COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES
GARDEN STATE COUNCIL

Channels
The council marketing committee maintains three primary channels to communicate with volunteers, Scouts, parents and the community at large: the council website, Knapsack electronic newsletter, and social media. Each channel has specific ways to be utilized most effectively.

gardenstatescouting.org
The council website is updated on a regular basis. Each committee with content on the website has the ability to edit, create, and remove their own content.

Knapsack
The Knapsack newsletter is e-mailed to approximately 10,000 people each week. Lists are generated both through Scoutnet and opting-in via the council website.

Social media
The council has obtained accounts on most major social media sites. The sites being actively utilized to communicate with the membership are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Create
The most important element of any communication channel is content. Committees should consider the audience for any content they are creating, and create content that is relevant and valuable. As a rule, all content should leave a user with any reasonable questions answered and provide a way to obtain more information (either a link to more content or contact information).

Guidelines:
- Keep articles below 500 words. If an idea cannot be expressed in 500 words, it is probably worth multiple articles.
- Size photos correctly to prevent distortion. Images in news articles should be 1200x400 pixels, and images appearing on the front page sliders must be 1080x420 pixels. Images should be 72 DPI.
- Accompany written content with graphic elements: photos, drawings and videos can all be embedded in articles.
- The time, date and location of even event should be front and center for news articles. Make sure to include this information at the top of your article in a clear manner.
- Do not use clip art, scans of flyers, or images of letters, etc. Find graphic elements that add value to the written content.
- Never write in the first person.
- Pay attention to formatting of dates and phone numbers. Dates should be written out or hyphenated (6-30-13). Phone numbers are separated by periods with extensions marked as an "x" (856.555.5555 x5). Times do not include a colon (530 PM).

Publish
All content publishing is done on the website, and the shared through other channels. To publish content, a user should log in to the website. The bottom left of the page has a small menu for adding content. It is essential when publishing content to complete all fields (headline, tags, body, images). To edit existing content, a user must be logged in and navigate to the content they would like to edit. An edit tab will be visible at the top of the page to modify any content the user has access rights to.

Guidelines:
- Pay attention to fonts sizes and usage. Text editors on the site have formats pre-loaded into them. Use Normal (DIV) for body text, and the different Heading formats for headlines and sub-heads.
- Text on the website should always appear in black.
- Consider whether content is meant for a static page, or should be shared as a news update. If the content is a resource users seek out, it belongs on a page. If it is timely information that needs to be distributed, post it as a news story.
- Do not post that a page will be updated in the future. That is understood. Content should go online when it is ready, and updated as necessary. If information is incomplete but must be shared, it may be a better fit for social media.
- Make content easy for users to find. Resources related to membership belong on the membership page, not a district page. If a committee has an excellent resource for a page they do not maintain- share it!

- Tags are the primary way users explore and find additional content on the website. When an article is posted, include 2-5 tags for the article so that users can find additional, similar content.
- White space is not a bad thing. It makes content easier for users to read. Allow a full space between paragraphs. Paragraphs should not be indented.
- Bold and italics should be used sparingly. Unless it is a book or movie title, it should not be in italics. DO NOT WRITE POSTS IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, IT IS DISTRACTING.
- Headlines should use proper capitalization (do not capitalize each word), and should be in 14 point font, bolded.

Share

There are three ways to create additional visibility for, and share, the content posted on the website: the Knapsack, social media, and promoted posts.

Knapsack

The deadline for the Knapsack is **5PM each Wednesday**. Content received by this date will be placed in the Knapsack released that Saturday. To place content in the Knapsack, send an e-mail to marketing@gardenstatecouncil.org. The e-mail must include a link to the article (already published on the website) and a two or three sentence blurb/summary to run in the Knapsack promoting the article.

Social media

To promote an article on social media, send a link to the article to marketing@gardenstatecouncil.org. If a committee has content other than an article (such as a picture for Instagram or a simple reminder of a registration deadline for Twitter), that raw content may be sent directly.

Promoted posts

Seven posts may be promoted on the front page of the website at any time: three in the slider at the top of the page, and four in the promoted posts boxes below. If a committee would like content promoted, send a link to the content and a request for the promotion to marketing@gardenstatecouncil.org. News stories must have a graphic element to be promoted. *It may take up to a week for a piece of content to become promoted on the front page.*

General tips

Creating and publishing large amounts of content can be time consuming. Here are a few general guidelines that are important to keep in mind. They'll help ensure the content posted and shared is relevant and valued by users.

- Do not upload any files for distribution that are not in PDF format. Word, Excel or other editable documents should not be posted to the website.
- Volunteer e-mail addresses should not be posted if possible. The council has the ability to create forwarding e-mail addresses (i.e. president@gardenstatescouting.org) to keep volunteer addresses private. If you need e-mail aliases, please request them from the marketing committee.
- Avoid linking to non-BSA approved websites. This includes unit pages or Scouting-related pages maintained by individuals.
- Content should not be redundant. An older article can be promoted through different channels to draw an audience if need be, instead of re-posting.

Support

The marketing committee is committed to helping every organ of the council share what it's doing with the Garden State Council family. If you have suggestions on how the committee can be more effective, or issues utilizing any of the channels we maintain, please contact either Susan Nagy (sunagy@bsamail.org) or Ed Lynes (elynes@gmail.com).