A resident had written in to inquire about an assistance scheme for young, low-income families.

Worried that someone may have missed her e-mail, she logged on to Facebook and wrote on the wall of North East Community Development Council (NECDC) to ask about her query.

NECDC responded within 18 minutes that she would be hearing from the CDC that day.

This prompt response can perhaps explain why NECDC’s Facebook page has gained close to 12,000 likes.

This is more than some shopping malls and pips other CDCs like Central CDC, which, among the five CDCs on Facebook, has the second-highest number of “likes” — more than 2,200.

For NECDC, which started actively engaging residents through Facebook a year ago, the result was no mean feat.

In its use of social media for engagement, NECDC recognises one thing — the people that they see on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter may not be the ones that need CDC services.

Said NECDC’s senior corporate manager, Miss Sharinita Ismail, who is also one of two administrators for NECDC’s Facebook page: “For NECDC, we acknowledge the fact that not all the people that we see on Facebook will be the ones that need CDC services.

“But through them, more people may know about what CDC services are and could help refer those who need it.

“We realised there was a need to look at how we could use Facebook to engage our residents as almost everyone is now getting connected via Facebook.

“We want to be able to stay in touch with our residents and reach out to them or people around them if they need assistance.”

For her as an administrator, it means responding to feedback faster, usually within the hour and even on weekends. And being willing to take the knocks and negative feedback.

Complain

Miss Sharinita recalled how NECDC had organised a running event last year with one of its partners and participants visited NECDC’s Facebook to complain that the fit of the running vest was not suited for women runners.

She said: “The CDC had to work closely with our partner to address all these concerns within the hours that the feedback was posted.”

It also prompted a Facebook reply from North East District’s Mayor Teo Ser Luck, who said that they would work with the contractor to address the issue and produce vests for the event.

He also apologised for the inconvenience caused.

The same principle should apply to all CDCs but for all CDCs to engage with residents.

For NECDC but for all CDCs to engage with netizens.

“An organisation needs to keep in mind that effective online engagement relies on ‘personal touch’ and ‘interactivity’.”

For organisations interested in building a social media presence, Mr Chew said it is important to keep three things in mind.

First, think about what the audience wants instead of what the organisation wants.

Next, understand how successful brands communicate online.

Last, those managing social media platforms need to be trained to understand the platforms they want to work with, what kind of content works and how to communicate that across different media.