Election 2020
Social Media POV
October 6, 2020
Overview:

The 2020 Presidential Election is unlike any other – surrounded by political, social and environmental turmoil. This POV is designed to help your brand navigate the social media landscape before, during, and after the election.

TL;DR

If you choose to engage, do it in a way that remains true to your brand voice. Focus on positivity and participation over politics, and avoid overly promotional or self-serving content.

While we don't recommend going dark, remain on the pulse of conversation, trends and news. Consider daily touch bases with your team to monitor the situation and evaluate planned content to mitigate risk.
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Key Dates & Publishing Considerations
Key Dates

Presidential Debates: 9/29, 10/15, 10/22
Do not go dark but assess key words in social and influencer posts that may cause your content to run alongside political content. Avoid posting in the hours of the debate (9pm-10:30pm ET) and be mindful that social discussion may continue until the morning.

Vice Presidential Debate: 10/7
Do not go dark but assess key words in social and influencer posts that may cause your content to run alongside political content. Avoid posting in the hours of the debate (9pm-10:30pm ET) and be mindful that social discussion may continue until the morning.

Election Day: 11/3
While we know that results likely won’t be in, social audiences will be interested & focused on one thing: voting & the election results. We recommend NOT posting on this day to allow space for these messages to be communicated. If your brand is able to drive a VOTE message as part of the strategy, today is the day to do it.

Post Election: 11/4 – TBD
The results of the election could remain uncertain or contested for days, or even weeks after polling has closed. Once results are confirmed, protests may arise and conversations will fluctuate across social. Be prepared to increase monitoring and evaluate if and when it’s appropriate to consider publishing business as usual. Avoid big campaign launches or announcements to go live prior to the week of 11/9 if possible.
On-Going: Now – November 9th

Publishing Checklist:

- Audit trending hashtags and keywords daily to confirm they can’t be connected back to your brand or content to ensure your planned content is not at risk.

- Thoroughly vet a trending hashtag before incorporating it into your content to ensure real-time content is not at risk.

- Avoid engaging with consumers and influencers whose social profiles are aggressively political. Be extra diligent in vetting and screening of those that post unsettling, politically motivated or overly divisive posts.

- If publishing election related content, consider design (avoid color schemes that are overly just red or only blue). Ensure messaging is nonpartisan (unless you’ve made a clear stance in the past and are prepared to continue that commitment).

- Be prepared for curveballs. Even topics that ordinarily wouldn’t or shouldn’t be polarizing might take on more of a political bent in Q4. Have a plan of action in place for community management, and be prepared to pivot if necessary.

Sensitive Keywords:

- Debate(s)
- President
- Vice
- Candidate
- Supreme
- Court
- Blue
- Red
- College
- Breaking
- News
Brand Participation

While there is no single roadmap that works for every brand, there are four approaches that we are seeing across the social space.
Be Bold:

What: With 4 weeks left, most big plans are likely underway. That said, there is still an opportunity to be bold in social content. Bold brands are bringing elements of their brand’s values & purpose to the forefront to demonstrate civic-consciousness or to take a stand.

Why We Like This: Consumers (especially Gen Z) are invested in brand actions during these times and shout out the brands they love for doing this (Hello Ben & Jerry’s). If ever there was a time to show off your brand purpose, it’s this.

Ben & Jerry’s “Democracy is in your hands” content is a way to deliver on their brand belief that Democracy only works when it works for Everyone.

Patagonia stitched messages into clothing tags and launched a partnership with BallotReady to encourage people to vote climate-change deniers out of office.

Spotify taps musicians and influencers to launch “Voter’s Booth” Hub providing non-partisan voting resources, podcasts and curated playlists.

“In a year marked with such uncertainty, amid a pandemic and social unrest, our country’s future—and our collective role in shaping it—has never been more important.”

Richard Johnson
CEO of Foot Locker, Inc.
Encourage Voting:

What: In the last presidential election, just 60% of eligible citizens voted. Only 25% of 18-30 year olds voted in the recent midterm. Brands who want to support this movement with their younger demographic audience are incentivizing voting in a way that’s true to their brand voice.

Why We Like It: Encouraging your audience to vote allows brands to still get involved and do SOMETHING, but at a lower risk of larger progressive pushing brand work. Just make sure not do it as a checklist – do it because your brand is behind driving people to get to the polls.

Even with only a 25% US-based audience on Instagram, Champion’s “Vote like a Champion” IG Stories content proved to be highly relevant with their audience – driving the highest impressions and retention rate of 2020.

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Bravo is remaining true to it’s fan-first tone of voice by re-imagining iconic quotes with a 2020 Election spin. Using familiar visuals and talent stops fans in the feed with this important message.

Bonus: IG Stories also provide a less public forum if you are concerned with negative sentiment.

Bonuses: The quote format is easily shareable for fans who want to send to friends or to their personal Story.

“Given the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s more important than ever that voters have the information and resources they need to ensure their voices are heard”

Chris Lehane
SVP of global policy and communications at Airbnb
Be a Welcomed Distraction:

**WHAT:** 60%* of adults agree that parts of the Internet feel dark and scary these days. Particularly when people are arguing over their beliefs on social media. Done right, brands with a compatible personality can be a welcomed distraction to the otherwise relentless news cycle.

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** Staying true to your brand personality should always be at the forefront. For lighthearted brands, continue to let your personality shine through with evergreen content that can help be a positive force or serve as relief to politically overwhelmed consumers.

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*Source: Morning Consult and Pinterest, US Adults, July 2020*
Just Observe:

If your brand has sensitivities, doesn’t possess traits that logically extend to the election or to related issues, we recommend avoiding posting about the topic altogether. Not all brands have a place in this conversation, and that is OK.

If you elect to remain silent, be sure to continue to observe trends and monitor other planned content as stated earlier.

Consider community management and be sure to avoid engaging with consumers and influencers whose social profiles are aggressively political. Be extra diligent in vetting and screening of those that post unsettling, politically motivated or overly divisive posts.

*Source: eMarketer, US Adults, October 2019*
Influencer Considerations
Influencers & The Election

Unlike past elections, Influencers are feeling the pressure to use their social platform to speak up for the upcoming election. They realize the power of their voice to educate followers, usually younger voters, on the country’s policies and their impact. Those who are vocal have been sharing voting registration links and posting about their political standpoints to encourage voter turnout.

Whether you are working with influencers on an Election themed campaign or general brand programming, there are a few key considerations to keep in mind:

- **Vetting**: Thoroughly vet influencer partners to ensure they align with your brand values. Avoid engaging with influencers whose social profiles are aggressively political. Be extra diligent in screening of those that post unsettling, politically motivated or overly divisive posts.

- **Timing**: While it is not necessary to go dark, be mindful of timing of campaign launches or influencers posting on key dates (i.e. Election Day – 11/3). It’s also important to respect an influencer’s personal space during this time and be flexible if they request to adjust posting dates for sponsored content the week of the Election.

- **Sentiment**: Monitor follower sentiment around sponsored posts going live during the Election timeframe. Be prepared to equip influencers with reactive messaging if requested, or if appropriate, to enlist brand community management team to address negative comments on influencer posts. (Ensure thorough vetting of commenter profiles before interacting)
Paid Media Considerations
Paid Media & The Election:

Lead-up to Election Day: Now – Tuesday, November 3rd
- Remain live with paid campaigns but expect higher costs:
  - CPMs and costs often rise in Q4 even in non-election years, so plan for increased costs or fluctuations in metrics compared to the rest of the year.
  - When targeting states or regions seeing more competitive races, CPMs may be higher than usual. Nationally targeted campaigns with larger audience sizes should be less impacted by any shifts.
- Continuously review ad copy to ensure it remains sensitive and current based on news and trending topics.

Post-Election: November 4th – Monday November 9th
- For brands concerned with running their paid content alongside potentially controversial content around the election results, consider pausing media and re-evaluating daily. We anticipate campaigns will be able to relaunch starting around 11/6-11/9, but this could shift depending on any delays in tallying results.
- Monitor ads for additional user sentiment to guide potential pivots.
Key Takeaways & Action Items
Takeaways On A Page:

Key Dates To Be Aware Of
- Presidential Debates: 9/29, 10/15, 10/22
- Vice Presidential Debate: 10/7
- Election Day: 11/3
- Post Election: 11/4 – TBD

Considering Getting Involved?
- **DON’T** get involved unless your brand has a clear connection. Consumers see through performative activism.
- **DO** stay true to your brand’s values.

Approaches To Explore:
- **BE BOLD**: Bring brand values to life by showcasing civic-consciousness and take a stand.
- **BE ENCOURAGING**: Drive voter turnout by encouraging fans to vote.
- **BE A DISTRACTION**: Provide people with much-needed relief from a stressful news cycle.
- **JUST OBSERVE**: If it’s not a fit, don’t force it. Monitor the situation instead.

Publishing Considerations
- **DO** be mindful of key election activity—no need to go dark, but assess content carefully for sensitive language, hashtags and keywords.
- **DO** regularly vet trending hashtags & keywords before incorporating into planned or real-time content.
- **AVOID** posting during the debates (9-10:30 ET).
- **AVOID** engaging with users whose social profiles are aggressively political or overly divisive.
- **AVOID** launches or promotional activity during this time period, including promotional emails and push notifications.
- **AVOID** overhauling social calendars with only election-related content. Consumers want balance in their social feeds.

Influencer Considerations
- **DO** be mindful of influencers posting around key election activity—no need to go dark, but assess content carefully for sensitive language, hashtags and keywords.
- **DO** thoroughly vet influencer partners to ensure they align with your brand values. Be extra diligent in screening of those that post unsettling, politically motivated or overly divisive posts.
- **DO** monitor follower sentiment around sponsored posts going live during the election timeframe.
- **DO** respect an influencer’s personal space and be flexible if they request to adjust posting dates for sponsored content the week of the election.
- **AVOID** engaging with influencers whose social profiles are aggressively political.

Paid Media Considerations
- **DO** remain live with paid campaigns.
- **DO** expect higher CPMs through Q4 when targeting regions experiencing more competitive races.
- **DO** review ad copy to ensure it remains sensitive and current based on news and trending topics.
- **DO** consider pausing media running immediately after election day, and re-evaluate daily; when live, monitor for user sentiment regularly.

Avoiding Content:
- **AVOID** engaging with influencers whose social profiles are aggressively political.
- **AVOID** posting during the debates (9-10:30 ET).
- **AVOID** engaging with users whose social profiles are aggressively political or overly divisive.
- **AVOID** launches or promotional activity during this time period, including promotional emails and push notifications.
- **AVOID** overhauling social calendars with only election-related content. Consumers want balance in their social feeds.

Consumers want balance in their social feeds. **DON’T** get involved unless your brand has a clear connection. Consumers see through performative activism. **DO** stay true to your brand’s values.

Approaches To Explore:
- **BE BOLD**: Bring brand values to life by showcasing civic-consciousness and take a stand.
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Thank you.
Appendix
## Key Dates

Sensitivity Days: Heavily vet content and monitor conversation sentiment.

### October

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Nonpartisan Voting Information Sources

- **I am a voter**
  - Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/iamavoter/](https://www.instagram.com/iamavoter/)
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/iamavoter](https://twitter.com/iamavoter)
  - Website: [https://iamavoter.com/](https://iamavoter.com/)

- **Vote Save America**
  - Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/votesaveamerica/](https://www.instagram.com/votesaveamerica/)
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/votesaveamerica](https://twitter.com/votesaveamerica)
  - Website: [https://votesaveamerica.com/](https://votesaveamerica.com/)

- **When We All Vote**
  - Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/whenweallvote/](https://www.instagram.com/whenweallvote/)
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/whenweallvote](https://twitter.com/whenweallvote)
  - Website: [https://www.whenweallvote.org/about-us/](https://www.whenweallvote.org/about-us/)

- **Rock the Vote**
  - Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/rockthevote/](https://www.instagram.com/rockthevote/)
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/rockthevote](https://twitter.com/rockthevote)
  - Website: [https://www.rockthevote.org/about-rock-the-vote/](https://www.rockthevote.org/about-rock-the-vote/)

- **Vote.org**
  - Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/votedotorg/](https://www.instagram.com/votedotorg/)
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/votedotorg](https://twitter.com/votedotorg)
  - Website: [https://www.vote.org/about/](https://www.vote.org/about/)
Social Marketing Best Practices

- **Real-Time Trends:** Culture is at the root of what we do but given the times brands should only capitalize on trending hashtags or keywords that have proven to be unrelated to politics.
  - Thoroughly vet all keywords/trends that you are jumping in on—sometimes something that may lend itself to your brand may have a larger meaning.
  - Pressure check with people who do NOT work on your brand—-a great way to get a reaction

- **Platform Specific Nuances**
  - **Twitter:** Since this is a primary place people consume news, be cautious of what could be developing in real-time. Check on trending hashtags and keywords throughout the day before posting big brand announcements.
  - **Instagram:** Traditionally known to be materialistic. Given the greater issues and conversations at hand during this time, it is likely that we’ll see creators scale back to give space for political voices and discussions.
  - **Facebook:** Given the older demographic, this platform tends to skew slightly more conservative than the others. Be mindful when posting election-focused content that you may see community members encourage specific candidates in the comments.
  - **TikTok:** Given the younger demographic, this platform tends to skew slightly more liberal and will be the most accepting of election/political-focused content.