman produced a video entitled "A Day in the Life of a National Ombudsman," which is available in both Dutch and English, and follows the ombudsman through an average work day. From meeting with veterans, discussing PTSD, being briefed by her investigative team, interviewed by the media about a specific public case, the video shows the public the range of activities that the ombudsman does over the course of a single day. While the video provides a fictional account of the ombudsman's day, it is nevertheless an extremely useful way for someone unfamiliar with the institution to learn about what the national ombudsman does. The video is also a useful tool for the national ombudsman to use when reaching out to new audiences.

https://youtu.be/v8iEsw1BZmM

Box 3.4

Reykjavik Metropolitan Police on Instagram

One of the most successful armed forces Instagram accounts is the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police account. The official Instagram account Lögreglan (Police) continues to rise in popularity with over 166 000 followers to date, more than the total population of Reykjavik. The popularity of the account may be due to the way it manages to portray the police in friendly and unexpected ways. One of the factors that makes this account so successful in terms of followers is the regular use of humour in its posts, creating a positive image of the organisation.[10]

While the Lögreglan account may appear light-hearted and not take itself too seriously, it now has direct, unfiltered access to communicate with tens of thousands of residents of Reykjavik. For example, during a race downtown, the police used the account to remind residents of the race, of road closures and to make sure that residents are parked in the appropriate areas. Similarly, it also used the account to inform its followers of a collective bargaining dispute between the police union and the state that had been ongoing for almost half a year. In both instances, the police were able to take advantage of their large following to inform the public on issues that they may not have otherwise been aware of.

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/logreglan/

10 The Reykjavík Metropolitan Police official Instagram account: https://www.instagram.com/logreglan/

Another way in which social media can enhance an ombuds institution's effectiveness is in following up on the non-compliance of recommendations. This is similar to the previous section, which explains how greater visibility strengthens an ombuds institution, as it makes it more are a good thing. They demonstrate that there is awareness of and trust in the system. Social media lowers barriers for individuals to file complaints. Several ombuds institutions have found that they noticed an increase in complaints, and therefore an increase in awareness of and trust in the complaints handling system, when they began using social media to promote their institution. The Ontario Ombudsman found that the number of complaints they received rose in tandem with their increased social media presence, and that when they announced an investigation or released a report, they received a rise in formal complaints.[11]

Social media also makes it easier to file a complaint. In the past, complaints had to be filed in person or in writing. Now, ombuds institutions are lowering the barriers to make a complaint. Almost all institutions allow persons to file a complaint electronically through their website, while many are experimenting with newer alternatives to filing complaints. The police in Nigeria are one example, which is examined in more detail in Box 3.5.

Many ombuds institutions still cannot receive complaints via social media, often because of privacy issues, such as those discussed in Chapter 2. However, this should not prove to be an impediment to adopting social media, and it can easily be mitigated. For example, many ombuds institutions explicitly state in their social media policy that they may not receive complaints via social media.[12] Even so, users are still likely to post complaints on social media platforms, directed at the ombuds institution. When the institution is not permitted to receive complaints via social media, staff responsible for using social media should be prepared to quickly refer them to the pre-approved complaints-handling methods, and follow up if necessary, to ensure the complaint has been filed.

11 Marin, "Old Watchdog, New Tricks", 4.

12 National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, official website, "Social Media Terms of Use", Government of Canada, http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-twitter/terms-of-use.page#complaints

Box 3.5

Nigerian Police Receive Complaints on Social Media

The Nigerian Police Force established the Complaint Response Unit to make it easier for citizens to lodge complaints about instances of abuse by the police services. In addition to a website, the Unit also created a Facebook page, Twitter account, and a number of dedicated hotlines on WhatsApp, Blackberry Messenger, and regular phone lines. Persons are able to file a formal complaint via Facebook, Twitter or the other social media platforms.[13]

The Complaints Response Unit will then also regularly update progress or investigations initiated, often designating the case number as a hashtag so users can easily track progress on the resolution of the investigation. It also provides updates on other pertinent topics, such as the arrest of a person impersonating an officer to extract bribes from citizens. This serves to combat misinformation, demonstrates to the public that the police are serious about combating corruption, and being transparent throughout the process, and therefore builds trust between the police and the general public.

13 "Complaint Response Unit - CRU, Nigeria Police Force" https://www.facebook.com/npfcomplaint/

Greater Efficiency and Affordability

Given the current state of affairs, government agencies are expected to accomplish more with less. Less funding, fewer staff and increased expectations have become the new normal. In light of increasing budget cuts, social media can provide a cost-effective alternative to traditional practices.

Police services have demonstrated that social media can be implemented effectively with minimal, if any, additional costs and time. As noted in Chapter 2, the large majority of police services spend less than 10 hours per week on maintaining their agency's social media presence.

While social media does not require intensive amounts of time, it can have significant savings, especially when re-examining how current funding could be better used. In the United Kingdom, the Greater Manchester Police experienced a 25% budget cut, and was forced to think creatively on how it could continue to carry out its work with these funding deficits. They adopted a new comprehensive communication and social media strategy that required no additional cost or personnel. Instead, the Greater Manchester Police redirected money that had previously been spent on printing and physical distribution of communications materials to social media efforts.[14]

In addition, police services began to identify new potential for social media that had not been possible with other forms of communication, namely the use of social media in investigations. These new utilities allowed police services to not only work more affordably but also more efficiently. Gathering information, contacting potential witnesses, and verifying identities, for example, became far easier to accomplish without even having to leave one's desk. These new applications have truly revolutionised how police and other organisations responsible for investigations – like ombuds institutions – conduct their work. These organisations cannot sit by idly while such a valuable new tool remains available to them.

14 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 28.

Chapter Highlights

- By proactively reaching out to one's core audience – armed forces personnel – through social media, ombuds institutions are ensuring that their message and services reach their constituents.
- Social media can better inform the public on what ombuds institutions do.
- Social media lowers barriers for individuals to file complaints.
- Social media can provide cost-effective alternatives to traditional practices.

Chapter 4: Creating a Social Media Strategy

As discussed in Chapter 2, lessons from the military show that by depending less on traditional media sources, militaries have gained more control over their public image while promoting their own narrative and key values. Lessons from police services show how law enforcement and investigative institutions can be more responsive and timely, and their direct channel to the public can generate positive exposure and stimulate wider cooperation in everyday situations and during emergencies.[1]

1 For more information, see Chapter 3.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, ombuds institutions can learn from these experiences, and comprehensively integrate social media into their work, first by identifying their own institutional objectives for the integration of social media. Simultaneously, ombuds institutions need to make a number of choices regarding their tone and form of address, the content they share, the audiences they target, followers with whom they engage, how they aim to respond to comments and feedback, and what performance measures to put in place and so on.[2]

In this chapter we discuss some of these key decisions and approaches, while stressing that institutional uses of social media are ever-evolving, and that one size does not fit all. A certain degree of flexibility as well as some trial and error is required when adapting social media to meet the institution's needs in the best ways. In fact, Pippa Alldritt, digital communications specialist and former Head of Digital and Brand Strategy at UK MoD, stresses that **starting slow using small-scale pilots and surveys are** imperative for creating a successful social media strategy. This allows the organisation to test its tone of voice, learn how to shape and promote content, and identify its audiences. Using small-scale pilots, the organisation can also evaluate how to avoid reputational or security-related risks and increase the benefits of their communication strategy.[3] See examples in box 4.1.

2 As did police services; see: Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 20-21.

3 Dermanović, "Pippa Norris".

Box 4.1 **National Ombudsman of The Netherlands' use of WhatsApp**

The widespread use of WhatsApp as a form of instant-messaging in The Netherlands had led the ombudsman's office to look into using the application to facilitate individuals with problems or complaints to contact their office. However, this type of communication was new to the office's webcare team and required a short examination period before widely publicizing the new communication channel.

Initially, the webcare team posted the WhatsApp contact details on one page of their website and did not advertise the new service. After the webcare team took some time to acclimatize themselves to responding to questions via Whatsapp, they began to publicly promote the option of contacting their office through this medium on other social media platforms, and more widely on their website. As a result, this gradual roll-out allowed the ombudsman to ensure that they were prepared to handle a potentially large influx of questions and complaints on this new platform.[4]

4 National Ombudsman of The Netherlands Webcare Team, presentation at the Ombudsman office, 22 April 2016.

Define Your Objectives

Clearly defining your objectives prior to launching an institutional social media presence will lead to a sounder, more effective engagement with users and followers. Defining the purpose of the institutional account, i.e. what the organisation is hoping to accomplish by using it and how it fits with the broader communications strategy, will guide the institution in choosing which applications to adopt as well as what content to share. News outlets, journalists, entertainers and governments all use a different tone, style and frequency in their use of social media. In other words, only after figuring out the "why" can the institution continue and plan the "how".

In identifying the "why" in order to plan the "how", P. Saskia Bayerl, Associate Professor Technology and Organizational Behavior at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, differentiates amongst three functions or purposes of social media use by police services. Organised in this way, these three broad categories, as Bayerl lays out below, are also relevant to ombuds institutions when defining institutional objectives:

Purpose 1: to PULL information

- To gather information from the public to support crime investigations ('crowd sourcing')
- Listening and monitoring situations for situational awareness
- Intelligence gathering for crime prevention or investigation

Purpose 2: to PUSH information

- Notifying the public of crime or disaster related issues ('information')
- Information on crime prevention ('education')

Box 4.2

US Army: Facebook as a Tool to Communicate Directly with Over a Million Followers

The US military for example identified a need to communicate directly with the public, an objective which falls into the category of "pushing information". Dale Sweetnam, formerly of the Online and Social Media Division in the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs of the US Army explained: "we've taken our communication and distributed to a much broader audience than we could have possibly imagined seven to eight years ago. We know that instead of hoping that the media or the press goes to the army website and picks up a press release, that these 1.4 million users on Facebook can see the content we put out there on our news feed".[5]

5 Marcia W. DiStaso and Denise Sevick Bortree (eds.) *Ethical Practice of Social Media in Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 70.

Purpose 3: for community outreach

- Relationship and trust building
- Public relations (image campaigns, show the 'human side' of policing)
- Recruitment[6]

Even if ombuds institutions are mostly concerned with the smaller audience of their own constituents, this audience is more likely active on social media than they are on any other form of communication. Having a direct channel to constituents, informing or reminding them of their rights and updating them on the activities of the ombuds institution, reinforces the visibility and trust between the institution and its public.

In addition, the constituency of an ombuds institution is especially diverse (e.g. cadets, veterans, family of personnel). Ombuds institutions may find that communicating with these groups using different accounts may be more effective, as they will respond to different types of content. This multifaceted approach allows organisations to strategically tailor communications to specific audiences, and minimises problems when conveying different types of messages to disparate audiences.

Furthermore, securing good governance is one of the overall objectives of ombuds institutions. Therefore, raising the profile of the institution using social media relates to **promoting values of good governance**. In practice, this could be done by sharing key points of ongoing investigations as

6 P. Saskia Bayerl, personal communication, 9 August 2016.

Box 4.3 **National Ombudsman of The Netherlands' use of WhatsApp**

The Manitoba Ombudsman in Canada, for example, clearly states the objectives of its social media accounts on the institution's website:

"Manitoba Ombudsman will use social media platforms to:

- Promote Manitoba Ombudsman's mandate
- reach a wider, more diverse audience
- disseminate time-sensitive information as quickly as possible
- educate and inform
- consider alternative viewpoints
- promote discussion (with a view to finding solutions)
- promote events, new publications, and other materials

learn about the community and its needs"[7]

7 Manitoba Ombudsman, "About the Office: Social Media Policy" https://www.ombudsman.mb.ca/info/social-media-policy.html

well as by sharing articles written by the institution or by others which promote good governance.[8] The Irish Standards in Public Office Commission, for example, regulates the institution's Twitter use: "tweets will be used to communicate news and information about the work of the Office, including the Annual Report, Special Investigation Reports and other matters of interest to the public".[9]

Acknowledge Limitations

After establishing why and how ombuds institutions intend on using their social media accounts, acknowledging what content they are not willing to share or tolerate from users is equally important. Many ombuds institutions have made their social media policies visible on their public websites, where they clearly acknowledge their limitations or restrictions in using social media. This transparency can minimise confusion and help to better manage constituents' expectations of ombuds institutions.

Time and Resources

With regards to limitations, **time seems to be a major concern for ombuds institutions** in managing their online presence. As noted in Chapter 1, social media can enhance the responsiveness of ombuds institutions. However, clearly acknowledging the institution's policies and capacities assists in managing the expectations of followers and commentators. The Office of the Ombudsman of Ireland states for example:

"Normally our Twitter account will be updated and monitored during office hours, Monday to Friday. We welcome and will read all @ messages. However in general, due to resource constraints, we will not be in a position to reply to all messages."[10] In addition, some studies suggest that the amount of time an ombuds institution would need to spend using social media is less than might be expected. For more information about this, see Box 4.4.

8 Julia Campbell, "Steps to a Successful Nonprofit Social Media Strategy", *The Balance*, 8 August 2016 http://nonprofit.about.com/od/socialmedia/fl/11-Steps-to-a-Successful-Nonprofit-Social-Media-Strategy.htm ;

"How to Develop a Social Media Strategy for your Organization", *Know How Non-Profit*, 18 September 2013 https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-develop-a-social-media-strategy-for-your-organisation

9 Standards in Public Office Commission official website, "Commission Twitter Policy", Republic of Ireland http://www.sipo.gov.ie/en/About-Us/Our-Policies/Commission-Twitter-Policy/

10 Office of the Ombudsman official website, "Office Twitter Policy", Republic of Ireland https://www.ombudsman.gov.ie/en/About-Us/Policies-and-Strategies/Office-Twitter-Policy/

Box 4.4

Time – a Valuable Resource

There are vastly different levels of engagement that one can dedicate to social media. For instance, in a survey of 553 police departments across the United States, which all varied in size from 1-5 staff (3.3%) to 1000+ (2.2%), nearly 60% of all police departments spent less than 5 hours per week maintaining their social media presence.

Also in the survey, over 85% of agencies reported that social media has helped them solve crimes, and over 83% attested that social media has improved police-community relations. With time being a major concern repeatedly mentioned by ombuds institutions and other organisations in adopting social media, these figures show that spending relatively little time maintaining social media accounts may still lead to great benefits.[11]

11 IACP, *2015 Social Media Survey Results*, 1, 15, 22-23.

Complaints

Another concern of many ombuds institutions is **receiving complaints via social media** applications. Although some technologies are readily available for discreet information sharing, most ombuds institution do not believe that social media is an accepted platform for the submission of official complaints, due to considerations of priva

Box 4.5

Social Media Operators as the "Gatekeepers" of the Institution

The National Ombudsman of the Netherlands for example acknowledges that complaints are not accepted via social media. However, the Ombudsman's webcare team attests that the most common type of question they receive via social media is "can you help me or do you know who can". As the webcare team is an integral part of the institution, familiar with its different divisions and procedures, they can often answer these questions immediately. Still, the team's policy is to answer within 30 minutes to 2 hours, as some questions do require further inquiry. If this is the case, the webcare team will inform the individual with the question that they are looking into it, and they will get a more in depth answer as soon as possible. In this way, the webcare team serves as gatekeepers pointing constituents in the right direction when approaching the Ombudsman.[12]

12 National Ombudsman of The Netherlands Webcare Team, presentation at the Ombudsman office, 22 April 2016.

cy, confidentiality as well as the logistical and administrative concerns of documenting and tracking complaints.[13]

Inappropriate Content

Beyond the limitations brought about by resources, ombuds institutions should acknowledge what type of content or comments it **will not allow on its social media accounts**. As what constitutes as "inappropriate" varies and is prone to interpretation, the institution should clearly define and state what it will not tolerate from its users when commenting on the institution's posts.

An example for an institution-specific policy can be seen on the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman website. It states they will not acknowledge tweets that contain comments about the work or professional duties of individual employees.[14] Other institution-specific policies of the ombudsman include not allowing announcements from political organisations or advertisers, as well as posts that are typed in all CAPS ("it is difficult to read and is interpreted as yelling").[15]

Evidently, an institution's policies may vary and depend on the culture and values of the institution and the public it is engaging with. However, in its "Commenting Policy – What is and is Not Acceptable?" the Ombudsman establishes more standard policies, which other institutions have also addressed in their regulatory frameworks. This includes, but is not limited to comments that are "racist, hateful, sexist, homophobic, slanderous, insulting or life-threatening", as well as "abusive, aggressive, coarse, explicit, vulgar, violent, obscene or pornographic".[16]

13 Based on a questionnaire and discussions at the guide planning and review workshop, 22 April 2016.

14 National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, "Social Media Terms of Use", Government of Canada http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-twitter/terms-of-use.page

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid. In addition to institutional policies, social media applications and services have their own terms and conditions regarding the content they allow and do not allow users to post.

Develop a Plan, Understand the Medium

Initially, police services in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Finland, Iceland, Ireland and elsewhere used social media mainly as an additional channel for their communication departments.[17] However, the range of uses has since extended considerably, as police services found that treating a social media account as simply one more outlet for press releases produced a limited amount of traction as well as a limited level of users' engagement.[18]

In other words, **the content should fit the medium, and it should also fit the platform.** Press releases or other long and complex messages are not fit for Twitter for example, as it is a form of micro-blogging with each tweet restricted to 140 characters. It is suitable however for posting a short attention-catching statement, perhaps a quote or a statistic from the press release, and providing a link to that longer article.

Facebook allows for more text than Twitter, which often captions an image uploaded to the account. In general, whenever an image – photo or video – is possible, it is likely to attract more attention from users, and often expresses more about the institution than a short text would, as explained in chapter 1 of this guide. Pippa Alldritt, who led the Digital and Brand Strategy team at the UK MoD, emphasises the significance of image-led content, and encourages the use of photo and video-led applications in a way that lets the image tell the story.[19] Alldritt also predicts that image-led applications, such as Instagram for example, will continue to grow. Even the US Army took notice of their audiences' love for videos and photos, which prompted them to join Pinterest in 2012, in addition to their other existing social media platforms.[20]

In addition, **timing can have a profound impact** on how the target public interacts with the information. By tailoring a post to a timely event, such as a public holiday, a popular news story or trend, the post is much more likely to have a greater resonance with its audience. Making posts at times when most users are on social media can also increase the impact. For example, the National Ombudsman of the Netherlands devel-

17 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 16-17.

18 See for example: IACP, *2015 Social Media Survey Results* as well as the website: The International Association of Chief of Police (IACP) conducts a yearly survey on police uses of social media as well as examines case studies and examples. See: (http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/

19 Dermanović, "Pippa Norris".

20 DiStaso and Sevick Bortree, *Ethical Practice*, 70-71.

oped a content calendar so its staff can coordinate all its social media content and plan posts strategically.[21]

Finally, **finding the right tone of voice** for the organization on social media accounts is a matter of balance. Some accounts, especially those speaking directly on behalf of the organisation use a more formal tone. Other organisations, which allow for staff to speak on behalf the organisation (for example in a professional blog or account associated with the organisation) allow for a less formal voice, thus adding additional dimensions and appeal to the organisation's overall communications strategy. Experiences from police services show that they receive positive feedback when they rephrase press releases, and when they post content that is not directly related to police operations, or which has to do more with police culture. Sharing personal messages such as a police officer leaving for vacation or historic images of police officers tend to receive warm feedback from citizens.[22]

Using a less formal tone is a way to "humanise" an institution that often seems faceless or isolated from the community it lives and works in. A particularly successful example of such an informal use of social media is the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police and its Instagram account Logreglan (Police). In fact, the Instagram account is so popular that it has more followers on Instagram than actual Reykjavik residents. By posting photos of police events, officers riding their bikes in a playful manner, working out, or posing with their pets, the account manages to "humanise" the police service, and creates a positive image using humour.[23] This stresses the importance of tone and creative engagement as well as the power of a visual narrative, and image-led content.[24]

Most important when incorporating social media into a communication strategy and dialogue platform, is for those manning it to **always keep a consistent voice** that is in accordance with the organisation's aims and message. It is especially crucial to lay this out clearly when more than one person is answering queries and comments on the platforms. A unified voice that speaks for the organisation will be key to building a sense of familiarity and trust for the audience.

21 Interview with the National Ombudsman of the Netherlands Webcare Team, private communication, 26 July 2016.

22 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 24-25.

23 The Reykjavík Metropolitan Police official Instagram account: https://www.instagram.com/logreglan/

24 For more information about the Logreglan's use of Instagram refer to the box in Chapter 3.4.

Develop Institutional Guidelines

Guidelines for Institutional and Private Use

Once the role of social media in the overall communication strategy of the institution has been determined, the next key step is articulating clear guidelines to promoting sound behaviour, based on the values of the organisation.

All staff of ombuds institutions - in particular those in the head office - who act as the public representative of the organisation, along with those responsible for operating the organisation's official social media presence, must be careful in how they present themselves on social media to avoid doubts about the office's impartiality, neutrality, independence, effectiveness and accountability. Controversial remarks on political or sensitive topics may cause the public to question the organisation's impartiality, and may therefore erode trust in the organisation. This too applies to staff using social media in a purely private capacity. Just as armed forces personnel need to be careful while using social media and to "think before you share," so too must ombuds institutions staff.

For this reason, the ombudsman for the Australian state of Victoria's *Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy* is quite instructive. It provides detailed guidance on how staff may use social media, and to ensure that any personal statements made are not done on behalf of the Ombudsman's office. Further, emphasising the utmost importance of maintaining the impartial and independent reputation of the office: "staff must ensure that any personal comments do not compromise their capacity to perform their public role, the public's confidence that the Victorian Ombudsman is unbiased, or in any way question the reputation, integrity or impartiality of the Victorian Ombudsman."[25] The Toronto Police Service concludes this guideline by reminding its personnel: "**your accounts are yours but they represent us**".[26]

25 Victorian Ombudsman official website, "Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy", Government of Australia, https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/Social-Media-Policy

26 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 6.

Creating guidelines for personnel operating institutional social media accounts, as well as those who only use social media in a private capacity does not mean that the institution has to reinvent the wheel. The South African Military Ombud states that their guidelines follow the South African government communications policy in promoting government transparency, participation and interaction with the public.[27] In general, it is a good idea to reference and learn from guidelines created by fellow institutions. For example, *The Social Corps*, the United States Marines social media handbook, contains excellent guidelines, applicable for military personnel, institutions, and even private users, titled "15 tips to stay safe and out of trouble online".[28]

Box 4.6

US Marines: Trusting Your Online Communities

On their official website, the US Marines adapted their guidelines to fit their experiences. The Marines' guidelines exemplify how an institution can study the "nature" of social media and design its strategy accordingly. For example, the operators of official social media accounts noticed that when negative comments were made criticising the Marines, users were the first to defend the Marines position.

The Marines write about the balance needed between monitoring conversations and allowing for open debates. See below some examples:

- "This is an opportunity to leverage the tools for what they are – a means of solid communication. Avoid the tendency to defend and protect every comment made though. Given time, social networks normally self-correct negative aspects. Let users explain and work out the issues and ideas being expressed.
- Do not stray from negative comments. An open forum comes with certain risk [sic] of negativity and to shy from it will tarnish credibility. However, responses must be vetted / approved and accurately express the Corps' position without editorializing or straying from the facts.
- Allow your fans to fight your battles for you, as well, when possible. They are, by virtue of their nature, not the official Corps' responders and, as such, carry with them a different level of credibility".[29]

27 Based on an interview with officials from the South African Military Ombud, 22 April 2016.

28 US Marines Corps, "The Social Corps: The U.S. M.S Marines Social Media Principles" http://www.navy.mil/ah_online/OPSEC/docs/Policy/Marines-Social-Media-Handbook.pdf

29 Ibid.

Guidelines and Monitoring Accounts

Guidelines do not only pertain to what and what not to post, but also how to react to users who engage via the institutional accounts of the organisation. Some users will not abide by the institutions guidelines even if they are clearly stated on the official website. However, institutions should not fear its users. The US Marines actually encourage trusting your online community: "trust is the foundation upon which the success of public affairs and social media is built".[30]

While they still monitor their pages, the confidence in their virtual community allows the Marines to moderate the conversations less, and allow for users to actively express their support. However, some engagements on social media require immediate and serious intervention. The New South Wales report: *Responding to anti-social use of social media and the internet* provides clear guidelines on these matters. For example, Figure 1 illustrates the five steps of managing online content, and Figure 2 illustrates how to evaluate and assess unacceptable comments.[31]

Figure 1

Monitor	Evaluate	Respond	Follow-up	Support
Discover negative or inappropriate online content	Content Purpose Credibility Impact Context Rules	Public response Private response Public and private response Legal response	Follow-up and follow through	Support your staff

30 The US Marines Corps official website, "Social Media Standard Operating Procedures" http://www.marines.mil/News/SocialMedia/SOPs.aspx

31 New South Wales Ombudsman official website, "Responding to Anti-Social use of Social Media and the Internet" Government of Australia, https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/fact-sheets/state-and-local-government/responding-to-anti-social-use-of-social-media-and-the-internet

Figure 2

Is the content unreasonable?

- Is it constructive criticism or is it inflammatory, offensive, misinformed or misleading?
- Does it contain personal information about a staff member (or their family)?
- Is it unlawful?

What is the apparent purpose of the content?

- Does it appear to be dedicated ti targeting or degrading others?
- Is it a publicity stunt?
- Does it incite others to engage in unlawful conduct?

Is the online content highly and easily accessible?

- Has it been viewed by a relatively small number of people or has it 'gone viral' thereby requiring a relatively comprehensive response?
- Could it be viewed as credible or does the content or behaviour seem unbelievable?

What impact will the content have on your organisation?

- Is the reputation of your organisation or a member of your staff at risk?
- Do you have common law duty of care or legal liability to respond or act?

What are he circumstances surrounding the online posting?

- Does the complainant have a legitimate issue thet needs to be addressed? If yes, then you may have to act and act quickly.

What are the terms of use?

- Organisations should include mechanisms to deal with unacceptable behaviour in their terms of use policy including if and when content will be removed.

Evaluating Progress, Implementing Lessons Learned

Determine How to Measure Success

The most straightforward measure for engagement on social media are likes, shares, retweets, and commenting, which are provided by the platform's analytical tools. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn provide analytics free of charge. However, further evaluation measurements will depend on setting clear objectives, metrics, and data sources from the outset. These may develop and change over time as new objectives and data sources are added. This valuable data will inform communicators, and help develop the necessary experience in learning what type of content, on which channels, at which optimum time - creates the most traction.

Further, user surveys are key tools that provide quantitative and qualitative data, which helps to create a deeper understanding of the audiences, and may enable ombuds institutions to become more adept at meeting their needs. According to a 2015 survey of police departments in the US, 25% of them conducted community surveys.[32]

Other methods of estimating success depend on the initial objectives set out by the institution. Beyond followers, likes and reposts, simply calculating the time-saving and cost-saving effects of using social media may serve as a tool for measuring success; for example saving the costs of recruitment ads or press release publications, or obtaining information quickly and easily without leaving the office when investigating a case.

Listen to Feedback

Whether via users surveys or posted directly on an institutional account, feedback is an opportunity for improvement. In fact, as illustrated in Box 4.7, even mistakes can be seized as an opportunity to reshape the organisation's strategy, and promote positive exposure.

The COMPOSITE project mentioned earlier, illustrates the positive outcome of the GMP's experience, demonstrated above in Box 4.7, by more than just supportive tweets. In fact, some locals even chose to show their support for the police service by bringing food for the officers at the station.[33] This example is telling, as it reconnects the online with the offline. In other words, positive exposure using social media applications is not limited to a virtual reality of online communities, but rather shapes the opinions and actions of individuals in "real" life.

32 IACP, *2015 Social Media Survey Results*, 24.

33 Ibid., 25.

Promoting an open dialogue using the organisation's official channel has also been endorsed by the US Marines social media handbook, mentioned above. To conclude the issue of creating a social media presence, we stress here the philosophy of the Marines regarding social media: "this type of communication is a conversation, not a speech."

Box 4.7

The Greater Manchester Police: From Error to Opportunity

During riots in the UK in 2011, the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) had used social media in order to communicate with the public as well as collect information and conduct investigations. One of their tweets however, caused much controversy. The GMP tweeted:

"Mum-of-two, not involved in disorder, jailed for FIVE months for accepting shorts looted from shop. There are no excuses."[34]

Many of the GMP's followers felt the tweet was too harsh. The GMP issued an official apology, removed the tweet, but also used the opportunity to engage with their followers asking for feedback on their communication efforts.

The GMP received both detailed criticisms from which they could learn and improve, as well as appraisals for their embrace of social media. By both apologizing for their mistake and initiating a dialogue with the public, the GMP found an opportunity to promote a positive image of their organization by appearing "more human". Followers tweeted for example: *"Someone made a mistake, tweet removed and apology issued. FFS it's human behaviour"* and *"@gmpolice everything right, more transparency = more faith in you guys".*[35]

34 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 21; Sebastian Denef, P. Saskia Bayerl and Nico Kaptein, "Social Media and the Police: Tweeting Practices of British Police Forces during the August 2011 Riots", *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (2013), 3471-3480.

35 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, p. 21, 25.

Box 4.8

US Marines Guidance: Social Media is a Conversation

"The temptation is to send out command messages and organizational information, but it's also good to keep the page entertaining enough for people to want to follow it. Don't fall into the trap of talking at your audience. **This type of communication is a conversation, not a speech.** Ask your audience for feedback and suggestions; then act on that feedback. Being social accomplishes little if your audience is not interested in what's being said. Listening to your audience can mean the difference between maintaining a successful social media presence or an irrelevant one. Take the time to respond to questions; your community will value the interaction".[36]

The Social Corps, US Marines

36 US Marines Corps, "The Social Corps", 23.

Chapter Highlights

- Like any other organisation, ombuds institutions first must identify their own institutional needs and objectives, in order to create an effective social media strategy, within an overall communication strategy.
- Starting slow and using small-scale pilots and surveys allows testing tone of voice, types of content, and mitigates risks.
- Using social media requires that the content fit the medium, as well as fit the platform.
- Some organisations benefit from a friendlier, less formal tone of voice on social media. This depends on the organisation and its objectives, and is generally a matter of balance.
- All staff of ombuds institutions must be careful in how they present themselves on social media to avoid doubts about the office's impartiality, neutrality, independence, effectiveness and accountability.
- Institutions should not fear its users and followers. Open dialogue may often draw negative commentary; however, in such cases the institution has tools to assess and react to the inappropriate use of social media.
- Ombuds institutions should measure their progress against their objectives. Social media indicators can inform communicators and help develop the necessary experience in learning what type of content, on which channels, at which optimum time, creates the most traction.

Chapter 5: Social Media and Investigations

This chapter will explore the role social media can play in investigations conducted by ombuds institutions. Because there is generally a lack of existing good practice by ombuds institutions using social media in investigations, this chapter will draw heavily upon good practice by police services. As discussed in Chapter 1, ombuds institutions and police have much in common. In particular, they are both responsible for conducting investigations into wrongdoing even though the nature of the wrongdoing may differ; ombuds institutions are often not mandated to investigate criminal matters. Police have been active in adopting social media and integrating it holistically into their daily operations, for example in obtaining or verifying information relevant for an investigation. Therefore, social media usage by police can prove to be instructive for ombuds institutions that are seeking to expand their use of social media in investigations. As always, before using social media in investigations, ombuds institutions should ensure that such activities are in compliance with their national legal frameworks.

Types of Investigations

Investigations are typically initiated at the behest of a complaint, whereby an ombuds institution receives a complaint, examines its merits (e.g., there has been wrongdoing, the complaint falls within the relevant mandate, it is not criminal in nature, etc.), and then investigates the complaint. These typically make up the majority of an ombuds institution's investigations. However, these types of investigations are dependent on an individual turning to the body in the first place.

Ombuds institutions can, and already do, conduct outreach by expanding their social media presence in a targeted fashion and engaging with the public, visiting barracks, and speaking with armed forces personnel, or receiving informal complaints (either second-hand or not in compliance with the formal complaints-filing process). As they do this, they will naturally discover additional problems or concerns that have not been raised in a formal complaint, yet still warrant further examination.

It is just as important that in these instances, ombuds institutions have the ability to investigate the matter, and issue recommendations, if necessary, despite receiving no formal complaint. Initiating an investigation on their own initiative is often referred to as an "**own-motion investigation**", and is available to most ombuds institutions for the armed forces.[1] It is particularly important that ombuds institutions have and use this form of investigation as they increasingly use social media to interact with their audience.

Another form that often stems from own-motion investigations is that of **systemic investigations**. This form typically deals with two types of problems: widespread problems or laws or regulations that are non-existent, harmful or misleading.[2] As a result, systemic investigations deal with issues that have a wider scope than a typical isolated instance of abuse or wrongdoing, but point to a pattern of it. Systemic investigations, therefore, can have the greatest impact on the lives of armed forces personnel, because the matter being investigated could have the potential to affect many more people than the few concerned in a normal complaint.

1 Buckland and McDermott, *Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces Handbook*, p. 90, Table 8A, 90.

2 Ibid., 90-91.

Use of Social Media in Complaints-Based Investigations

As has been noted in Chapter 2, information that has been shared on social media can be very difficult, if not impossible, to fully remove from the internet. In effect, social media creates a permanent digital account of information integral to an investigation, such as someone's personal information, movements, connections (social networks of friends and associates) and opinions, interests and preferences. Furthermore, most communication is conducted in writing and is therefore recorded.

Realising this potential, police departments from around the world have almost universally begun using social media while conducting investigations. In a 2015 survey of over 500 American police departments, 96% of them indicated that social media was valuable in conducting investigations.[3] Police services in Europe, too, have noted the value of social media in conducting investigations.[4] These social platforms have not merely assisted with investigations; 85% of US police departments surveyed reported that social media has helped their agency actually solve a crime.[5]

There is a range of information available on social media, from that of easily accessible information publicly shared and searchable, to that of information hidden behind privacy controls. Both types of information are important to have access to during an investigation. Police departments have developed a wide range of tools and skills to access the information needed. Some police departments have also established highly trained and specialised units tasked with cyber investigations. Ombuds institutions, however, may be endowed with different investigative powers than law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, ombuds institutions are entrusted with considerable powers to access information during investigations.[6]

3 IACP, *2015 Social Media Survey Results*, 21.

4 Denef et al., *Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation*, 13.

5 IACP, *2015 Social Media Survey Results*, 22.

6 For more detailed information about ombuds institutions powers in accessing information, see Chapter 10, "Access to Information," Buckland and McDermott, *Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces*, 115-125.

Accessing Public Information

Information that is publicly shared, and is easily searchable is considered in the public domain. Therefore, no specialised authorisations are necessary to access and use this information. Police officers have found that considerable information can be obtained in an investigation from these rudimentary searches of social media that would not have been available otherwise. From identification of suspects or witnesses to evidence of wrongdoing, each of which is illustrated in Box 5.1, social media has proven to be an important tool in investigations. It is especially valuable because this information was found as a result of traditional investigative techniques that have been applied to the digital realm. Contacting known acquaintances and keeping an ear out for gossip are long-established methods for police to collect information, though they now are able to do so on different social media platforms. These actions do not create new onerous conditions; rather they complement and enhance the work that was already being done.

While the incredible magnitude of social media may appear daunting – after all, there are billions of people using

Box 5.1
Old Business, New Ways: Gathering Information via Social Media

Evidence collection: "It is amazing that people still 'brag' about their actions on social media sites…even their criminal actions. Last week we had an assault wherein the victim was struck with brass knuckles. The suspect denied involvement in a face-to-face interview, but his Facebook page had his claim of hurting a kid and believe it or not, that he dumped the [brass knuckles] in a trash can at a park. A little footwork… led to the brass knuckles being located and [a confession] during a follow-up interview."[7]

Location of suspects: "I was able to identify a drug dealer known only by his street name and physical description by finding him on another dealer's page. He was showing off his bike and you could see the plate. Got the registration and ID'd him."[8]

Witness identification: "I regularly read our local gossip page on Facebook. One night after a pursuit I was scanning the site and found that someone had witnessed a portion of the pursuit. I contacted that person and we obtained a witness statement supporting our charge of felony eluding against the suspect."[9]

7 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 12.

8 LexisNexis, Social Media Use in Law Enforcement: *Crime Prevention and Investigative activates continue to drive usage* (2014), 8. http://www.lexisnexis.com/risk/downloads/whitepaper/2014-social-media-use-in-law-enforcement.pdf

9 Ibid., 9.

it – there are a number of software and tools that seek to distil the vast information into something more easily consumable. Moreover, many social media companies have demonstrated a willingness to actively assist investigators. Facebook[10], Twitter[11], Instagram[12], just to name a few companies, have dedicated guidelines, staff, and contacts for law enforcement to facilitate their accessing essential documents, records, or evidence required in an investigation.

Accessing Private Information

Accessing information that is not publicly available can be more problematic. A number of police departments have begun creating specialised investigative units for monitoring social media. These units use specific tools and techniques to gain access to information that is not easily accessible via public searches. However, just like police engaging in traditional undercover activities, there are special considerations that must be taken into account when engaging in undercover activities on social media. A legal review of the covert use of social media must be conducted before initiating such activities, and clear actionable guidelines should be established in compliance with the law, which all officers must follow when undertaking such work. The New York Police Department (NYPD) issued such a policy to guide its covert use of social media in investigations, which is explained in Box 5.2.

When establishing specialised units such as these, investigators must be aware of the laws regulating individuals' right to privacy. Because each national legal framework is unique, it is not possible to provide detailed guidance on the possibilities and limits for investigators accessing information that is privately shared on social media. [13]

10 Facebook, "Information for Law Enforcement Authorities": https://www.facebook.com/safety/groups/law/guidelines/

11 Twitter, "Guidelines for Law Enforcement": https://support.twitter.com/articles/41949#

12 Instagram, "Information for Law Enforcement": https://help.instagram.com/494561080557017

13 For more information about the legal considerations in the European Union, see: European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), "Surveillance by intelligence services: fundamental rights safeguards and remedies in the European Union - Mapping Member States' legal frameworks" http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2015/surveillance-intelligence-services

Education and Training

In addition to staff being formally educated on the laws pertaining to accessing information in investigations, staff should be properly trained and educated on how to use social media for investigations. Many ombuds institutions and police departments have noted that they may not have the onsite capacity to use social media effectively in investigations, and that they need additional assistance on techniques. Some police departments have developed comprehensive training programmes to train staff, such as the Toronto Police Service, outlined below in Box 5.3. Other initiatives, such as the Social Media the Internet and Law Enforcement (SMILE) Conference, seek to share good practices on the use of social media by law enforcement in the areas of public outreach, crime prevention, and forensics.[14] Other institutions have developed their own capacities internally.[15]

14 See SMILE website: http://smileconference.com/

15 Based on an interview with officials from the South African Military Ombud, 22 April 2016.

Box 5.2
Social Media in Investigations: NYPD Regulations

In September 2012, the NYPD issued Operations Order 34, titled Use of Social Networks for Investigative Purposes – General Procedure. The memo outlined the procedures that the NYPD follows when using social media in investigations or research, in order to balance the need for information in crime prevention and the preservation of public order, and privacy expectations.

In particular, it provides detailed guidance on how the NYPD may create and maintain aliases when acting on social media, and operate on NYPD equipment anonymously.

It also provides guidance about relevant legal procedures that all NYPD officers are bound by, namely that officers may not engage in political activity unless specifically authorised, as well as the means to request information from internet service providers for information relevant to the investigation.[16]

16 NYPD, "Operations Order 34: Use of Social Networks for Investigative Purposes – General Procedure", 5 September 2012 https://publicintelligence.net/nypd-social-network-investigations/

Box 5.3

TPS Training Course: Computer-Facilitated Crimes

The Toronto Police Service conducts two different training courses. The first is a three-day course to inform and educate members of the TPS on how to make best use of social media to communicate with members of the public. The TPS has also developed an extensive week-long training on computer-facilitated crime for investigators. An expert on cybercrime teaches TPS detectives a range of topics pertaining to digital investigations, and is not limited to social media. These topics include:

- *Internet investigations, including IP addresses and tracing websites*
- *Social media searches and source intelligence*
- *Facebook account management, privacy settings, and data searches*
- *Cellular telephones and devices, Internet service providers, and cell tower data*
- *Search and seizure of computers, cell phones, and related devices*
- *Forensic analysis of computers, cell phones, and related devices*
- *Cross-border investigations, multi-agency cooperation, and other law enforcement resources*
- *eLearning tools and resources for continuing education*[17]

17 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 8.

Chapter Highlights

- Social media usage by the police can be instructive for ombuds institutions that are seeking to expand their use of social media in investigations.
- Before using social media in investigations, ombuds institutions should ensure that such activities are in compliance with their national legal frameworks.
- Considerable information can be obtained in an investigation from rudimentary searches of social media that would not have been available otherwise.
- When accessing private information, ombuds institutions must ensure that they are in compliance with all laws.
- Ombuds institutions should train their staff on how to use social media for investigations.

Chapter 6: Monitoring and Preventing Abuse

In addition to reacting to wrongdoings by receiving and investigating complaints, ombuds institutions should proactively seek out unaddressed but nevertheless problematic issues within the armed forces. Much like own-motion investigations, ombuds institutions should be aware of the realities faced by armed forces personnel, and be able to identify deficiencies in the system. Many ombuds institutions currently accomplish this through outreach activities, such as visiting personnel regularly.

In visiting barracks or attending community events targeted at armed forces personnel and their families, ombuds institutions can keep up to date with the problems faced by these groups, and can react more swiftly in rectifying any issues identified. Social media can complement and enhance these activities, and allow ombuds institutions to get a clearer picture of the state of the armed forces. By monitoring or 'listening' to social media accounts, pages and profiles that are geared towards or utilised by armed forces personnel, and by working proactively to prevent further and continued deficiencies, ombuds institutions can improve the quality of life and service for armed forces personnel.

This chapter will examine ways in which ombuds institutions can use social media as another tool in their toolbox to monitor the armed forces and prevent abuse.

Monitoring

Monitoring is "the continuous conduct of searches of content on the Internet for any discussions, posts, videos, blogs, and online conversations about your department or other topics of interest to you. The purpose of [monitoring] is to discover what is being said online, raise awareness … and put oneself in a position to correct false information or rumours."[1]

For ombuds institutions, monitoring may be an additional tool to uncover any dissatisfaction or wrongdoing that does not find its way into a formal complaint. Ombuds institutions already conduct regular visits to military installations to uncover issues that might not be expressed in a complaint, as filing a complaint is often viewed as a last resort. An individual may only file a complaint with an ombuds institution after all other remedies fail. Often by this point, the individual has spent considerable time attempting to resolve their problem and faced many obstacles in the process. In monitoring or meeting with personnel, the ombuds institution may be able to intervene in a situation before it has caused any prolonged dissatisfaction, and avoid leading to potentially larger knock-on effects.

1 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), "Listening Strategy Fact Sheet" US Department of Justice, http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/Portals/1/documents/Fact%20Sheets/Listening%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

One positive example is that of the Toronto Police Service Traffic Unit. An officer in that unit noticed how social media had been used successfully in other areas (see Chapter 2 on "Social Media and the Police" for more information) and noticed how Toronto residents frequently turned to social media to express their "pet peeves" about traffic-related issues. The officer began engaging with these people on several different social media platforms, offering advice and information and answering questions. The officer's engagement with the community helped better inform the population, and diffuse some early problems or misunderstandings. In cases where someone expressing their annoyance on social media had a genuine problem, the officer was therefore able to quickly refer the person to the appropriate authority, or to alert the relevant authorities on the need to intervene.[2]

Preventing Abuse and Maladministration

Preventative Recommendations

Systemic investigations, as discussed in Chapter 4, deal with issues that have a wider scope than a typical isolated instance of abuse or wrongdoing, but are often related to a broader issue. When investigating and offering recommendations on systemic issues, ombuds institutions should offer recommendations that seek to not only resolve the problem of the complainant, but also to address the underlying issue that has created this widespread problem. If done effectively, the ombuds institution's recommendations have the effect of preventing further abuse or wrongdoing.

An example for a widespread problem is gender inequality and gender-related abuse within the armed forces. In the Australian Defence Force for example, abuse within the ranks was brought to the attention of Former Chief of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison. General Morrison reacted to the abuse extraordinarily well, and via the Australian Army YouTube channel, his message went viral. See Box 6.1 for more details.

Over 1.7 million views later, Morrison received the 2016 Australian of the Year award for his role in promoting gender equality and diversity on a national scale.[3] His example

2 COPS, "Social Media and Tactical Considerations", 4.

3 Judith Ireland, "Ex-Army Chief David Morrison Named Australian of the Year for 2016", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 2016 http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australian-of-the-year-2016-named-as-exarmy-chief-david-morrison-20160125-gmdpy4.html

Box 6.1

Lieutenant General David Morrison on YouTube: Promoting Organisational Values to Wider Audiences

In what is referred to as the "Skype Sex Scandal" a cadet filmed himself and a fellow female cadet having sex, while screening it to other personnel watching in another room. The female cadet was not aware of the filming, and was then also bullied repeatedly in relation to the incident even after transferring bases, and according to her, was eventually "bullied out of the army".[4]

Former Chief of Army Morrison learned of this and other gender-based harassments in the Australian military from Elizabeth Broderick, who served as the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner from 2007 to 2015. In 2013 Morrison addressed the issue publicly and extraordinarily. Via the AustralianArmyHQ YouTube channel Morrison stated zero tolerance for abuse and gender inequality. His tone was unambiguous and firm as he turned to personnel within the Australian forces who cannot abide to these values, and ordered them to "get out".[5]

4 "ADFA Cadet Daniel McDonald Sacked Over Skype Sex Scandal", *ABC News*, 8 November 2013 http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-09/adfa-cadet-sacked-over-skype-sex-scandal/5080834

5 Australian Army HQ official channel, "Chief of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison Message about Unacceptable Behaviour", YouTube, 12 June 2013 https://youtu.be/QaqpoeVgr8U

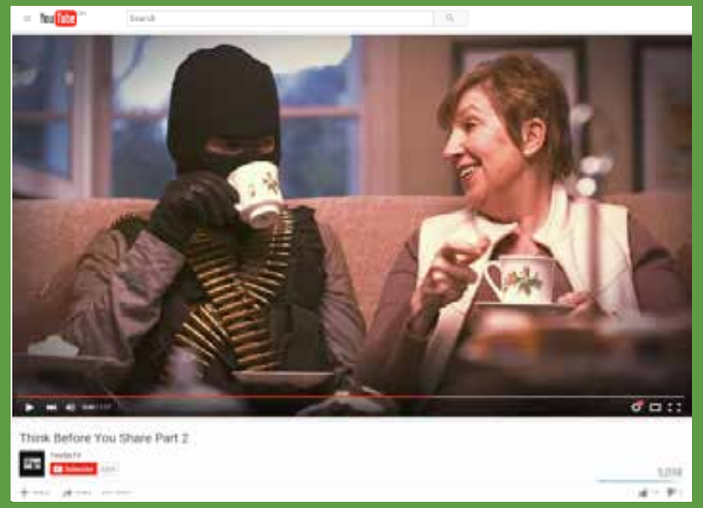
is especially relevant here, as he reacted to an abuse that started with social media (Skype), using social media (YouTube). By addressing military personnel using the Army's official YouTube channel, General Morrison managed to get his message across to a much wider and more diverse audience than he himself anticipated. In this way, military leadership and ombuds institutions as well, can lead by example and react to bad practices of social media by good practices of social media.

Education to Prevent Abuse and Maladministration

Social media is a relatively new phenomenon, and as a result, many people are unfamiliar with the challenges and risks posed by it, as well as its implications. Ombuds institutions and the armed forces can both play an important role in educating and providing training for how armed forces personnel can use social media responsibly. The British MoD devised an awareness campaign to educate their employees and families on some of the risks posed by social media, and how to use it more responsibly. The campaign was a creative example of how to make education easily accessible and interesting to a large and diverse audience. Refer to Box 6.2 for more information about this campaign.

Likewise, social media can also be the ideal platform with which to educate and train personnel on both matters pertaining to the usage of social media, but also on a wide range of other subjects. The Inspector General of the United States Army as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan produced a series of YouTube videos to inform soldiers on their rights and how to identify abusive behaviour, further illustrated below in Box 6.3

Box 6.2



UK MoD "Think Before You Share" Campaign

The UK Ministry of Defence launched a campaign, "Think Before You Share," which dealt specifically with how social media can impact operational and personal security. The 4 videos posted on YouTube in 2011 showcase different scenarios of social media misconduct by personnel or their family members. The errors of the protagonists of the videos (two Royal Navy officers, the mother of a soldier, two soldiers back from deployment, and an employee of the MoD) are not done maliciously, but as the result of a misunderstanding of the risks involved with over-sharing on social media. The one-minute videos vividly illustrate how sharing identifying and personal information, your location or the location of a family member or friend in service, or details regarding military operations may put you and your loved ones in danger.

In 2012, the "Think before you share" campaign was presented with an award from The International Visual Communications Association (IVCA) for its success in raising awareness and educating users. Pippa Alldritt, who collected the award along with her colleagues, wished to stress two points: "firstly, the security of our people is of utmost importance, and secondly, that social media is not something to be demonised but to be used safely and responsibly".[6]

The campaign was further supported by the Twitter persona "SoldierUK."[7]

6 Ministry of Defence, "MOD Scoops Gold for Social Media Awareness Campaign" https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mod-scoops-gold-for-social-media-awareness-campaign

7 "SoldierUK" Twitter account: https://mobile.twitter.com/SoldierUK

Box 6.3

What does Hazing look like? US Army IG YouTube Training Videos

The CJTF-1 ID Inspector General (IG) of Regional Command East of the United States Army's mission is to "serve as an extension of the Senior Commander by providing him with an independent and impartial assessment of the readiness, morale, welfare, and discipline of the Command and reports on other matters that impact upon the economy and / or efficiency of the Command."

The Inspector General produced several YouTube videos to educate armed forces personnel on how to discern the difference between pranks and hazing. The video outlines their rights according to internal regulations, interviewed personnel to solicit their opinions.

Another video included a re-enactment of what would be considered hazing, and then explained how the example was unacceptable. It called on all soldiers to stand up against hazing when they witness it.

A third video provided guidance on how to identify the difference between "corrective training" and demeaning or abusive actions. Corrective training is given to a soldier to improve his or her performance. All too often demeaning or abusive actions are meted out that have no intention to improve performance, but rather to demean or punish. The video clearly explains the difference and calls on all leaders to ensure that all corrections are appropriate and effective.

Each video addressed a specific topic that was problematic, educated soldiers on their rights, and included a senior-ranking official calling on all military leaders to ensure compliance.

https://www.youtube.com/user/RCEastIG

Social Media to "Make the Connection": the Preemptive Approach

Social media has an incredible function to connect people across large distances. It is difficult to quantify how social networks and community pages benefit individuals in coping with their problems or challenges, but the widespread use of these types of online interactions demonstrate people's need to connect.

Using social media, individuals who previously may have felt alone or isolated, can now tap into large networks of like-minded people facing similar challenges. These networks can provide an outlet for armed forces personnel or their family and friends to share their concerns, issues or worries with each other, and in doing so, may prevent a problem from escalating into something larger.

One excellent example of this is "Make the Connection," an American organisation which is "an online resource designed to connect veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives".[8] With almost three million fans on their Facebook page, the resource page openly discusses matters such as mental health issues and substance addiction among veterans.[9] In a one minute video on their YouTube channel, veterans mentioned the difficulties of adjusting back to civilian life, and other emotional and mental struggles. The video emphasises the need and the importance of talking about one's experiences, and appealed to veterans to seek the support of The Veterans Affairs Department, and "talk about it". The video has been viewed over 1.3 million times.[10]

Support networks such as "Make the Connection" provide an invaluable and often incalculable contribution to the well-being of veterans, who are particularly at risk of losing touch with traditional military support services as they transition back to civilian life. This organisation is able to provide veterans with a support network, but also to connect them with services they may not have otherwise known about. This service works as a "connector" and often plays an important role for ombuds institutions. A number of these have noted that much of the time; the best support they can provide is connecting an individual with the appropriate authority to address their problem. Social media can play a similar complementary role to this important function of ombuds institutions.

8 "Make the Connection" website: http://maketheconnection.net/what-is-mtc

9 "Make the Connection" Facebook account: https://www.facebook.com/VeteransMTC/videos/968818489870811/

10 "Make the Connection" YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/VeteransMTC

In addition, social media can be a valuable tool for those still serving in the armed forces. Two commanders in the US Army in the late 1990s created a platform to allow military commanders to share their experiences, ideas and problems.[11] The platform grew initially from a mailing list, to a forum and eventually into two formal US Army-sponsored websites (http://companycommand.army.mil/ and http://platoonleader.army.mil/). The two commanders, Nate Allen and Tony Burgess, wished they were able to recreate the informal conversations they would have when stationed together on a base, but to a wider audience. In moving the conversation online, it allowed any commander with an internet connection to contribute to the conversation. Much of the motivation was to enhance effectiveness of leadership. However, closely interlinked with effectiveness is making sure a proper-functioning unit where all personnel are content. By developing this online social platform to share good practices, it also served to prevent potential abuse and dissatisfaction.

While these examples were grass-root initiatives, ombuds institutions can also play a role in using social media to pre-empt the escalation of problems. Ombuds institutions can support and promote valuable existing networks for armed forces personnel, their friends and family, and veterans. They can cooperate with these organisations or networks by connecting individuals to these services.

11 David Weinberger, "Powering Down" Leadership in the U.S. Army", *Harvard Business Review*, November 2010 https://hbr.org/2010/11/web-exclusive-powering-down-leadership-in-the-us-army

Chapter Highlights

- Ombuds institutions should proactively seek out unaddressed but nevertheless problematic issues within the armed forces.
- Ombuds institutions should be aware of the realities faced by armed forces personnel.
- Monitoring may be an additional tool to uncover any dissatisfaction or wrongdoing that is not expressed in a formal complaint.
- Ombuds institutions' recommendations have the effect of preventing further abuse or wrongdoing.
- Ombuds institutions and the armed forces can both play an important role in educating and providing training for how armed forces personnel can use social media responsibly.
- Social media can be the ideal platform from which to educate and train personnel on both matters pertaining to the usage of social media, but on a wide range of other subjects.
- Individuals who previously may have felt alone or isolated, can now tap into large networks of like-minded people facing similar challenges via social media, and in doing so, may prevent problems from escalating.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

As this guide has shown, social media can play an integral role in the work of ombuds institutions for the armed forces, as they are an essential part of any transparent and accountable security sector, and social media is particularly effective at enhancing transparency and accountability. By establishing a presence on social media, ombuds institutions become more accessible, and therefore more responsive and accountable. Social media can also strengthen their voice, which thereby strengthens the power they hold over the armed forces, to hold them accountable for their actions.

The emergence of social media has transformed communication abilities for armed forces personnel, enabling them to maintain connections with their families and loved ones. Using social media, personnel have also found a way to share their experiences and feel as if their voice is being heard. However, social media has also been misused by armed forces personnel. While it is impossible to monitor every blog or post, education and training on social media can assist in creating a safe online environment. In addition, for individuals within the armed forces as for the institutions themselves, the benefits of social media outweigh the security risks.

One such benefit, a lesson learned from the armed forces and especially applicable to ombuds institutions, has to do with strengthening trust between the public and the organisation. Since ombuds institutions are responsible for rectifying problems, a high degree of trust is required for them to operate effectively. Actively engaging with the public via social media can assist in building and maintaining that trust and even increase the level of cooperation with the public as well as inform them on the work of ombuds institutions.

To that end, as has been discussed in this guide, social media may be used as a direct channel to the constituents of ombuds institutions. Proactively reaching out to armed forces personnel, veterans, and other constituents, ombuds institutions ensure that their message and their services reach those who need it most. Consequently, social media lowers barriers for individuals to file complaints.

For communication, social media can provide cost-effective and beneficial alternatives to traditional practices. However, this guide has laid out important steps to consider before creating social media accounts. Like any other organisation, ombuds institutions must first identify their own institutional needs and objectives in order to create an effective social media strategy, within an overall communication strategy. Starting slow and using small-scale pilots allows testing tone, types of content, as well as mitigating risks. In addition, using social media requires the content to fit the medium, as well as the platform. Lengthy and very detailed articles are not suitable, but visuals – images and videos - have been shown to be especially engaging. Finding the right tone of voice is also a matter of balance, and depends on the organisation and its objectives. Some benefit from a friendlier tone on social media, others prefer a formal one.

In addition, institutions should expect that an open dialog may often draw negative commentary; in which case the institution has tools to assess and react to any anti-social use of social media. Measuring success is also an integral part of maintaining and

developing a social media strategy. Ombuds institutions should measure their progress against their objectives. Social media indicators can inform communicators and assist in learning what type of content, on which channels, at which optimum time - creates the most traction. Nevertheless, all staff of ombuds institutions must be careful in how they present themselves on social media to avoid doubts about the office's impartiality, neutrality, independence, effectiveness and accountability.

The use of social media in investigations requires additional preparation. Lessons learned by police services can be instructive for ombuds institutions that are seeking to expand their use of social media in investigations. Experiences from the police show that considerable information can be obtained in an investigation from rudimentary searches of social media, which would not have been available otherwise. However, prior to using social media in investigations, ombuds institutions should ensure that such activities are in compliance with their national legal frameworks, particularly when accessing private information. As for communication, but even more so for investigations, ombuds institutions are responsible to train their staff on how to use social media for investigations.

Like the armed forces, ombuds institutions too can play an important role in educating and training armed forces personnel on how they can and should use social media responsibly. In fact, social media can be the ideal platform to educate and train personnel on a wide range of other subjects, due to its accessibility, effectiveness and convenience. Ombuds institutions may also take advantage of social media's ability to connect people. Individuals who previously may have felt alone or isolated due to a range of military-related issues for example, can now tap into large networks of like-minded people facing similar challenges via social media, and in doing so may prevent problems from escalating.

Finally, as the pulse of the armed forces, social media can open a window into the realities faced by armed forces personnel. Monitoring key social media accounts may be an additional tool to uncover any dissatisfaction or wrongdoing that is not expressed in a formal complaint. As ombuds institution's recommendations have the effect of preventing further abuse or wrongdoing, they should proactively seek out unaddressed but nevertheless problematic issues within the armed forces.

With these lessons in mind, now comes the time to implement them. This guide is intended to be a starting point, but it is hoped that as ombuds institutions increasingly adopt social media, and their expertise with social media grows, new lessons and good practices will emerge. As it has been stressed throughout the guide, there is no one-size-fits-all model for the institutional use of social media. Nevertheless, ombuds institutions can learn a lot from other related fields, such as the armed forces and the police services, but also amongst themselves.

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The aim of this guide is to promote and support ombuds institutions in adopting and competently using social media as part of their broader business and communications strategy. Social media can be used as a safe and effective tool through which ombuds institutions do business, communicate, connect, engage, inform and listen to the public, as well as members of the armed forces under their jurisdiction. In addition, by using social media to raise awareness about the work of ombuds institutions as well as raise their profile, this guide aims to support and promote the values and objectives associated with such institutions, within the larger message of good governance. In this guide, there are practical examples of the positive use of social media by ombuds institutions, as well as lessons learned from the armed forces in the adoption of social media. There are illustrations of good practice in later sections, drawn from the experiences of diverse military and police services.

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