Cisco Tactical Operations [TACOPS]
Social Media Engagement Protocol – SMEP

Public Version

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Cisco TACOPS Social Media

A History of TACOPS Social Media

Team Facebook page created February 2009

Twitter accounts for the NERVs created around this time too – initially SJ_NERV, RTP_NERV reflected bias towards NERV ops.

Since then, the global mission of the team required consolidation and more flexibility – CiscoTACOPS Twitter account created March 2013. Vehicle accounts depricated.

Our "social goals"

- Be an exemplary brand ambassador for Cisco.   Engage with customers, Cisco employees, and the public. Be the face of "boots on the ground" Cisco CSR in a crisis, highlight our non-emergency community engagement (STEM education, partnership building, etc.) outside of crisis.

- CUSTOMER FOCUSED. Consider our messaging from the customer's perspective. DO not erode the customer reputation to benefit our own.

- LEAD THE WAY -> be the example of IP communications in HA/DR/PubSafety etc

- Promote the value of public/private partnerships and "whole community / whole response" globally.

- Tell our story – links to news articles, professional journals, blog postings, etc. that reference us and our operations.

- Support our partners' activities – appropriate references to Cisco partners (e.g. Red Cross, NetHope, etc) to enable our audience to get engaged during a crisis. Support "skills based volunteering" (e.g. CrisisCommons, etc) outside of crisis.

- Establish and maintain a reputation as a leading emergency ICT team – trusted advisor, subject matter experts.

- OPERATE WITHIN CISCO SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY.

Our "social values"

❑ Authoritative: linking to primary sources of information, avoiding rumor and innuendo and removing the "fog of war." We avoid 'marketing', since our audience expects us to say what's real and what's not. We value our credibility with internal, customer, and public audiences.

❑ Timely: We provide information about our operations in a timely manner without jeopardizing personnel safety/OPSEC/customer relationships.

❑ Engaged: We respond to our audience's questions, comments, concerns. SM is all about conversations, and we are not afraid of having them.

❑ Visual: we use photography, video, etc. to tell our story

❑ Smart use of language: language is "team" oriented – "we" instead of "I". "News style" – lede, inverted pyramid in succinct statements. Twitter msgs are RT friendly, use hashtags

❑ "Authentic Voice" – the audience knows there are "real people" on our side of the keyboard, not "PR people". Occasional bouts of humor and informality. Keep it real.

❑ Respectful: We do not sensationalize tragedy, post lurid, demeaning or degrading content of individuals or organizations.

"Peacetime" Operations

Normal (day to day) SM use

❑ Facebook is the primary "hub" for our SM communications.   Use twitter to drive SM users to FB page where we can have longer conversations, more photos, etc

❑ Refrain from posting too much content (feels like spam), but don't let our presence get stale (updates 1 or 2 times/week or as events warrant)

❑ Consider "the big picture" – our messaging in context of world events, Cisco biz events, etc.

❑ Use of photos: BE INTERESTING … not every photo should get posted. Quality over quantity.

    ❑ IN FOCUS AND WITH A CLEAR SUBJECT.

    ❑ Candid "action" shots of the team doing something are preferred over posed photos

    ❑ "Context" photos show vehicles & team in the field, but occasionally don't have any of our people or vehicles but give the viewer a "flavor" for the engagement or scene.

    ❑ Creative (artistic/manipulated) images are OK in "peacetime", but never for a response (more on this later)

    ❑ Use more photos for larger events, fewer photos for smaller events.

    ❑ Photos of the team with VIPs (President Carter, etc) are awesome when appropriate.

Photo examples

Context: Shows vehicles/team in context with other agencies, events, etc. (CalEMA HQ)

Demonstrates: trusted advisor, credibility

Tech: Shows our technology in action during demos, exercises, etc.(JIFX 13-2)

Demonstrates: advanced technology, we do this "for real"

Engagement: Shows our team interacting with agencies/ public etc. (Tech Challenge)

Demonstrates: we do more than disaster. We're approachable.

Normal (day to day) SM use

❑ Facebook headlines for our albums: "<Event Type>: Name of Event" (such as Training, Public Event, Exercise etc. Response is used for emergencies, Deployment is used for non-emergency activations such as Habitat build support, RNC/DNC, Giants Parade etc.)

❑ For responses, adding the year helps separate "recurring" disasters from one another… e.g. "Response: Alabama Tornadoes (2011)"

❑ Sometimes a significant emergency happens and is developing. Our audience expects us to be aware of these things even if we're not actively responding. In these cases, it may be appropriate to put out a message saying we're aware and you should be too…

> "We have been monitoring reports following the M8.0 earthquake and tsunami in the Santa Cruz Islands that occurred at 01:12 UTC. If you are in a potentially impacted area, pay attention to local news reports and warning authorities."

❑ The specific details above tell the audience we know what's going on, and we want you to be safe without committing Cisco or TACOPS to any particular action or expectation of response.

Normal (day to day) SM use

❑ Feel free to link and promote articles that make the case for IP technology in emergency, interoperability, etc. Cisco blog postings, case studies, etc. are great.

❑ A lot of Cisco "for amplification" social media pre-canned messages are generic. If they're relevant to our audience, feel free to re-word & post the core message for our SM channels.

❑ Don't be afraid to humanize the team and mission:

> Tomorrow will be the three year anniversary of the Haiti earthquake. We remember those who lost their lives and those who saw their families and homes torn asunder.   For those of us on the team here at TACOPS, the response to that quake was a pivot point for us. We learned a lot from that, grew out our global capability, and have applied lessons so painfully learned to help out in other emergencies around the world. From our three teams that went in right after the quake, to more recent deployments to help reconstruction efforts, we have seen the glimmers of a more hopeful future arise from the debris. Haiti faces a long a difficult road ahead of it, but so many are still working for that better future.
>
> But tomorrow, we should pause and remember the human suffering caused by the quake. And then redouble our efforts to mitigate that suffering with the technology at our disposal.

Crisis Support SM

Crisis Support SM usage: Guiding Principles

❑ FIRST: DO NO HARM. Precautionary principle should guide all SM activities in crisis.

❑ OPERATIONAL SECURITY (OPSEC) / FORCE PROTECTION: protecting our people from physical threat is the highest priority. If we are worried about the physical safety of a team downrange (e.g. Haiti, Horn of Africa, Iraq), avoid specifics that may put the team at additional risk. (my personal rule is that if we have to worry about arranging GPS security for a deployed team then OpSec is a major factor and to think twice about posting anything)

❑ SECURITY EVENTS: National Security Special Events (NSSEs), law enforcement or security support -> post nothing unless cleared by PIO and/or Corp Crisis Comm. Not all responses are publicized ☺

❑ DON'T BREAK THE NEWS INTERNALLY: Social media MUST NOT ever be the first place Corporate Crisis Communications, CCT or other Cisco teams learn about an activation. Make sure relevant Cisco teams and personnel are notified before anything is said publicly.

❑ ENCOURAGE PUBLIC SAFETY: "@SJ_NERV: All affected in the path of #Sandy should finalize their prep ASAP. This is a very dangerous storm"

Crisis support – on call expertise, minor impact.

❑ Sometimes we are providing remote support, our footprint is tiny. In these cases, it's okay to post a quick statement of engagement…no followup is needed or really expected.

> "Typhoon Bopha: Cisco TacOps engineers are assisting NetHope member NGOs in their response to Super Typhoon Bopha, which struck the Philippines on December 3rd, 2012. We've been sending equipment and assisting with remote design and troubleshooting support."

Crisis Support – activation w/personnel

❑ When we get involved in a crisis, defer "non-crisis" related SM.

❑ Once internal notification has happened and all relevant internal processes are spun up, external notification can happen (if no acute OPSEC issues)…keep it high level, no customer names but incident name and general location are OK.

   ❑ (on facebook)"TACOPS Activation - Hurricane Sandy

   Cisco vehicles (NERV-1, MC-2, Utility-1) and a team of operations coordinators and engineers will be departing Cisco enroute to a staging location tomorrow. This is in advance of expected emergency requests for support from NY, NJ and CT."

   ❑ (on twitter) "NERV Activation: NERV2 has been activated for the Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado. The team will depart San Jose Wednesday morning."

Crisis Support – on scene

❑ Once the team has arrived on scene, we fall under incident PIO (if using ICS) – check w/PIO before mentioning customer agencies or photos of joint ops (anything that shows affiliation).

❑ You'll notice we mention "kind" (vertical), but not necessarily agency unless it is cleared. "Public Safety" or "utility" customer, etc.

❑ Getting photos of the team in action are good – but don't be disaster tourists. Be respectful of local communities and victims. (e.g. a big cheery picture of you with huge devastation is just wrong, man, wrong…)

❑ In larger incidents, interest will be high. I started doing abstracted unit logs as a narrative on …

   ❑ "SANDY RESPONSE UPDATE: The team continues to restore communications for the affected public safety agency, and is making progress. Additional engagements beyond the current one are possible, and we've making contingencies in staffing and equipment for those possibilities. The weather is expected to get worse later in the week.

   Great teamwork by everyone on the team and the extended Cisco crisis response effort. We're all acutely aware of how important it is to help restore these critical life-saving organizations."

   ❑ (on twitter) "The NERV and team arrived in Colorado yesterday. Support networks rolled out overnight, more today. http://twitpic.com/a1vgwo"

Crisis Support – release / return

❏ Once the team has been released from the emergency and has returned, I usually will note the release from the incident, and then wrap up the "incident" mode by noting the safe return of our team.

❏ Normal (non crisis) SM can resume at this point.

❏ Release/return – mention disposition of networks (what happened to our work), etc.

  ❏ "NERV2 was released per Waldo Canyon IC at 1000hrs local. The network will be transitioned to local support and remain until the incident is closed out."

  ❏ "TacOps team members and the NERV have returned safely from the Waldo Canyon Fire response."

Crisis Support – engaging critical questions

❑ During the Sandy activation notice, a couple of people on Facebook were asking why we didn't move faster. These are NOT critical in the traditional sense. They're seeing events on TV and expecting us to be there already! These are opportunities to educate…

<Person 1> Michael Brown must be in charge. Shouldn't have waited.

<Person 2> Was curious myself why NERVs weren't preemptively headed over. Probably takes time to assess where such resources would be most effective, and I might assume NYC has internal resources of it's own. Not significantly affected by Sandy in ME, but appreciating your assistance to those that were.

<Cisco TACOPS> <Person 1> and <Person 2>: We work within the National Incident Management System (NIMS) - there are protocols for appropriate activation that we follow. It's important to verify routes of travel, availability of fuel, etc to ensure that we don't become part of the problem. Hope that answers your question.

Photo examples (response)

Context: Shows vehicles/team on scene. (Sandy)

Demonstrates: We're there in the thick of it.

Action: Shows our team in action (can be "messy" because disasters are "messy") – (Sandy)

Demonstrates: we're working hard.

Engagement: Shows our team interacting with agencies/ public etc. (San Bruno)

Demonstrates: One team w/ others. [ensure PIO clearance for agency affiliations!]
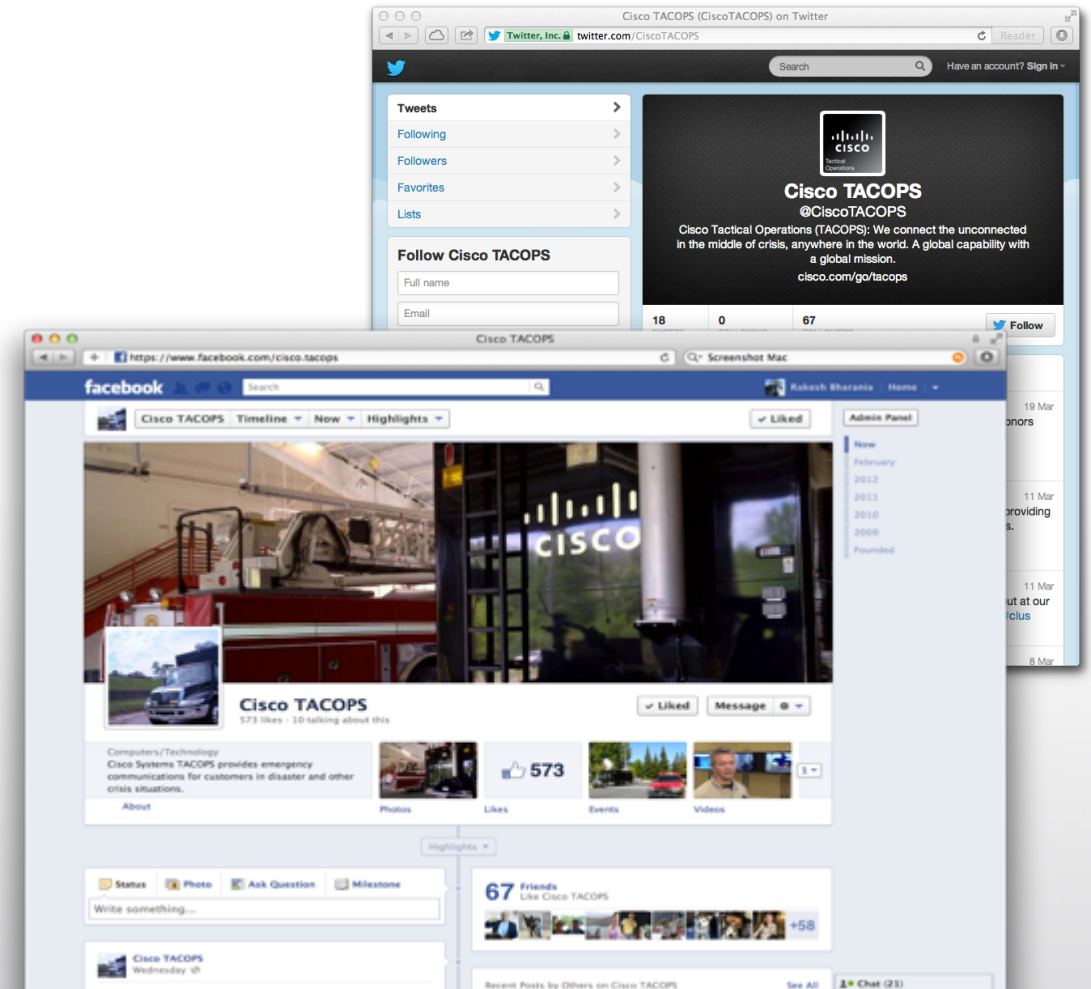
Additional Resources

Connect with us…social media, web, email!

On Cisco.com http://www.cisco.com/go/tacops/

Email: tacops-info@cisco.com

Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/cisco.tacops

- Twitter: @CiscoTACOPS

Thank you.

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