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Clerk's Corner

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Getting the Word Out With Social Media

Social media is a phrase that has increasingly made its way into our nation's vocabulary over the past few years. Without professing expertise in this area, it can be said generally that social media refers to technology-based communications and can incorporate sharing text, pictures, video and audio between electronic devices ranging from cell phones to computers, handheld devices to specially-equipped televisions and video gaming consoles. This form of communication is called social because most services and products allow both public broadcast and individual interaction. They are called media in reference to more traditional methods of expression such as letter writing, newspapers, radio, television and more recently, email.

The Clerk's Office and other government agencies are increasingly using social media to communicate news and events in a faster and more efficient way than using paper notices, mailings, website postings and even emails. Social media can serve as the fastest way to get out a message or to direct clients and customers to a website, telephone number or other resource for more detailed information.

The Clerk's Office currently posts information through the websites Twitter and Facebook. As an example of the usefulness of this technology, the Clerk's Office recently posted through Twitter that court buildings were being evacuated, days the office would be closed and the day and time of scheduled website outages. Those who get the Clerk's messages from Twitter sent directly to their phone were among the first to know about these important events.

Social media can be effective in answering frequently asked questions, illustrating difficult concepts, or to spotlight areas of the office, products or services that customers might not know about. While the Clerk's Office posts training videos on its own website, some agencies use video-sharing websites, such as YouTube, to post "how-to" videos, messages from the elected or appointed official (or CEO, Chairperson, etc.) or other graphics and video-based content.

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is another technology tool gaining more use and recognition. The software involved is known as "aggregators," "feed readers" or "RSS readers." Using the settings in an internet browser, Google or a number of other websites, an RSS reader can be created to gather information in one place related to one agency or any number of agencies or on any number of topics. This "information gatherer" tool creates one place where the user can find all Clerk-related information, whether posted to the Clerk's website, sent through Twitter or Facebook, or by any form of social media or communications system that is enabled to provide RSS feeds.

Social media can best be used when an account is created and customized to meet individual needs. However, information posted on the Clerk's social media tools can be read without creating an account or filling out any kind of registration. From the main page of the Clerk's website, www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov, view the Newsflashes section, any of the related links on the page, or click on the icons for Twitter and Facebook.

There are many resources on the internet that further explain social media and how to establish and use an RSS Reader. People will continue creating innovative ways for government and private sector organizations to share their message. In the spirit of customer service, the Clerk's Office will continue looking at ways to better communicate with those who depend on the services of the courts.