

# Sample Social Media Policy

This policy is meant to serve as a guide for you to create a unique policy for your organization. It is not meant to be copied and adopted, as every organization has its own needs and expectations of its staff. Use this to draft your own policy and have your organization's legal counsel review it. If your organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, it is especially important to consult with your attorney about what is permissible for your staff to post on their personal channels using organization-owned computers and phones as that aspect is not included in this sample policy.

**(Your Organization Name)** developed this social media policy to govern the publication of - and commentary on - social media by its employees. For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wikis, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and new tools as they emerge. This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet.

**(Your Organization Name)** employees may publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. Employees are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as a **(Your Organization Name)** employee.

Notwithstanding the previous section, this policy applies to all uses of social media, including personal, by **(Your Organization Name)** employees who use social media platforms on behalf of the company as their position with **(Your Organization Name)** would be well known within the community.

Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary. Employees should be aware that what they say is permanent.

When using social media, employees are required to follow the same ethical standards they would otherwise use when communicating about our work. All conduct standards stated in the employee handbook apply to any employee's use of social media.

## Don't tell secrets

It's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details of current projects, research, and comments shared in confidence during meetings within the organization or any coalition work.

## Protect your own privacy

Set your privacy settings on social media platforms to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what can be accessed on the **(Your Organization Name)** website. Set other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.

## Be honest

Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names in any personal or organizational capacity. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name and be clear about who you are. Nothing gains you notice in social media more than honesty - or dishonesty. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details. If you cannot post something without being dishonest then you shouldn't be posting it in the first place.

## Respect copyright laws

It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others, including **(Your Organization Name)**'s own copyrights and brands. Never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source.

## Respect your audience, **(Your Organization Name)**, and your coworkers

The public in general, and **(Your Organization Name)**'s employees and partners, reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't say anything contradictory or in conflict with the **(Your Organization Name)** website. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully.

When using social media on behalf of **(Your Organization Name)**, employees must use caution when commenting on topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion.

In all social media outreach, employees should be respectful of diverse cultures and points of view (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, etc.). Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of **(Your Organization Name)**.

## Controversial issues

If you see misrepresentations made about **(Your Organization Name)** in the media, you may point that out. Be sure to check with senior staff about it before responding. If you decide to respond, always do so with respect and with the facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or goad opposition or others into inflammatory debates. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.

## Be the first to respond to your own mistakes

If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly - better to remove it immediately to lessen the possibility of a legal action. If you make an error that has the potential to cause harm or embarrassment to **(Your Organization Name)** or its partners, please alert management, even if you have deleted or modified the post.

## Think about consequences

Once again, it's all about judgment: using your blog to trash or embarrass **(Your Organization Name)**, our partners, or your coworkers, is dangerous and ill-advised and may lead to disciplinary action or termination.

## Disclaimers

Many social media users include a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for, but that they're not speaking officially. This is good practice and is encouraged, but don't count on it to avoid trouble - it may not have much legal effect.

Wherever practical, you must use a disclaimer saying that while you work for **(Your Organization Name)**, anything you publish is your personal opinion, and not necessarily the opinions of **(Your Organization Name)**.

The senior staff can provide you with applicable disclaimer language such as "All thoughts and opinions expressed here are my own," and assist with determining where and how to use that.

## Don't forget your day job

Make sure that activity on social media does not interfere with your job or commitments to projects.

## Social media tips

The following tips are not mandatory, but will contribute to successful use of social media.

The best way to be interesting, stay out of trouble, and have fun is to write about what you know. Beware of joining a conversation online if you aren't familiar with the topic. Don't just join in for the sake of joining or because it is gaining traction or attention. Bring your perspective to the conversation and explain why it is relevant.

Quality matters. Use a spell-checker. If you're not design-oriented, ask someone who is whether your blog looks decent, and take their advice on how to improve it.

The speed of being able to publish your thoughts is both a great feature and a great downfall of social media. The time to edit or reflect must be self-imposed. If in doubt over a post, or if something does not feel right, either let it sit and look at it again before publishing it, or ask someone else to look at it first.

When in doubt, ask. If you have any questions about what is appropriate, play it smart and check with a senior staff member before posting.

## Enforcement

Policy violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination at the discretion of **(Your Organization Name)**.

Email [digital@spitfirestrategies.com](mailto:digital@spitfirestrategies.com) and we'll send you a customizable social media policy template.

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