

# What marketers can learn from governments on social

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**Columnist Chris Kerns takes a look at top government agency social accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to uncover the innovative ways they're using these channels.**

As marketers, we strive to find new ideas for campaigns, strategies and tactics from any source we can find. Looking to our own historical performance, watching top performers in the industry and staying on top of the latest trends are commonplace for any marketer worth their latest budget. But sometimes inspiration comes from unexpected sources.

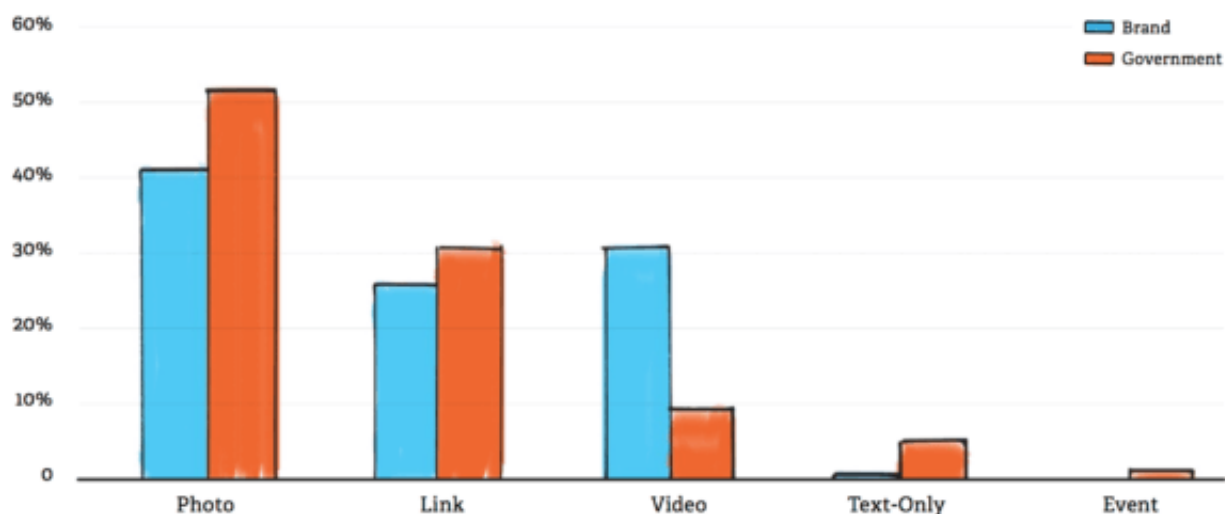
Last month, our Spredfast Research team dove into some of the top government agency social accounts to find the leaders in the space ([full report available here in the Smart Social Report #7](#), registration required). We weren't quite sure what we'd find, but we were definitely surprised by the results.

We mined public-facing government accounts from **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube**, **Instagram** and **Pinterest** from a collection of countries (USA, France, Canada, UK, Australia, Germany) to find high-level patterns and superstars creating great content.

## Governments on Facebook

Let's first look at media usage compared to some of the leading brands in the industry. Government accounts use a good amount of imagery, but they are a bit behind brands in the social sophistication of their posts.

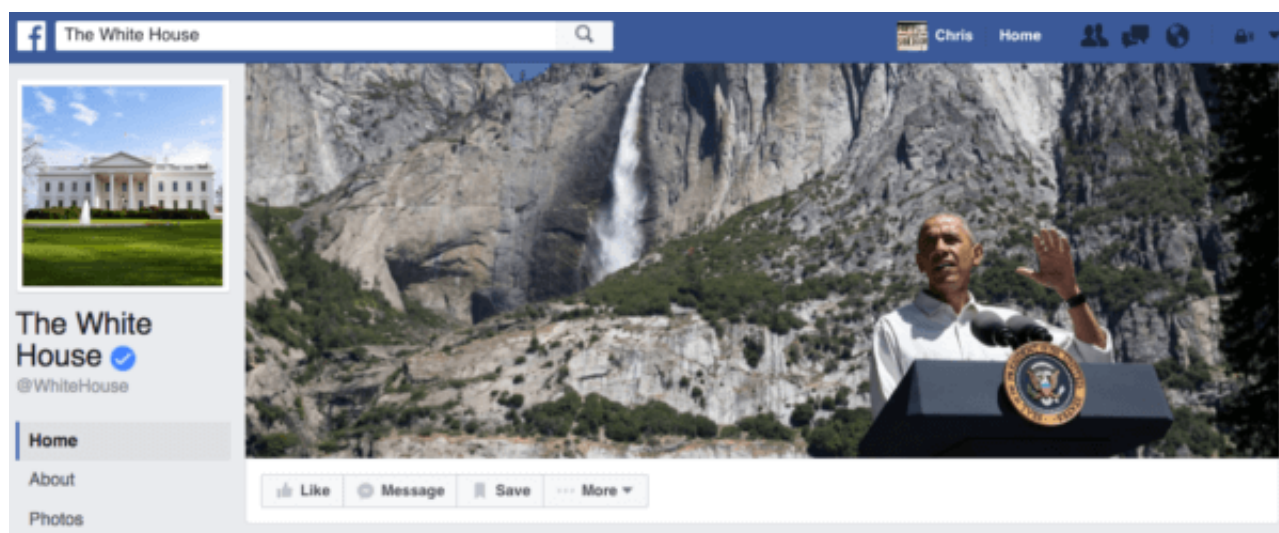
### Top Brands vs. Government Facebook Posting



When compared to an index of 50 top social brands, government accounts post more photos than brands, but much less video. Government accounts also post over 500 percent more text-only posts vs. their brand counterparts.

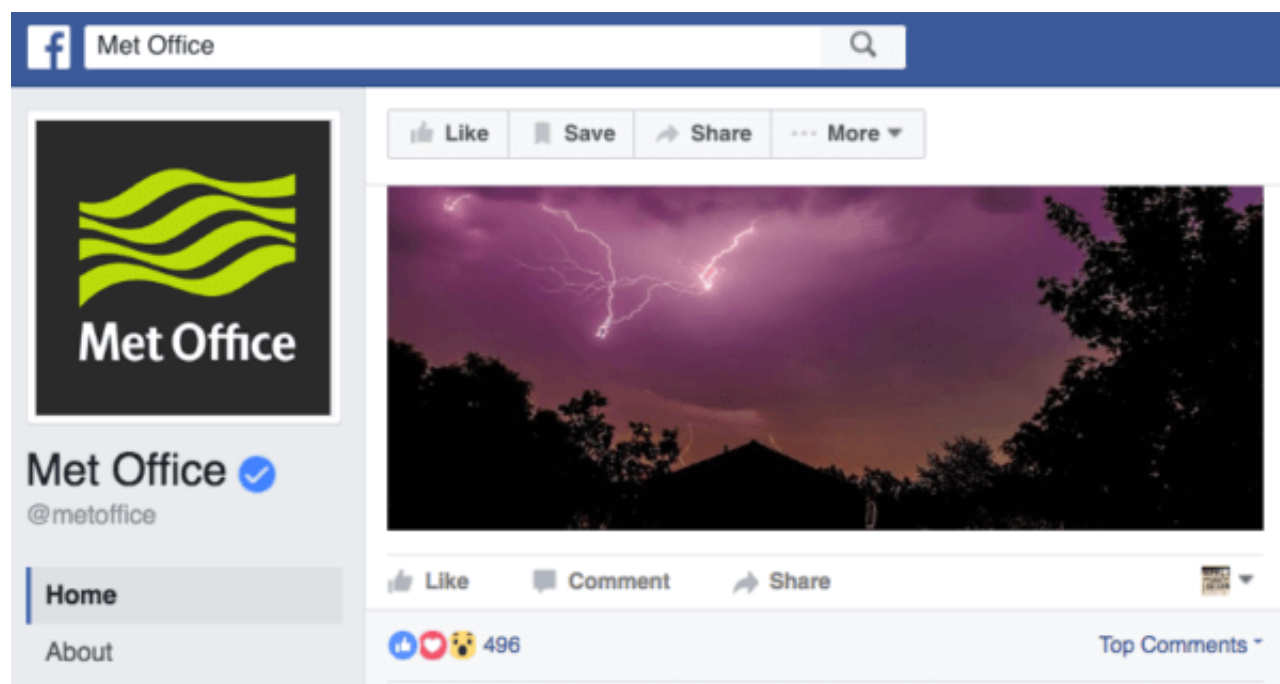
What can social data tell us about some of the top government accounts on Facebook?

#### The White House



The [Facebook page for The White House](#) creates content that gets people excited, registering a much higher than average number of “Love” reactions on posted content vs. other government agencies.

#### The Met Office



The [UK government's weather service](#) highlights regular forecasts, but the extreme weather posts grab the most “Wow” reactions from the audience.

#### NASA



When it comes to content, [NASA](#) is tough to beat. The space agency keeps its audience entertained and informed with great imagery and videos following everything from life in space to weather patterns.

#### Royal Canadian Mounted Police



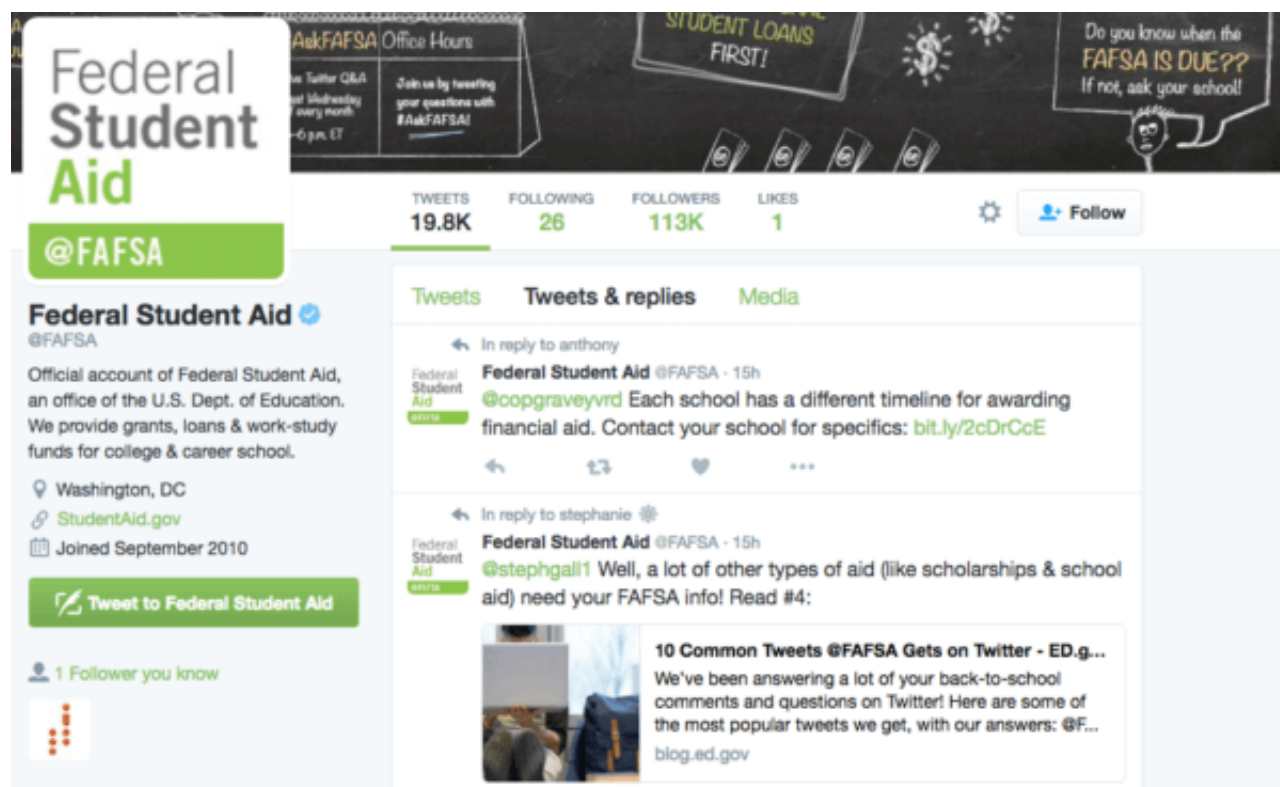
Posting a diverse set of content (recruitment efforts, crowdsourced efforts to name new foals, and highlighting how the police force gives back to the community), the [RCMP](#) does a great job using Facebook to build an important brand.

## Governments on Twitter

Government agencies around the globe have a huge presence on Twitter and use the channel with a diverse collection of creative tactics.

### Customer service

Government agencies aren't just creating content for the masses; they're also replying to individual questions, addressing complaints and sending personal notes. After mining a few hundred government Twitter accounts, we found that 89 percent of their tweets were directed at individuals in 1:1 conversation, which is approaching brand numbers (closer to 93 percent).



The practice of responding to individual tweets is done in high volumes in most countries other than France and Germany, where most of the tweets were meant for their entire audience.

### Bots at the border

While a good amount of tweets from US government agencies originated from transportation services like Amtrak, Canada takes a different approach. The Canadian Border Patrol has set up bots to tweet out border wait times every few minutes every day, making daily life easier for thousands of commuters.

[https://twitter.com/CBSA\\_BWT/status/751017468764774400](https://twitter.com/CBSA_BWT/status/751017468764774400)

## Governments on Instagram

On Instagram, we're seeing many government agencies using creative imagery to build their brands. Here are some examples.

### The Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BJ3K5w5gIcM/>

You might be surprised to hear that the TSA has run a must-follow Instagram account for the

past few years. Regular photos of confiscated items, introductions to their security dogs and policy clarifications have done some serious brand building for the group.

#### **Tourism Australia**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BJ8tgKcBW9i/>

Tourism Australia posts content showcasing the country's best destinations, enticing followers to dream about a future journey Down Under. The agency not only has more followers than popular accounts like Ford and the Green Bay Packers, but manages to receive higher average engagement as well.

### **Social use cases: flags of many colors**

Just when you think you've figured out every way to use social media, new use cases pop up. The different platforms offer brands a variety of features and functionality to take advantage of, and marketers would be wise to look outside their worlds to find innovative ways to use the channels.

What are some other hidden gems of inspiration that you've found?

*This article first appeared in [www.marketingland.com](http://www.marketingland.com)*