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# 2019 Essex Facebook Guidelines

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## Executive Summary

Each community Facebook page is owned and managed by the community. The Essex Facebook Guidelines are designed to support Community Managers and their staff in their management of their community Facebook page.

- When posting, remember you represent the voice of Essex. It is important that each community Facebook page reflects company values. All content should be professional, authentic, positive, relevant, and engaging. It is important that your style and tone is responsive, responsible, relevant, and respectful.
- A designated Facebook page manager needs to be identified for each community and registered with Essex Marketing.
- It is recommended that communities post **at least twice a week** to keep followers engaged and informed. Additional posting is welcome and encouraged. Posting do's and don'ts are outlined in these guidelines.
- Escalate any comments, posts, or messages that contain "high risk" language to [reputation@linnelltaylor.com](mailto:reputation@linnelltaylor.com) and [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com). If you feel a post or comment should be removed, contact [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com) for support and to confirm.
- Always use common sense and keep these guidelines in mind but remember that Facebook is meant to be an enjoyable way to connect with your residents and prospects, and to create community.

Please reach out to Marketing [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com) to set up your Facebook page and with any questions.

## Introduction

Each community Facebook page is owned and managed by the community. The Essex Facebook Guidelines are designed to support Community Managers and their staff in their management of their community Facebook page. These guidelines are meant to clarify the purpose and expectations of Essex Facebook initiatives and maintain consistency and quality across all community pages.

It is important that each community Facebook page reflects company values. All content should be professional, authentic, positive, relevant, and engaging. Any direct communication with residents and/or prospects should be honest and transparent.

## Benefits

- **Increases Traffic**
  - Facebook pages with high engagement (comments, likes, and shares) experience increases in website traffic, which increases leads → leases from social media as an ad source, as well as a general increase in brand awareness.
- **Improves Overall Reputation Management**
  - Building trust and engagement can have positive impacts on online ratings as it shows businesses are actively listening to customers.
- **Highlights Value for Residents and Prospects**
  - Facebook provides an opportunity to showcase community selling points in a more personal and visual way. It allows prospects to get a “behind the scenes” look at communities as they research potential new homes.
- **Strengthens the Sense of Community**
  - Highlights engagement and activity among residents, which has a positive, spillover effect for prospects.

## Getting Started

### Designated Facebook Managers

A designated Facebook page manager needs to be identified for each community and registered with Essex Marketing. The Facebook page manager will need to use their personal Facebook account, per Facebook guidelines.

The role of the community Facebook manager is to:

- Understand and adhere to the Essex Facebook guidelines.

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- Post regularly to community Facebook page.
- Monitor all page activity and engagement.
- Escalate to management when necessary.
- Inform Essex Marketing of any role responsibility changes within community.

## How to Set Up Your Facebook Page

- Once your designated Facebook page manager has been identified, please reach out to Marketing for help in assigning your Facebook page to them. Sometimes this will involve unassigning a previous Facebook page manager who has changed roles or left Essex.
- If your community is new to Facebook, Essex Marketing will also provide support in getting your Facebook page up and running.
- Contact Marketing at [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com).

## How Often Should I Post?

- It is recommended that communities post **at least twice a week** to keep followers engaged and informed. Additional posting is welcome and encouraged.
- Please consult your RPM with any concerns regarding the time allotted for managing social media each week.

## Structure of Your Facebook Page:

- **Page**
  - This is the main area where you and visitors can post to your page.
  - Visitors see a chronological feed of your most recent posts when viewing this section.
- **Inbox**
  - This is where direct (private) messages from residents and prospects will appear.
- **Reviews (Recommendations)**
  - Facebook users can recommend (or not recommend) your business to others.
  - *Please note that these are fed into Chatmeter as part of our Reputation Management program. All recommendations will be responded by LinnellTaylor after receiving CM approval.*
- **Notifications**
  - The notifications section will update and share any new activity on your page. Notifications will include actions, such as:
    - New visitor posts
    - New direct messages in your inbox

- Mentions
    - When a Facebook user tags your community page in a personal or other post on Facebook
  - New page likes / follows
  - Post likes / shares / comments
- **Insights**
    - These are page analytics where you can see an overview of your page's engagement
  - **Publishing Tools**
    - Facebook's in-platform tool that allows you to write posts and schedule them to post on a certain date/time.
  - **Events**
    - Your team is encouraged to use the Events section on your page to inform residents about upcoming events.

## Direct Messages

- Direct messages are sent directly to your community's page and are not publicly visible to anyone but your team. The sender typically expects an immediate response.
- When a message is sent, you will be informed with a page and/or inbox notification.
- In an effort to help answer questions when staff is unavailable or during off hours, Facebook users will receive the following automated response when messages are sent:

Thank you for your message {first name}. If you have questions about leasing an apartment or are a current resident in need of assistance, please call {contact center FB/Yelp phone number} or email {community email address}.

## Posting Tips

### Style and Tone

- **Respond to Comments and Posts in a Timely Manner**
  - An important part of social media engagement is responding to those who comment or post to a page. This shows that we are actively listening to those who interact with us.
- **Responsibility**
  - Always keep in mind that you are speaking on behalf of the company when you post.
  - All posts must be professional and appropriate.

- There is a difference between speaking “on behalf of Essex” and “about Essex.” Any statements made about Essex must be true, and all claims must be substantiated.
- If in doubt, ask your Regional Manager or email [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com).
  
- **Relevance**
  - All posts should be related to your community, resident life, or Essex in some way. Maintain a positive, upbeat, and conversational tone.
    - For example, posting about coffee would be relevant to a coffee shop, but not to Essex or a community. Unless the coffee is somehow specific to your community. (i.e. free coffee in the leasing office, resident coupons for a local coffee shop, etc.)
  - Always ask yourself before posting, “How does it provide value to residents, to prospects, or to the community/Essex?”
  
- **Respect**
  - Posts must be respectful and appropriate for all ages.
  - Do not post about controversial topics such as politics and religion.
  - Do not post anything profane, libelous, slanderous, or that could be deemed offensive to specific groups or cultures.
  - Do not post anything related to illegal activities or substances.

## What to Post

- **Provide Opportunities for Engagement**
  - Post positive and relevant content that will encourage users to engage (comment, like, share)
  
- **Celebrate Your Staff and/or Residents.**
  - Post about birthdays, milestones, or other events, such as maintenance appreciation week.
  
- **Showcase Resident-Related Goods and Services**
  - RentCafe online payments, dry cleaning services, food trucks, referral program, etc.
  
- **Inform Residents About Upcoming Events**
  - Keep residents up-to-date about events before and after by using Facebook events and sharing photos or videos.
  - During events, don’t forget to take photos and encourage residents to post and tag us.
  
- **Photos and Videos**
  - Photos and videos from your community are highly encouraged.

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- Use our [Facebook photo flyer](#) at events to inform residents that you'll be posting photos on Facebook.
- Do not change or update the profile or cover photo for your page. Essex Marketing has standardized the look and feel of these images for paid campaigns and branding.
- *Note: Marketing will regularly update property photo albums as new photography is produced. For more information about community photography, visit the [Advanced Visual Technologies](#) page on Buzz.*
- The following sites provide free options for stock photography readily formatted to both Facebook and Instagram. Using visual imagery helps bring your posts to life.
  - Pixabay.com
  - Canva.com
  - Unsplash.com
- **Additional Posting Ideas**
  - Photos of resident pets to show your community is pet friendly
  - Before, during and after photos of renovations to get residents excited for upgraded interiors and/or amenities – and indirectly acknowledge their patience during the process
  - New retailer openings, available discounts offered for residents, and grand opening events
  - Events in the area – festivals, farmer's markets, marathons, etc.
  - Points of interests in the neighborhood
  - Take a poll to give residents a chance to speak up and to find out their preferences
  - Be sure that anything we are sharing still conforms to the Essex guidelines of professionalism, relevancy, etc. and includes positive acknowledgement of the source

## What Not to Post

- **Content from Other Brands**
  - Do not use photos, videos, or other media that are not owned by Essex. (i.e., movies, TV shows, cartoon characters, etc.)
    - For example: Disney artwork is the intellectual property of Disney and cannot be used by any other business without their permission. If content is posted by a trusted source on Facebook (i.e., Disney), other businesses may *share* the post on Facebook as it credits the original poster. It cannot be posted as if Essex owns it.
- **Content That Would Violate Fair Housing Laws**
  - **Fair Housing laws apply on Facebook.** Do not post anything that could be construed as discriminatory, offensive, or controversial to any group. If you have questions about an intended post, email [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com) before posting it.

- **Resident Photos Without Permission**
  - Ask residents' permission when using photos or videos on Facebook.
  - Use our [Facebook photo flyer](#) at events to inform residents that you'll be posting photos on Facebook.
  - If you are ever asked not to post or to remove a photo, respect your residents' wishes and do not post the photo.
  
- **Low Quality Images**
  - Avoid posting low quality images that are blurry or pixelated.
  - Avoid using images with a large amount of copy/text. (Facebook identifies these as spam.)
  
- **Specials**
  - Avoid posting specials on Facebook as this is not an appropriate medium for pricing messages due to the fact that current residents make up the majority of the audience.
  - However, you are encouraged to post about referral incentives to let residents know that if they refer friends to the community, they may receive money off rent or other benefits.
  
- **Essex Confidential Information**
  - Authentic and open communication are key, but always observe Essex's privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines for external commercial speech.
  - Do not provide any confidential company information or comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties with whom we are in litigation. Reach out to [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com) if you receive any posts of that nature.
  
- **Competition**
  - Do not post about your competition.

## Monitoring & Responding

### Daily Monitoring

- Designated Facebook managers are encouraged to monitor daily for new comments and posts. The following groups are responsible for the indicated areas:
  - Community – Monitors and responds to comments and posts
  - LinnellTaylor – Monitors and responds to recommendations (thumbs up or thumbs down) and associated comments
- Note: Marketing also monitors all pages and maintains the Essex corporate page.

## Engaging With Visitor Posts

- A resident (or other individual) may post on your Facebook page, which will cause the post to appear publicly on the Essex community Facebook page.
- All visitor posts must be responded to and engaged with by responding with a comment, and a “like”, if appropriate.
- If a post is abusive and you feel it violates Facebook’s policies, it can be flagged for removal.

## Managing Negative Visitor Posts

- Sometimes your page will receive a negative post, comment or message. In this case, it is important to respond. All complaints are to be treated with urgency due to their public nature.
- Always answer questions and complaints promptly and respectfully.
- Consult your Regional Manager if you are unsure how to respond. You may also reach out to [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com) for assistance in crafting responses for negative posts and comments.
- There is always more than one side to every story. Strike the balance between being empathetic without admitting guilt.
- When responding, a standard formula to follow is to acknowledge concerns and move the conversation off-line by asking the poster to contact the office directly or send a private message through Facebook. Try not to engage in a long conversation publicly to resolve issues.
- Avoid defensiveness and he said/she said interactions at all costs. Remember, you are seen as a corporation and will be judged accordingly.

## High Risk Language

- Escalate any comments, posts, or messages that contain “high risk” language to [reputation@linnelltaylor.com](mailto:reputation@linnelltaylor.com) and [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com).
- This includes language around:
  - Threatening legal action.
  - Reports of criminal acts or incidents.
  - Reports of serious physical injury or accident.
  - Report of mold and/or water damage.
  - Report of an issue that could significantly impact resident health or safety.
  - Report of hazardous or unsafe conditions.
  - Non-compliance with local laws or ordinance, such as:
    - Affordable housing
    - Significant pest, rodent, or bed bug infestation
    - Rent control
    - Just cause eviction
    - Fair housing/HUD
    - Reasonable accommodations
  - Involves tenant advocacy groups, Housing Rights Center, or other agencies.

- Knows, or wants to know, contact details for CEO, Michael Schall, or other members of SMC.
- Mentions escalation to the CEO or other Executive Management.
  - Involves the press.

### Deleting Posts

- If you feel a post or comment should be removed, contact [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com) first to confirm. In accordance with Facebook policies, we will only request that Facebook remove something if it meets one of the following criteria:
  - Profanity or inappropriate language.
  - Personal attacks or verbal abuse.
  - Spam.

### Gaining Followers

- Community Managers and on-site staff are encouraged to like and support their own and other property's pages, but always remember that residents and prospects are your target audience – not your colleagues.
- Let residents know about your community's Facebook page and encourage them to Like and follow.
- If you are interested in exploring paid advertising options, send a request to [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com).

### Conclusion

Above all...

Have fun! The most effective Facebook presence is one that is authentic and engaging. Always use common sense and keep these guidelines in mind but remember that Facebook is meant to be an enjoyable way to connect with your residents and prospects, and to create community.

The Essex Marketing team is available to help with any questions or concerns that you may have. If at any point you are unsure about these guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com).

*All updates related to social media guidelines, platforms, or policies will be shared via E-hour and on Buzz.*

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## Review and Sign – REQUIRED

Please complete the form below and send to [marketing@essex.com](mailto:marketing@essex.com). By signing, you will be indicating you have read and understood the Essex Facebook Guidelines.

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### **COMMUNITY MANAGER AND ASSIGNED ADMIN(S) MUST COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW**

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Community Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Manager Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Will you be managing your Facebook page?**

- Yes
- No

#### **If YES, but other onsite staff members will be helping, please indicate those names below:**

Associate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **If NO, please indicate your assigned Admin(s):**

Associate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_