



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

# SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2026

March 2026


# COURSE OBJECTIVES

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- Understand why we need to engage
- Platforms – Why/How
- Build authentic engagement
- Navigate algorithm changes
- Create a reliable content strategy
- Use social media to influence policymakers



# WE ARE THE EXPERTS WHO DELIVER THE SERVICE

 **Anonymous participant**  
February 13 at 3:53 PM · 🌐

Public Information Post:  
Fire Department Overtime & City Budget

Before anyone comes at me with their pitchforks and flame throwers, I ask that you please read this post in its entirety, and you remain focused on the facts presented, instead of the emotions these facts stir up.


- 1. Appreciation for Firefighters**  
Firefighters are essential public safety personnel. They are needed, wanted, and appreciated in this community. Nothing in this post is meant to take away from the work they do or the risks they take every day.
- 2. Documented Overtime Expenditures**  
According to public payroll records:
  - Overtime paid in December 2025 and January 2026: \$43,910.00This number is for overtime ONLY. It does NOT include base wages, benefits, or any other compensation. If overtime averaged around \$20,000 per month that would put us on pace for roughly \$240,000 per year in overtime alone.
- 3. Sustainability in a Small Town**  
Our community has roughly 8,000 residents. Overtime payouts at this level are a significant and a recurring financial strain on a small-town budget. Our mayor has publicly projected that the city could be around \$600,000 over budget for the next fiscal year. That shortfall is not caused by just one department, but this level of spending is a very large piece of the overall picture.
- 4. General Fund Limitations**  
The fire department is funded through the general fund.

Someone is telling your stories


Shouldn't it be you?




# TELL YOUR STORIES – YOU ARE THE EXPERTS!

 Miles City Firefighters IAFF Local 600  
Published by Matthew Lowery · February 11 at 12:59 PM ·

This is NOT the answer to budget problems, we didnt create. Tell your elected leaders to OPPOSE Mayor Chris "Butch" Grenz plans to DEFUND YOUR Fire & EMS services. #MilesCityMT

 Support Your Miles City Firefighters! Share!



**Miles City, MT Mayor "Defund the Fire Department"**

THIS IS THE GOAL



# THE 2026 SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

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- Lots of platforms to choose from – Pick one or two!
- Content Prioritizing: Vertical Videos / Pictures of People
- Authentic/Emotional/Connection
- Artificial Intelligence is growing and complicating/bots
- Private/closed groups growing
- Local content outperforming national messaging
- More regulation and verification



**JUST KNOW:  
IT'S ALWAYS  
CHANGING\***

**DON'T GIVE UP**

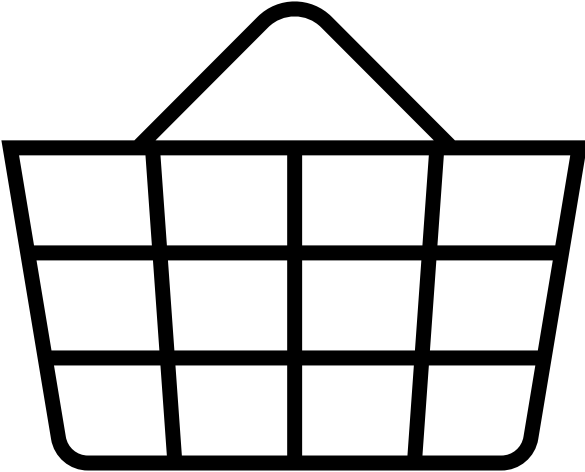
# WHICH PLATFORMS ARE "BEST"?

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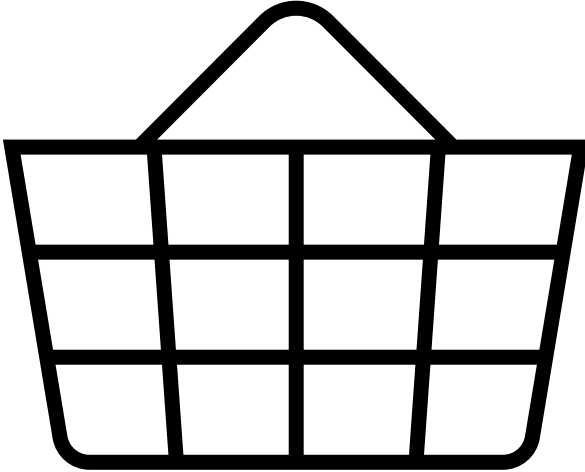
# CONTENT STRATEGY FOR IAFF LOCALS

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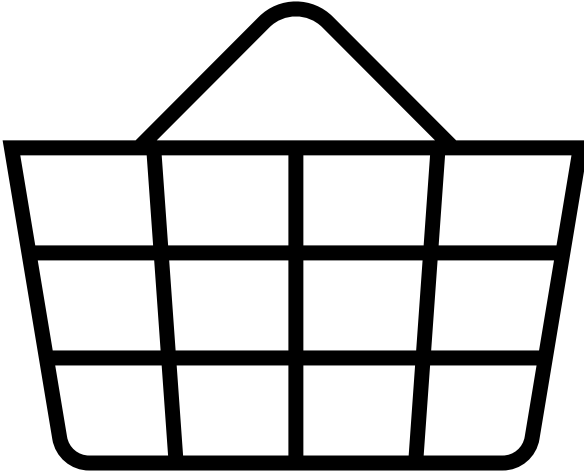


**SAFETY**

**OUR BASKETS**



**ADVOCACY**



**COMMUNITY**



# EVERYTHING WE DO IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE:

- Time Critical
- Labor Intensive
- Highly Technical



# CONTENT STRATEGY FOR IAFF LOCALS

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- Short videos: incidents, training, station life, your locals advocacy issues
- Public safety messaging – with Pics/Vids
- Community service highlights – With Pics/Vids
- Simplified legislative updates – With Pics/Vids
- Member features – With Pics/Vids



# SOCIAL MEDIA – UNIVERSAL TRUTHS!

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- All platforms prioritize vertical videos
- All platforms deprioritize links to other websites
- All platforms employ social/behavioral psychologists to find ways to best exploit our human traits for improving their sites/algorithms - IE: Keep you on it longer!
- All platforms sell ads/collect data/sell data
- All platforms seek your consistency/frequency for distribution

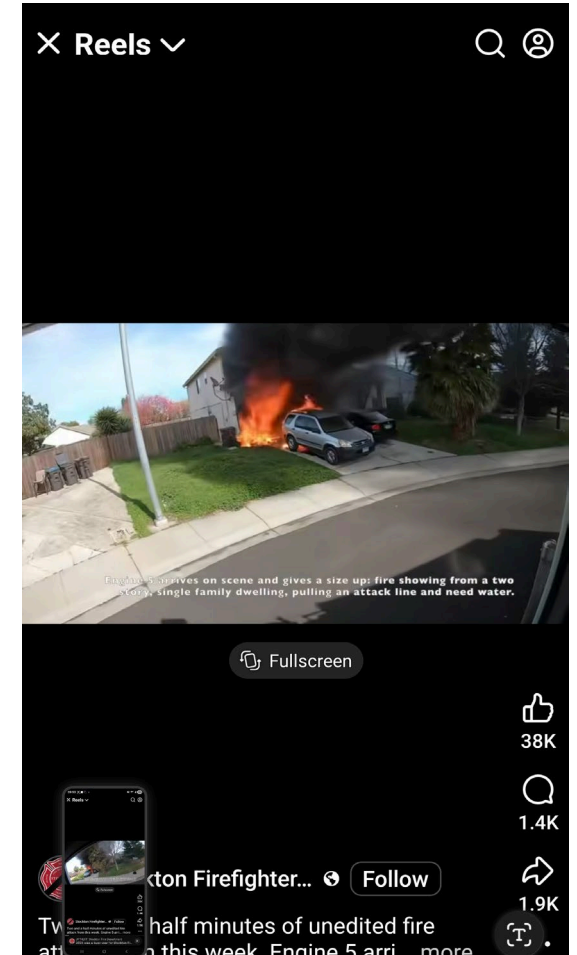


# VIDEOS - CONTENT

Hot Dog vs Hamburger -  
Vertical vs Horizontal?

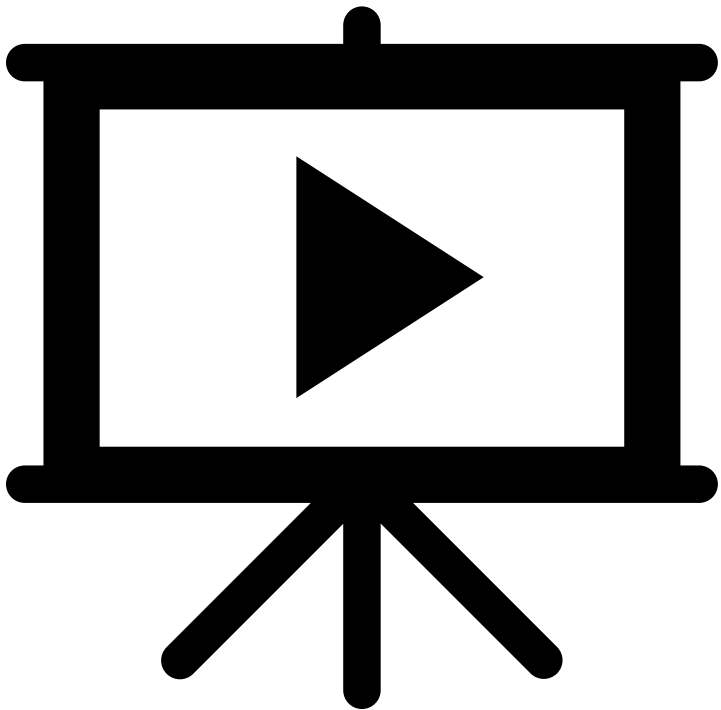
Reels vs Stories?

- Permanent vs Temporary



# VIDEOS

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Half of FB reported most viewed content.

Record in a vertical format.

Use caution when taking videos on duty. (Don't get yourself in trouble.)

Invest in ensuring you have great sound.

A great way to make connections with your community.



# VIDEOS

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Content Library Post insights

Omaha Professional Fire Fight... Published by Greg Eckstrom September 6, 2024

"Hey, how do you work the siren? Is it a crank, or a button, or what?" It's like this - either a pedal on the floor, or on some, knee-operated on the captain's side (which they will accidentally hit A LOT).



12K 101 285

Views over time

Views Viewers

Audience retention

Average watch time: 13s

Most of your audience dropped off at the 0:04 mark.



Table with 2 columns: Metric and Value. Includes 3-second views (736,726), 1-minute views (0), Watch time (4509:36:33), Average percentage watched (64%), and Player completion rate.

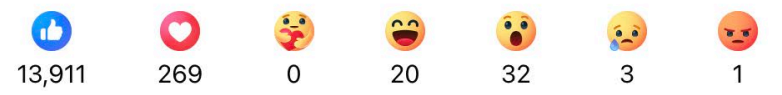
Followers vs. Non-followers

Not enough data to show yet.

42,935 Engagement

Engagement summary cards: Reactions (12,831), Clicks (28,303), Comments (101), Shares (293).

Reaction by type



Distribution signals

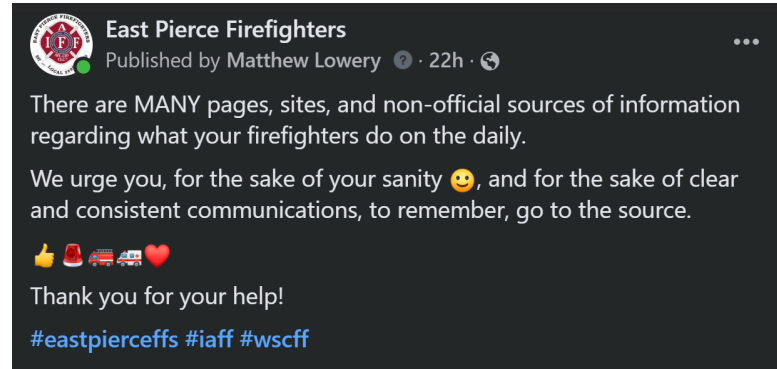
Player like rate and Player hide rate.

Net follows

1,579 Net follows

# PICTURES - CONTENT

- Pictures vs Graphics
- Purpose Driven: What are you attempting to accomplish?



# COPY/WORDS/SCRIPT - CONTENT

- Speak with YOUR voice – AI is good, but it ain't you!
- Be authentic – Personal Stories
- Insight – What's your lived experience? Share it!
- Consider AI for editing, clarity, and summarizing.
- Consider the Length!



# COPY/WORDS/SCRIPT - CONTENT

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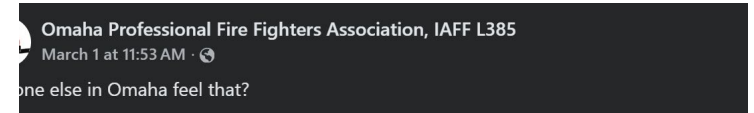


- Keep it SIMPLE
- Speak less technical
- It's "Fire Fighter Staffing", not "Staffing"
- It's YOUR Fire Fighters
- Explain WHY something matters



# COPY/WORDS/SCRIPT - CONTENT

- Be relatable
- Algorithms do not amplify the most important messages. They amplify the most engaging ones.
- Engage in social!



Nebraska: That 70 degrees day last week was great. Can we get another?

Mother Nature:



615 20 comments 284



**FACEBOOK**

# WHY FACEBOOK?

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- Largest Audience,
- People of Voting Age,
- Easiest for Your Local



# FACEBOOK

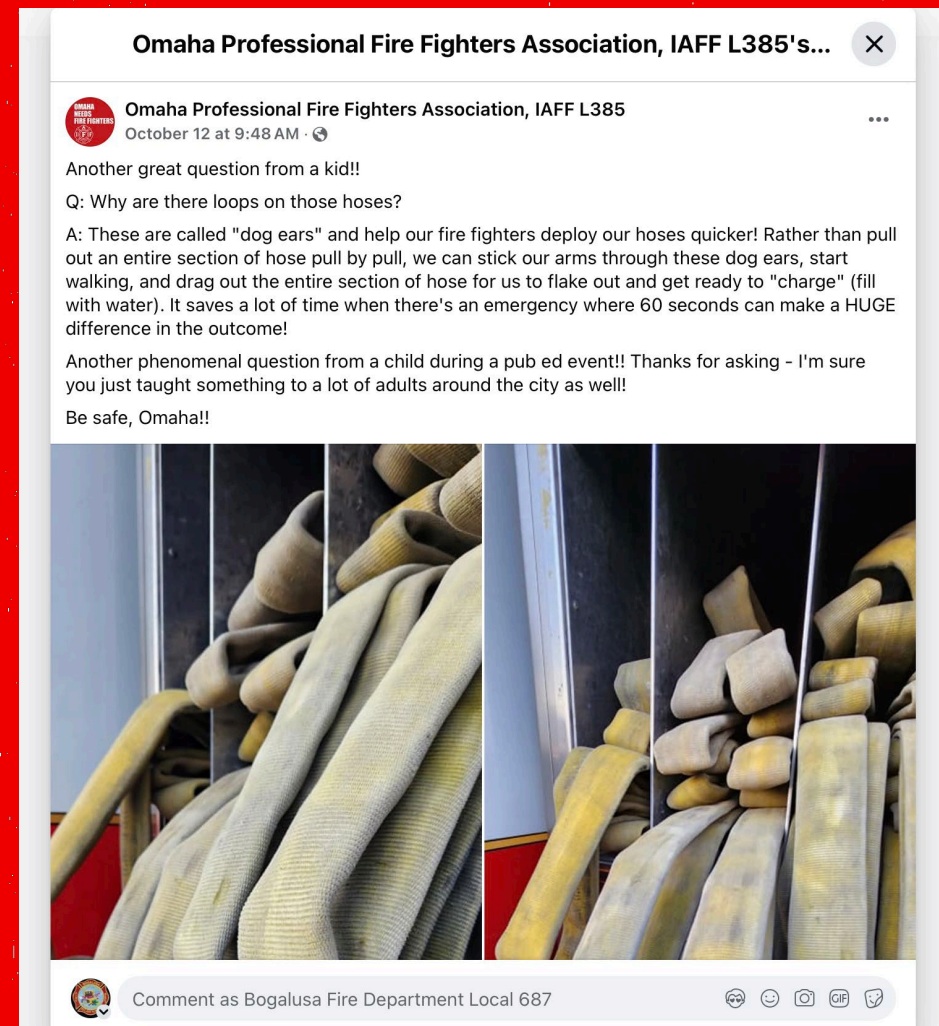
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- Community stories and member spotlights
- Short videos with closed captions (sound off scrolling)
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Use Facebook Groups for internal communication
- Use Community FB Groups for direct message shares (extra work with anonymous participants)
- Live streaming and event promotion



Go behind the scenes.

People love getting a behind the scenes look and seeing people or places they know.





Another great question from a kid!! Q: Why are there loops on those hoses? A: These are called "dog ears" and help our fire ...

Post · Published on: Sat Oct 12, 9:48am



Boost

Top performer

Continue getting results when you boost this post and spend \$19 each day

Estimated daily results

1.4K - 4.1K more reach

Boost

### Overview

Reach ⓘ

35,749

Higher than typical

Impressions ⓘ

37,231

Higher than typical

Interactions ⓘ

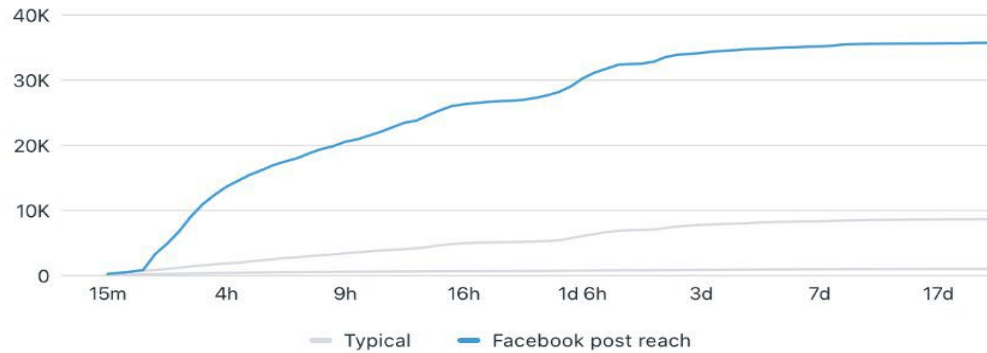
94

Typical

Link clicks ⓘ

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### Reach



### Interactions ⓘ

Reactions ⓘ

74

Typical

Comments ⓘ

10

Higher than typical

Shares ⓘ

10

Typical

Saves ⓘ

0

Typical

### Feed preview



Omaha Professional Fire Fighters Association, IAFF L385

Published by Greg Eckstrom

October 12 at 9:48 AM

Another great question from a kid!!

Q: Why are there loops on those hoses?

A: These are called "dog ears" and help our fire fighters deploy our hoses quicker! Rather than pull out an entire section of hose pull by pull, we can stick our arms through these dog ears, start walking, and drag out the entire section of hose for us to flake out and get ready to "charge" (fill with water). It saves a lot of time when there's an emergency where 60 seconds can make a HUGE difference... See more



Boost

View post on Facebook



**INSTAGRAM**

# INSTAGRAM

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- Reels prioritized
- Carousels for storytelling
- Human-centered visuals
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Showcase union culture



**X (TWITTER)**

# X (TWITTER)

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- Good for rapid updates
- Media presence allows for quick unfiltered delivery of info
- Useful for advocacy messaging
- Strong for crisis communications
- Fast-moving feed rewards frequent posts
- Visual attachments increase reach



**TIKTOK**

# TIKTOK

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- Highest organic reach
- Great for training clips & safety tips
- Ideal for recruiting
- Trends + humor perform well
- Short stories of fire service life



# ALGORITHMS

# 2026 ALGORITHM CHANGES

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- Universal video-first approach
- Quality engagement prioritized
- Comments/saves/shares matter most
- Local-interest content boosted
- AI-curated feeds dominate



# WHAT UNIONS NEED TO DO DIFFERENTLY

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- Post with purpose
- Prioritize transparency and trust
- Highlight safety, staffing, and community impact
- Use data—not guesswork
- Maintain consistent brand, tone, engagement



# Insights

Review performance results and more.

Export data

Last 28 days: Jan 7, 2026 – Feb 3, 2026

Overview

Plan

Results

Audience

Messaging

Benchmarking

Content

Overview

**Content**

Ads

Earnings

Earnings

## All content

Create post

Filter

Clear

Search by ID or caption



Title	Date published ↓	Views ⓘ ↑↓	Reach ⓘ ↑↓	Viewers ⓘ ↑↓	Interaction
Hopefully some more code save awards wil... Multi media • Omaha Professional Fire ...	Tue Jan 27, 8:44am	26,500	15,500	15,962	385
ASK A FIRE FIGHTER! Q: For larger fires, h... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Mon Jan 26, 7:12am	8,357	5,675	5,507	64
It's another cold day in Omaha today, and t... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Sat Jan 24, 7:00am	4,802	3,159	3,093	64
Recognition time for some of our awesome... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Fri Jan 23, 7:00am	40,337	24,094	24,729	319
Looking for pre-weekend plans? One of our... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Thu Jan 22, 9:43am	2,199	1,295	1,322	26
Back at it in the Capitol this morning for th... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Wed Jan 21, 9:32am	20,193	13,075	13,386	244
Well, we're back down at the state legislatu... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Tue Jan 20, 9:36am	32,536	21,130	21,222	413
On Martin Luther King Jr. Day today, we en... Photo • Omaha Professional Fire Fight...	Mon Jan 19, 5:57am	3,088	1,953	2,075	43
Cold, cold, cold day for our B-Shifters yest... Multi media • Omaha Professional Fire ...	Sun Jan 18, 8:30am	347,997	213,446	214,981	2,495

# Planner

Plan your marketing calendar by creating, scheduling, and managing your content.

Create ad

Create post



Week

Month



Today



February 2026

Content type: all

Shared to: all

Sun 1

Mon 2

Tue 3

Wed 4

Thu 5

Fri 6

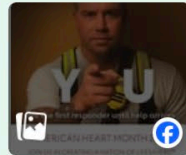
Sat 7

Ground Ho...

Keep your followers engaged by resharing our top content to our story.

Share to story

9:00 AM



14

7:00 PM



This week, your Facebook followers are most active at this time.

Sch...

Goals

More



Set a goal, track progress and learn helpful tips for your professional success.

Start new goal

Start sharing content more regularly to connect with your audience.

Create

# HANDLING MISINFORMATION AND NEGATIVITY

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**KEYBOARD  
WARRIORS**



# HANDLING MISINFORMATION & NEGATIVITY

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- Respond with facts
- Keep explanations simple
- Correct misinformation publicly
- Move heated conversations to private messages
- Stay aligned with union messaging



# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

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- Canva for graphics
- CapCut for editing
- IAFF Media Toolkit
- Platform analytics dashboards



# FINAL TAKEAWAYS

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- Authenticity wins in 2026
- Video-first strategy is essential
- Content, frequency, authenticity, emotion: drives engagement
- Use data to guide decisions
- Social media is core to union advocacy – Tell your stories experts!



# FINAL TAKEAWAYS - YOUR FOLLOWING

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Promote	Promote your events and campaigns with hashtags •#firefighters - allows you to group your posts with similar posts
Follow	Follow other like-minded groups
Add	Add social media handles to your business cards, website, union newsletter, etc.
Monitor	Monitor your social media analytics. You can check your reach, engagement, follower count, etc. for free in each of the accounts and pull reports.





**MATTHEW LOWERY**

Strategic Campaigns - [mlowery@iaff.org](mailto:mlowery@iaff.org)

**THANK YOU!  
ANY QUESTIONS?**

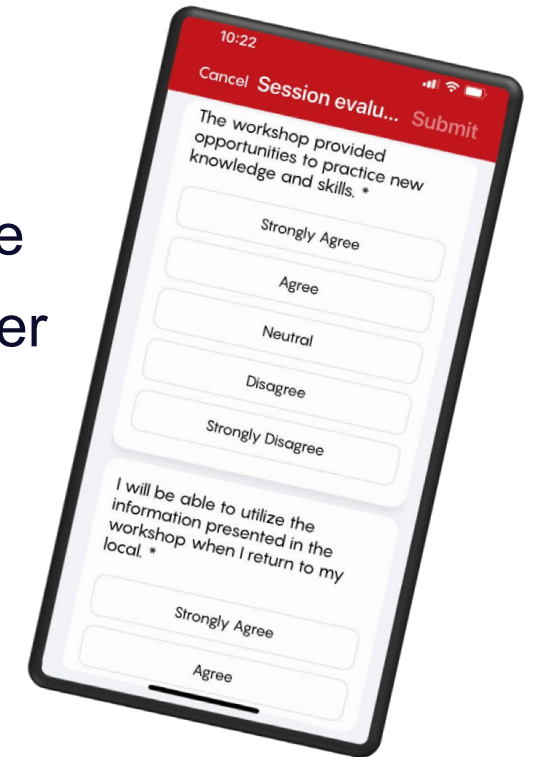


**TREVOR TOWEY**

Strategic Campaigns - [ttowey@iaff.org](mailto:ttowey@iaff.org)

# EVALUATION AND WIN AN IPAD!

- **Submit your workshop and overall evaluations to be automatically entered in two drawings for a new iPad!**
- **Complete your evaluations using the IAFF app:**
  1. Download the IAFF app and sign in with your iaff.org username
  2. Tap the 2026 Strive for Excellence Summit event image to enter the event's dashboard
  3. Tap "Sessions" and tap on the workshops you attended
  4. Tap "Evaluation" and complete the evaluation
  5. Tap "Submit"



**For the event's overall evaluation, follow steps 1 and 2, then tap "Event Evaluation" located in the event's Dashboard.**

