

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ELECTIONS AND VOTER REGISTRATION

Cj Gilsinger

Destry Richey

Project Completed January 21, 2025



Cass County Indiana

Cj.Gilsinger@co.cass.in.us

Destry.Richey@co.cass.in.us

Ballots@co.cass.in.us

INTRODUCTION

As newspaper and radio stations have steadily lost their audience in the past several years, the ability to communicate effectively with Cass County citizens has also declined. The days of advertising in these local media outlets as a primary means of communication to all citizens have ended with the rise of online news and streaming services used as an alternative. Social media has quickly become a preferred communication method by various demographics of citizens. Social media encompasses various outlets, making it sometimes tricky to determine what platforms to use. Counties should avoid using too many platforms, as they risk not getting all the same information across each platform. Adding social media as a communication tool for the Cass County Voter Registration office will allow them to regain some of the lost audience through local media outlets and communicate with their community and voters effectively.

GOALS

Desired Outcomes and Objectives

The goals of the Capstone Project are to determine the most effective social media platforms to communicate with Cass County's various social demographics and use them to improve their election communications. This goal will allow Cass County election administrators to effectively, efficiently, and immediately communicate information such as upcoming deadlines, public testing dates and times, election board meetings, poll worker recruitment, vote center information, ballot information, registration information, and any changes to the voting process that their voters should know about before election day. Social media posts will also allow them to explain more about the election process and help the community better understand the cycle of elections. They also want to share information to inform the public that there is much more to elections than just those few weeks of voting. This will help Cass County election security by combatting disinformation that unreliable sources may spread.

Measurable Action Items Supporting the Project's Success

Cass County can determine the success of this project by evaluating how many "followers" are gained on each social media presence. The population of Cass County is roughly 38,000 people, and the number of registered voters is around 22,000. Their survey indicated that approximately 75% of those surveyed could be reached using two social media platforms. If that holds, this suggests that approximately 16,500 registered

voters use these platforms. The project would be a success if they could reach 25% of those voters before the next general election.

METHODS

Schedule






This project first involved data collection, which they decided would be done during early voting of the 2024 Presidential Election. Next, the data was reviewed to determine what platforms to utilize. This was followed by creating a presence on each platform. After this, they started inviting contacts to like and follow the page while encouraging them to invite their contacts. Cass County then started weekly posts, including election, voter registration, and/or candidate information. They believe this will continue to infinity and beyond.

How Data Was Collected

The team first had to determine how many and which social media platforms to utilize. To do this, they decided to conduct a survey amongst Cass County voters. They made 100 small surveys, which included five major social media platforms and four age demographics. Those surveys were set out at the courthouse voting location. After submitting their ballots, voters had the option to fill out the survey. At this point, the surveys were collected, and the data collected was input into an Excel worksheet after the election.

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

How can we best communicate Election Information?
(Circle All That Apply)

 FACEBOOK	 X	 TRUTH SOCIAL
 INSTAGRAM	 SNAPCHAT	NO SOCIAL MEDIA USED

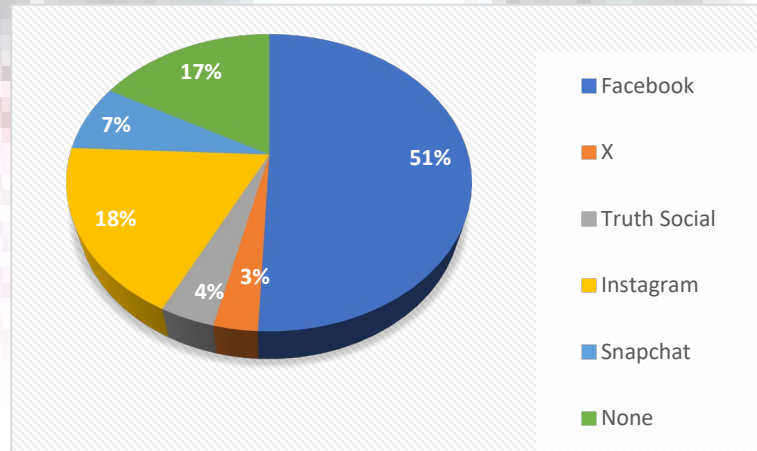
SELECT AGE DEMOGRAPHIC:
(Circle Age Group)

17 – 30 31 – 50 51 – 70 71+

Thank You for Your Response!

How Goals Were Achieved

After collecting and comparing the data, the team found that using two social media platforms could reach 75% of those surveyed.

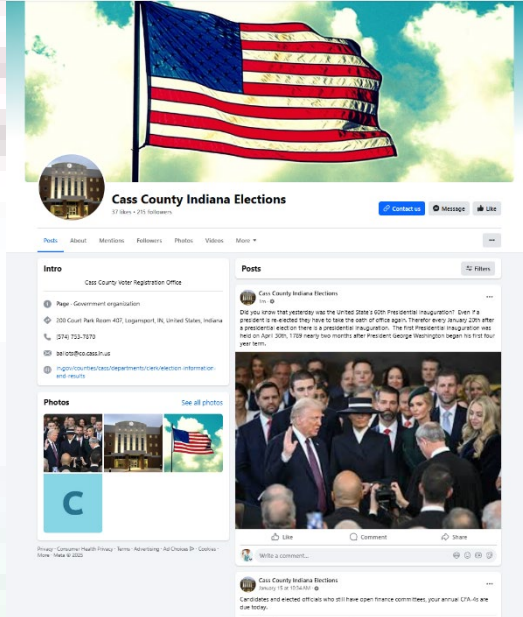


The social media

platforms chosen were used the most by all age demographics. The leading social media platform was Facebook at 69%, followed by its sister platform Instagram at 25%.

Seventy-six percent of those who indicated that they utilized Instagram also indicated Facebook. The other platforms had negligible results; thus, it was decided to use only Facebook and Instagram. Therefore, in creating a social media presence on those two platforms, the team met the first part of their goal to find the most effective outlets to improve communication with Cass County voters. Cass County will reach the next part of that goal as they continue to work to inform voters of their presence on social media so that voters may follow them for election information.

How The Problem Was Solved



The decline in the ability to communicate effectively with Cass County Citizens has been solved by creating our social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. Cass County is currently printing flyers to encourage voters to follow them on Facebook and Instagram by scanning a QR code and adding those QR codes to existing election mail communications. Currently, they have gained

approximately 251 followers in the short period of time that they have been on those platforms. The number of followers is expected to rise as they post more information and advertise their presence on social media.

CEATS PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS

The principles and Tools gained through CEATS used in this project are Election Administration, Election Security, and Election Integrity. Cass County has used and will continue to use tools from the Election Administration to adapt to changing times by reaching out to citizens better by creating a social media presence. Election security has improved, allowing Cass County to continue fighting disinformation about voter

eligibility, absentee procedures, voter fraud, and general election knowledge. Election Integrity was and will be enhanced by creating more transparency, thus giving the citizens another way to get their information and sharing information that could teach Cass County voters about the security of election equipment and the rigorous testing required on each device.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of social media in election and voter registration communications is combatting the decline in newspaper and radio audiences. Cass County now has the ability to communicate effectively with its citizens through two social media platforms. This will allow effective, efficient, and immediate communication of information regarding elections, voter registration, and candidate information. The ability to combat disinformation from unreliable sources has enhanced Cass County election security.

Cass County is not the only county affected by the decline in newspaper and radio audiences. Nationwide, people are moving to online streaming platforms and social media for their news and communication needs. Other counties could also benefit from using social media to communicate with their communities and voters. Although their results could differ from those of Cass County, a similar survey could easily determine which social media outlets would best suit their communication needs.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks go to our poll workers for assisting us in collecting the data by encouraging voters to fill out our surveys. We would also like to thank VSTOP for their encouragement and ideas in helping us through this project and CEATS Cohort 6.