

# Dealing *with* Social Media *in the* Workplace

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*Social media is just  
a buzz word until you  
come up with a plan.*

ANONYMOUS

# PREFACE

People love to stay connected, so it's no wonder that social media sites continue to grow in popularity. However, with social media sites going mobile and are open 24 hours a day, people can often forget where to draw the line, especially at work. Companies should examine how this media is affecting them and how they can implement ways to move forward with technology without letting it interfere with productivity.

*Social media is about  
sociology and psychology  
rather than technology.*

BRIAN SOLIS



# WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is actually a combination of terms: media means communications and social means interactive and personal. It is commonly associated with digital forms of communication since it allows more interaction from a larger audience. Sites that use social media differ from regular web sites in that while they offer you information, they also allow you to interact with them, whether it's to leave a comment or sharing a common interest. Social media performs like a two-way street of communication – it allows you to receive information while giving you the chance to communicate back.

## ONLINE COMMUNITIES

An online community is commonly a website or online forum where a group of people come together to share a common interest or ideas. They often include some form of membership, such as a fee or username. In an online community, members have a chance to share interests, such as stories or photos and allow other people to comment or share their opinions. It also allows them to share comments about anything they choose to share. Since members normally need a username or screen name, all activity is usually tracked and monitored.

## **Common types of online communities:**

- Blogs
- Chat rooms
- Online photo galleries
- Social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram

## **USER CREATED CONTENT**

Many websites are created by a company or person who supplies all of the content and material for everyone to see or use. But user created content generally refers to material posted on websites or social networks that is made and produced by the users of the website itself. Users are able to post or write pieces with certain expertise, and in turn other users or visitors can evaluate what was posted, make suggestions, or leave general comments. It can appear amateur at times, but it is widely accepted by people with common interests. One of the most popular examples of a user created content site is Wikipedia, where anyone can write or post articles for informational purposes, but it usually carries a warning that certain statements are not verifiable or may need more facts.

## **INFORMATION SHARING**

By definition, information sharing is an exchange of data or knowledge between various organizations, people, or technologies. In social media, this generally means people can share pieces of information, such as photos or videos, editorials and opinions. They are normally posted to

various websites, either on their own or a friend's, so that many people can share the content they have posted. Billions of people across the globe share information every day, either directly or indirectly.

### **Types of information sharing:**

- Sharing by individuals – such as sharing photos on Facebook or Pinterest.
- Sharing by organizations – such as sharing an RSS feed for various news reports or articles.

## **COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

Online communication tools are any application that allows people to communicate, either by one-on-one or in a group session. They work by capturing, storing, and presenting various forms of communication. This can be done by text, such as chat rooms or emails, or by video and photos, such as video chat or photo-blog. Interactive tools allow constant exchanges and interactions between people, including status options, emoticons, and video captures. Communication tools focus on establishing and maintaining a connection between people in a variety of ways since everyone communicates differently.

### **Common online communication tools:**

- Instant messaging
- Blogs
- Forums or message boards
- Text chats

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Carrie was trying to find a better way to communicate with her clients that were in another state. She knew that emails were too slow and phone calls were a challenge to setup. She went online and researched various forms of social media she could use. She found a website that allows them to exchange instant messages at any time and one forum where they could share ideas and topics about their upcoming projects. Carries was able to send instant message any time with her clients and speak with them instantly when she needed to. The forum was set up for the whole team to see, so any photo, video, or article that someone contributed could be viewed and commented on by everyone. With these tools, Carrie was able to successfully finish the project without sacrificing valuable communication.

*As social media  
becomes more prevalent,  
there will be blunders.  
We are in experimental  
mode right now.*

STEVE HALL



# DEFINING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (I)

When building a social media policy for the company, there are several aspects and guidelines to consider. In order to prevent situations that can put the company at risk, companies create a policy that outlines what is and is not acceptable use of social media in the workplace. Some basic rules should be established first to give the policy some structure. Determine what the policy wants to accomplish and what can be done to make that happen. Once the basics have been established, you can move toward the specific points of the plan and form a policy that will benefit everyone involved.

## IT SHOULD BE A LIVING DOCUMENT

Simply put, a living document is a 'document' or policy that is always changing or revised. Many company policies are written and then shared with everyone, only to be filed away and left the same as the day it was written. But social media is one area where things are constantly changing, so your social media policy needs to change with it. As new laws come into effect or new regulations are made, the rules of social media and information sharing will not remain stagnant. Keep this policy on the top

of your to-do list, even if it has already been reviewed, because it will need to be checked often to ensure accuracy.

## **CHOOSING AN INFORMATION OFFICER**

An information officer, or sometimes also referred to a chief information officer (CIO), is an employee who is responsible for the information and tools needed to uphold a company's policies and general business goals. In regards to a social media policy, an information officer would be responsible for any information or tools needed that would uphold the social media policy that has been put into place. This includes any updates needed, reviews that have been done and introducing any new material that may not have been previously addressed. The information officer often works on a committee that helps address the needs of a policy and ensure that the flow of information is done smoothly.

## **WHAT CAN AND CANNOT BE SHARED**

Since the goal of a social media policy is to set expectations for employees to display appropriate behavior while online, it is important to outline what information can and cannot be shared from the beginning. Use specific details when available, since vague and indefinite terms can be confusing or taken in the wrong direction. Review topics that discuss using company information on a social media website or how an employee should address content online. Establish what information can be shared and what information should remain confidential. Every policy usually includes some kind of restriction on revealing any business secrets, insider tips, or

client lists, while also giving the green light for other pieces of information, such as employee title and office phone number.

### **Common topics to review:**

- Customer or client lists and information
- Company secrets or insider information
- Company projects or assignments
- Employee and personnel demographics

## **LEGAL AND ETHIC SPECIFICATIONS**

When people use social media, they can often forget that their actions can appear illegal or unethical in nature, for instance, a user copying content to display on another site or using a blog to discriminate against another person. Since employees represent their company the moment they sign on, it is important to address any issue or topic that may harm the company legally or ethically. Many employees do not realize they can cause the company to be sued if they violate another company or person legally, which can lead to more problems for everyone. When you are defining the social media policy, discuss this topic with urgency, and stress the importance of practicing legal and ethical behavior when participating on social media sites, either at work or at home.

### **Common topics or rules to discuss:**

- Inappropriate or offensive content
- Online harassment or discrimination

- Keeping online records
- Expectations of privacy for employees and clients

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Danny was working on revising the social media policy with his employees. He knew that many new social media sites had just come on the market, and they were not yet addressed in the current policy. Danny and his team came together to have a meeting about the new sites and what they need to say about them. One member brought up that while this new site allows photos and text, there needs to be a restriction on what employees are able to post while at work. Another member was concerned about how the new site could be used to harass past employees or clients. By the end of the meeting, Danny and his team were able to address all of the legal, ethical, and privacy issues that come with new social media information and were able to update the policy to ensure everything was covered and made clear.

*Monitor, engage, and be  
transparent. These have  
always been the keys to  
success in the digital space.*

DALLAS LAWRENCE



# DEFINING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (II)

Creating a social media policy can be considered a work of art since it is often hard to explain at first and takes several attempts to reach what you want to accomplish. Once a policy has a definite structure and frames, steps, and instructions to follow, it can expand to define how the policy can be implemented, including employee education, postings guidelines, and what to do if a problem arises. Include specific details and directions for employees to ensure they know what the rules will be.

## NEW HIRE ORIENTATION

When introducing new employees to the workplace, one of the most important things to familiarize them with is the social media policy. New employees will be excited to get online and talk to other employees or brag to their friends about getting a new job. However, they are not aware that they are now representing the company, and to be careful about what they post or share. During an orientation period, new employees need to be aware of the company's rules about posting online and sharing information on social media sites. Give them examples of what is acceptable and what information should always remain confidential. Ask

for them to repeat the information back and double check to ensure they understand the policy.

## **LET COMMON SENSE GUIDE YOU**

Any time someone is about to post content online for everyone else to see, we hope that common sense will prevent them from doing anything wrong or foolish. While you can't stop everyone from making mistakes online, we can help reduce them. When outlining the social media policy, define rules that utilize our common sense, such as proofread what we want to post or stopping to ask ourselves *"Is this a good idea?"* The same advice applies to you – the next time you want to share something on a social media network, take a moment to think about it and what kind of impact it could have on your company or your employees.

### **Examples of 'common sense' rules:**

- Double check what you plan to share
- Proofread your posts
- Use discretion when posting photos or videos
- Take a few moments to review what you want to post and think about the consequences

## **NOTHING OFFENSIVE**

One of the most common rules of a social media policy is that employees and users are not to post any kind of content that can be offensive to other

parties. Posting offensive material can cast a bad light on the company and give the public the wrong image. Unfortunately, offensive can only be determined in the eye of the beholder, so while it cannot be totally avoided, you can try to prevent some of it. We know a vast numbers of things that can be deemed offensive to many people, so we can use these things as a starter base. Sometimes it helps to discuss these things with employees, not only to establish the 'nothing offensive' rule of the policy, but it also give insight on things that offend your employees that you may not have been aware of.

### **Common materials that has the ability to be offensive:**

- Discriminating material
- Nude or sensual photos
- Posts with crude or graphic language
- Religious or political information

### **RULES ON SOLICITING AND PERSONAL POSTS**

When at work, employees need to portray themselves in a professional manner, both in person and online. Sometimes employees cross that line when they want to post things on a social media site that either solicits their personal agenda or life, such as a personal blog or an ad for their couch they are trying to sell. Posts such as these should be limited to an employee's personal time and should not be done where they can be linked back to the company.

Employees need to stay focused on the assignment at hand and not mix ‘business with pleasure’ by posting personal posts or entries online while at work. So when you are creating these guidelines in the social media policy, specifically state what types of posts are not to be permitted on company time, such as for sale ads, personal campaigns (such as a child’s candy bar fundraiser), personal stories and photos.

### **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Paula is meeting with a group of new hires to inform them about the company’s social media policy. As new employees, she needed to inform them of the many guidelines and rules when posting on a social media site, either at home or at work. On top of telling them about the rules for what type of posts to make and what to generally share and not share online, Paula made sure to cover examples of offensive material that was not to be permitted under any circumstance. She warned them against using a social media site for their own gain while they are at work and told them to stay professional at all times. Finally, Paula reminded each one to use their common sense when getting ready to post something, and think about what kind of results the content will produce.

*When you give everyone a voice and give people power, the system usually ends up in a really good place.*

MARK ZUCKERBERG



# CREATING A LIVING DOCUMENT

Social media is constantly changing and being updated, so your social media policy should keep up. Any policy or regulation should be periodically reviewed and revised to keep up with the changing faces of social media and to ensure it is up to date 'with the times'. Policies or guidelines that are outdated or are no longer relevant can cause confusion among employees, so it is important that they are reviewed and altered as needed.

## WHAT IS A LIVING DOCUMENT?

Static articles, or 'dead' articles, are articles that are usually posted somewhere and do not change, such as a single edition dictionary or encyclopedia. In contrast, a living document is defined as a document which may be continually edited, revised, or updated, either by one appointed person or by a selective group. As we've reviewed, we know that social media is constantly changing and growing, so a policy that does not change with it will become obsolete. If the policy were a static document, it would have to be discarded and rewritten every time an update or change needed to be added. But having a social media policy classified as a living document allows for the delegated person or group

to review the policy and ensure that it is up to date and accurate at all times, without having to start from scratch.

## **HOW OFTEN IS IT REVISED?**

Finding the exact moment to revise your living document can be difficult to pinpoint. Some companies use a set schedule to update and revise their living documents, while some only base any changes or revisions on an as needed basis and wait until something needs to be changed to update it. However, when maintaining a social media policy, many companies have found it beneficial to use a combined system that uses both techniques to help them stay up to date. The social media policy is updated or revised any time a new update or development arises, but they also schedule a set time to revise the policy to check for anything that may have been missed or recently added. With this method, the company can better maintain their policy and assure its accuracy.

### **A living document can be revised:**

- Daily, weekly, monthly
- Annually or semi-annually
- On a scheduled basis
- On an as-needed basis

## WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE?

Often time the person in charge of changing or revising a social media policy is the information officer, but sometimes it can be another individual or even a team of employees. It is important to make sure the person, or persons, appointed to oversee the policy are someone the company can depend on to complete the task effectively and in a timely manner. They should have some sort of management experience and work well with others, since they will need numerous consultations when it comes to changes being made. Once someone has been chosen, make sure it is known to the department who they can contact with questions or concerns and ensure that they are aware of the proper procedure for submitting suggested changes or revisions.

### Things to consider:

- Who will be responsible for the revisions and corrections needed?
- Who will perform these tasks in an effectively?
- Who will be able to stay on top of the changing social media aspects?
- Who is dependable to accomplish the job with little supervision?
- Who work well individually as well as on a team?

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

One of the key factors in making sure your living document has an effective change management process. Change management is a term

used for the process or steps needed to manage a living document and the revisions/updates/changes it will need periodically. While one person is normally appointed to make the selected changes or updates, there is normally a team that handles the information requests and the procedure itself for having the living document changed. This team ensures that all requests for updates are received properly and, if carried out, then they are documented in the proper places.

To have a successful form of change management, it is important for everyone to recognize their roles and how they help the teams run smoothly. Since the exact procedures for change management differ for every organization, it is important to recognize what your company will need and what it can do in order to benefit their living documents.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Janet has some information about a popular social media site that she believes needs to be added to the company's social media policy. She spoke with an associate, Danny, who handled many of the company's policies and procedures. He told her to contact Jim, who was handling the social media policy at the time. Janet went to Jim's office and met with him and provided him with her suggestions. Jim thanked her for the information and told her they were scheduled to have a meeting about the policy the following week. Janet asked what would happen to her suggestion and if it would be brought up at the meeting.

Jim assured her that he would bring the information to the meeting and let the change management team verify and document it. From there

they will discuss it with one of their information officers and decide what changes would need to be made to the current policy. Janet thanked him for his time and was glad to know her suggestions would not fall on deaf ears.

*The beauty of social media is that it will point out your company's flaws; but the key question is how quickly you address these flaws.*

ERIK QUALMAN



# KEEPING AN EYE ON SECURITY

Although social media can be a great way for people to communicate, it can be bad for business if employees are posting unsecure content or are not careful about what they share with others. Many employees forget that they are representing the company when they post something, which can lead to information leaks or communication errors. It is important to establish security guidelines that can help keep the company's information secure and protected, while keeping the employee protected as well.

## PASSWORD RULES

One of the most used rules for using the internet is to keep your password to any site protected. When creating a new password, guidelines usually suggest making the password between 8-15 characters, including a number and upper/lower case letters. This helps protect against password hacking, as it provides a better layer of security and a challenge to crack. Once you have created your password, do not write it down or give it to someone directly; keep your password secure and offer to type it in yourself if prompted.

Most importantly with social media sites, remember to uncheck the box that usually reads 'Remember me' or 'Keep me logged in' option that is

visible when you sign in. This box stores your login name and password, which can make it easier for online hackers to steal passwords and invade your profile. This feature also keeps you logged in even after you have left, which can allow someone else to post as you or alter your profile information.

### **Password Tips:**

- Passwords should be complex and hard to guess – about 8-15 characters long with numbers
- Change passwords every so often to ensure they are safe
- Never give your password to any site to someone directly
- Do not use the ‘Remember me’ or ‘Keep me logged in’ features

### **NEEDS CONSTANT MONITORING**

Social media monitoring is a common practice for many companies. Although it is usually a tool for marketers using social media, it can also be used for general monitoring of a company’s presence online. Whenever a company establishes internet access for its computers, it always has a way to monitor the computer’s activity, such as the sites that are visited or what kind of content is being downloaded.

This type of information should be constantly monitored for any unprofessional or unusual activity by employees and staff. Many companies are able to monitor the exact websites an employee visits to ensure they are staying on task. It can also make sure passwords

have not been stored or company projects have not been shared by accident. Sometimes monitoring may be needed to ensure employees have logged out of the system and that their site is not being unlawfully used by someone else.

## **KEEPING INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL**

When employees use social media websites at work, whether for professional or personal reasons, the potential for the company's confidential information to be leaked goes up. Employees can choose to upload certain contacts to their Facebook account, but what about the confidential client list that is linked to it on the hard drive? An employee can download files from the company computer to work from home, but how do you ensure they have not taken confidential files with them, either by accident or on purpose?

When employees share information, it is important to make sure they are aware that confidential information needs to stay just that – confidential. Advise them to keep these files separate from their main files and do not link them together so they are not 'accidentally' uploaded to a website or added to a traveling file. Ask them to double check their work files and log out of all systems before leaving for the days. Be sure to let them know of any consequences that may occur if they choose to leak this sensitive information.

## **PROTECTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Intellectual property usually refers to a company's trademarks, logos, or copyrights. Social media sites are the perfect place for these things to run rampant since millions of users access these sites every day and with a simple click can use your logos and trademarks anywhere on the web. While the best practice is to not introduce these things online in the first place, that is not practical in today's Internet savvy business world. Double check what you want to post on the Internet and think about if it could be used in the wrong way.

You can also protect the content you submit to social media sites by including a copyright statement file with your photos or text. This will let people know that you own the copyright to the content and that it is not intended to be shared without permission. Of course, you will still have to be diligent about checking to make sure the content was shared anyway, and if it was, then a potential lawsuit could be filed. Many social media sites have some form of intellectual property statement, so be sure to check it out before agreeing to post anything with them.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Danny was reviewing the company's internet usage for the past month. He was pleased to see that none of the employees had saved their passwords and were keeping their log in information secure. While checking many of the social media sites that the company uses, he noticed many of the employees had made posts earlier that week. But then he noticed one employee had accidentally uploaded her company project sheet along

with her profile information. She had also included a large logo that only the company can use, which was now all over the website.

Danny called the employee into his office right away and pointed out the mistake. He told her that putting this information online was putting the company at risk and was unnecessarily sharing their private information. The employee apologized and logged into her computer right away to remove the information. Although the employee had corrected the problem, Danny knew he would have to keep checking the websites to make sure the logo and information wasn't shared somewhere else.

*Don't say anything  
online you wouldn't want  
plastered on a billboard  
with your face on it.*

ERIN BURY



# RULES TO FOLLOW WHEN POSTING (I)

Now that you have the structure of your social media policy and generally know what you want to accomplish, how do you put it into words? How do you decide on the Do's and Don'ts for your employees? Any policy should address what the employee should take away after reading the policy, while keeping the mood positive by attempting to focus more on what the employee *can* do, rather than a list of things they *can't* do.

## **ALWAYS SHOW RESPECT**

When deciding to post something online, sometimes the last thing on our minds is what others will think about it, or how it will affect us later. But when sharing our information, we must be respectful of our audience and refrain from using foul language or offensive material. Don't use the material to argue or pick a fight with another user or member. While a little controversy or a friendly debate can attract a larger audience, if pushed too far it can have the opposite effect. You can end up alienating your viewers and driving them away. So before you post something online, whether a photo or an article, show respect to other users by considering how it would make them feel.

**Remember:**

- Be polite
- Be aware of how your content makes others feel
- Don't try to argue or fight on a social media site
- Anything you post can come back to you or the company

**STOP AND THINK BEFORE YOU POST**

One of the best tools to prevent negative consequences to the company is to stop and think about something before you decide to post it. Before posting a photo or new article, think about how it will affect you and your employer. Will it appear negative or offensive? Is it something you should be sharing online? If there is any doubt in your mind, don't post it.

When replying to a post, or making a follow-up remark, think twice before making angry comments or criticizing others. Take a moment to think about what you want to say, and repeat it to yourself over and over again. Does it still sound like a good idea? Again, if you have any doubt or second-thought in your mind, refrain from posting it.

**Things to ask yourself before posting:**

- How will this make me look?
- How will this look on the company?
- Will the breach company policy?
- Will this share any unnecessary information?

## **ALWAYS BE HONEST**

When you are posting as an employee, be honest about your identity and your purpose. Don't try to post anonymously or pretend to be someone else just to try and to post something the company would not find acceptable. Make it clear that you are posting as a member or the company, but not as a formal representative since you do not speak for them. If you are posting an article or creating a webpage, it is usually advised to add some sort of disclaimer stating that you are the author or the page and are not under direction of the company.

When asked who you are or where you received your information, be honest and don't hide behind a username. Don't try to be a 'mole' that posts about their company anonymously, either in a positive or negative manner. These types of posts can usually be tracked to their original authors, and can be very embarrassing for you and the company.

## **NEVER DISCREDIT OR TALK ILL OF COMPETITORS**

The main purpose of social media is to communicate and share ideas among people, not to use it for ill will or negative gain. When we see an ad or photo posted by a competitor, we may think we are doing our own company a favor by posting negative reviews about their company or discrediting any findings they may have published. A small part of us may even be convinced that our words will help navigate customers to our business instead. But these thoughts couldn't be more wrong. When we try to post something to discredit or speak badly about our competitors, it makes our own company look petty and cheap. The plan

actually backfires and discredits ourselves and our employer, causing negative publicity.

**Remember:**

- Keep negative comment to yourself
- Negative responses only generate more negativity
- Customers will not want to do business with mean employees

**PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Rose is responsible for posting an article about the company's new line of cookware that is being released soon. She posted several different descriptions of it with accompanying photos. She made sure to identify herself as an employee of the company and was honest about the details of the product. As an added touch, Rose decided to add some of her client testimonials about the products, hoping to build a bigger customer base. When she was finished, Rose decided to browse other sites and look at the competitor's pages and products.

She was shocked to see how they had made negative comments and claims about her company's cookware. She started writing a paragraph about how wrong they were and how her clients preferred her products over theirs. Before she clicked submit, Rose sat back and took a deep breath. The more she thought about it, the more she realized that trying to discredit them would not solve anything. So she backspaced what she had typed, finished her assignment, and logged off of her computer.

*If there's a firestorm  
erupting via blogs, your  
customers will expect you  
to respond via those same  
blogs, not via a carefully-  
worded press release  
4 days later.*

MACK COLLIER



# RULES TO FOLLOW WHEN POSTING (II)

Rules are set in place to help guide employee what is and is not acceptable to share via social media. Sometimes employees forget they are at work or forget they are representing their jobs when they post online, which can lead to inappropriate posts or information leaks. Sometimes basic rules needs to be established to remind employees that when they are using social media at work.

## **BE TRANSPARENT**

Being transparent on a social media site means that that you are open and honest about your identity and your purpose. If you try to post as someone else or under the assumption of another person, you are not being transparent about who you are, and it can cloud people's judgment about you. By hiding behind a name or a label, it makes people questions why you are posting and what kind of image you are portraying for your company. Not being transparent will make your audience question what your company stands for or represents. So always post on a website clearly and with open intentions. Don't try to be sneaky or sly – it can backfire and cause more damage.

## **ACT LIKE YOU WOULD IN REAL LIFE**

Social media is not meant to act as a cloak to hide behind and disguise ourselves when we communicate with other people. Social media should be treated no differently than if you were speaking with someone face to face. The words you choose to use online hold the same meaning as if you had said them in person. The actions you do online give a bigger impression than the actions or words you perform in real life. Don't try to boost your ego or sound bigger than you are, because this will only lead customers on and give the wrong impressions to other users on the site. As we've said, be transparent and don't try to disguise your identity or purpose.

### **Remember:**

- You are the same person online and off.
- Your words hold the same meaning in person and online.
- Your actions online speak louder than words said in person.

## **GRAMMAR AND SPELLING STILL COUNTS**

The primary use of social media is through written communication, whether it is on a blog site, a written article or even just a personal webpage. Because millions of people can view your site at one time, it is very important to ensure that you are using the correct form of grammar and correct spelling. It may seem like a minor thing to remember, but bad grammar or incorrect spelling can cause a negative representation on not

only you, but the company that employs you. It can misrepresent your education level and can discredit the knowledge you claim to possess. Don't just rely on computer spell check systems, since they do not always pick up every mistake. Be aware that you should always check your spelling and grammar!

## **NEVER POST WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY**

A social media site is not a place for anger or negative emotions and feelings. When we are angry, we do not stop to think about our words or the effect they can have on people. This is because our anger makes us focus only on ourselves and our feelings, which has the ability to distort how we portray ourselves. This is why it is important that we do not post anything while we are angry or upset – it leads us to post things in haste and in a temper that we would not normally say, which can lead to negative impressions and improper communications. When we are angry, it is best to stay off of a social media site so we are not tempted to post anything without thoroughly thinking about it.

### **Tips to remember when angry:**

- Before posting anything, take a deep breath and think about what it for several minutes.
- Say what you want to post out loud to yourself. How does it sound?
- Determine if the words have the same meanings when you are angry and when you are not.

- If you feel you will be angry for a while, do not log onto a site to avoid posting out of control.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Bobby is publishing an article on the company blog about their efforts to 'Go Green' by recycling more and cutting down on waste. He posted several examples the company was following and what plans they had for the next couple of years. He identified himself as an employee and added a disclaimer at the bottom of his page so readers would know where it came from. After all, he didn't want to confuse them about where the information was coming from.

When he reviewed his page, Bobby noticed he had used a lot of fancy terms, and some of the paragraphs were very long-winded. He realized this was not the way he normally spoke, and this is not the way he would share the information with someone in person. He became agitated with himself for having to redo the article, and decided to step away from the computer for a few minutes. When he had collected himself again, he rewrote the article to help it sound more understandable. Once Bobby was finished, he was more pleased with his second copy than the first and was happy to publish it on the website.

*Social media can be an enabler and an accelerator of existing core capabilities, values, attributes and plans. It can even be a catalyst for change.*

DENISE ZIMMERMAN



# BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

People love to communicate and stay in touch with each other in different ways. Social media allows people to stay connected when they are apart and allows for everyone to share their opinions and fun events in their life. When using social media at work, employees are able to stay in touch with clients and allow customers to post feedback and information for the company to see. It allows employees to seek new ideas and inspirations by reaching out and sharing with other people online.

## FROM AUDIENCE TO AUTHOR

With social media, many people can directly submit any type of writing, articles, or text without having to submit to a middle-man or publisher. They can produce numerous pieces and express their views and opinions. This privilege also allows for the audience who reads these articles to submit their opinions or questions directly to the author, creating a form of two way communications and discussions. This also benefits the author, since it gives them the chance to openly speak with their audience and learn more about their views and ideas. Allowing them to ask questions or provide their input not only expands the author's views and ideas, it

makes the reader's feel more included and can lead them to want to follow more of the author's work in the future.

## **BUILDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

When a company uses a social media site to bond with and speak with customers, it helps build customer support and loyalty. Social media allows the company to build customer incentive programs, such as coupons or bonus materials, which can keep customers coming back time after time. But more importantly, it helps create a personal bond between the company and its customers when they are able to communicate freely and can directly speak with someone, rather than trying to use a 'Contact Us' page. Customers enjoy providing feedback and opinions, which gives them a feeling as though they are contributing to the company. Soon customers start to feel a sense of belonging, and that they are an important part of the company, which will keep them coming back and loyal to the people that show them appreciation.

### **Tips for building customer loyalty on social media:**

- Create and offer online incentive programs, such as discounts or bonus offers
- Give a section where customers can voice their opinions and thoughts
- Use forums and discussions to get more ideas from the customers

## **SPEED AND FLEXIBILITY IN COMMUNICATION**

Social media has made it easy for individuals, as well as businesses, to quickly and easily connect with people and provide them with a fast and flexible way of communicating. Communication such as letters, phone calls, and even emails are starting to become second-rate when compared to the ease of sending a message or creating a post on a social media site. When social media is used by an individual for personal use, it allows these people to choose any way they want to communicate based on their needs.

Video chats and sending instant messages has become commonplace with today's technology. Customers can now communicate directly with a company, they are able to send the correspondence directly to the company, rather than through several other departments, so they know their information is being received faster. Using social media also allows for the company to utilize a variety of communication methods, such as the traditional phone numbers and emails, as well as sending an instant message or using a live chat with an associate. When the customer feels they have more than one way to reach someone, they are more likely to keep coming back with their concerns, rather than taking their business elsewhere.

## **TWO WAY COMMUNICATIONS**

Along with the other benefits of social media, two-way communication stands out the most. Social media has many options for the author to post something and then allow for their audience to respond back. With

choices such as leaving a direct comment, sending an email or chatting live with someone, people feel more connected to one another when they are able to interact in a two-way method, rather than just reading something and not given the chance to respond or give feedback. Two-way communication is a growing need in many business areas, since customers and clients no longer want to just read about what is going on, but they want to become a part of it.

### **Benefits of two-way communication:**

- Individuals and customers feel more connected
- People feel as though they are being heard and acknowledged
- Information is easily given and received between parties
- Overall communication improves

### **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Luann has been reviewing the effects of using a social media site to help boost the company's image online. They have a Facebook account and hold a company blog where they post updates and company stories. Since the sites were established, Luann has noticed an increase in customer feedback and comments, which has allowed for employees to respond to them faster and help them if needed. It has also allowed employees to contact customers easier and form a better line of communication for on-going issues or providing assistance.

Because of its success, Luann decided to reach out to customers and open some forums and chat rooms for them to share more of their ideas and comments. After setting up the different sites, Luann noticed many of their customers were choosing to stay with the company, rather than try a competitor. She also noticed it was a great way to draw in new customer and hopefully turn them into loyal clients as well.

*Focus on how to BE social,  
not on how to DO social.*

JAY BAER



# THE PITFALLS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

While using social media at work can be beneficial to employees, it can also have negative consequences if used incorrectly or without thought. Employees can make inappropriate posts online that are traced back to the company, lead people to argue, bully, or misuse company information. Many companies may not filter their employees' internet usage, but if social media isn't monitored or regulated in some way at work, it can cause more problems for the company down the line.

## BULLYING

When interaction is made easier in any manner, it can open the door for positive and negative communications. One of the most recent forms of negative interactions that has been on the rise is online bullying, which is where someone or a group of people use a social media site to bully and torment someone else. Users will generally post offensive remarks or embarrassing photos in hopes to bully another person, many times for reasons either unknown or very petty. Some sites may not offer strict limitations on what can and cannot be posted; much of this content goes unnoticed by the owner of the website and is not addressed right away. This is a growing epidemic among teenagers, who often use the sites to

bully other classmates, which can, and has led to some drastic actions by some people.

## **GROUP THINK**

Social media is a great way for people with similar interests to come together and form groups. They often enjoy a sense of identity that comes with a strong social bond among one another. However, sometimes these groups can make decisions together; they run the risk of group-think. Group-think is when group members are exposed to one idea or opinion, and will often feel reluctant to express adverse or opposing remarks for fear of being out-casted or isolated.

This can lead to some members being fearful of speaking up. Outside views or information is often shunned from the group and made to believe it is destructive to the group. Social media can lead to group-think when it forms a group online and badgers its members to follow their ideas and post what they choose. While some members may not agree, they are usually still forced to participate for fear of group retaliation. Research and fact checking are the best tools in use in these situations. Look up information yourself and make sure that what everyone is saying is true.

## **TROLLING**

Much like bullying, trolling is a form of creating negative communications on a social media site. A person who 'trolls' usually has a target in mind and can be focused on an individual or on an entire group. Some examples of trolling online include attacking different races, defacement of a person's

webpage, posting comments in order to start fights and arguments, or even just playing mean pranks on various users. Also similar to bullying, it has become a growing epidemic that has some people interpreting trolling as some sort of 'challenge' to incite anger or cause turmoil. Unfortunately, trolling can be hard to identify or even stop, since many individuals claim it would be a violation of their right to free speech. This makes it difficult for sites and users to try and limit what kind of offensive material is posted and can often lead to more controversy, which can be exactly what the 'troll' wants.

### **REMEMBER, IT IS OUT THERE FOREVER**

When many people post or contribute to a social media site, they are often focused on the 'now' feeling and do not realize what kind of effects can be done down the road. When someone is angry, they may post a mean message about someone else in hopes of getting some sort of revenge. Once they have cooled down, they may realize how hurtful their words are and cannot take them back once they have been seen by millions.

The same goes for embarrassing photos, videos, or stories. While they may seem funny in the moment, they can cause damage to other individuals who see it or who are the 'butt of the joke'. But once it has been exposed, it cannot be taken back. Many users realize this too late instead of using good judgment when deciding to share online.

## **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Randy was contributing a post to the company's blog and reviewing many of the customers' comments and interactions. While scrolling through the comments, he noticed several posts made together that were belittling the company's image and spoke poorly of its products. Instead of arguing with them, Randy ignored them at first, since he knew that there was always someone who was not fully satisfied. When he logged into the company's Facebook page, he found several users trying to bully other employees, either by posting a mean comment or trying to insult them for working at the company.

Randy could not understand where all of the negative remarks were coming from, but he was hoping to stop them before they caused more problems. He worried what kind of image it was sending to their customers. So he typed several posts and comments in retaliation and created a warning for other bullies and trolls. But as Randy was preparing to deliver it, he realized that if he did, he would be no better than them and would only feed into their controversy. Not only that, but his negativity would be online for everyone to see, and that was not only something he couldn't take back, but it could lead to further problems for the company. So he decided to delete several of the offensive comments on the website and Facebook. He then set up a tool that allowed him to moderate comments posted to the sites, hoping it would help him stop the problem before it even starts.

*Social networks are not  
about websites. They are  
about experiences.*

MIKE DILORENZO



# LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Your customers are the greatest source of feedback and comments that your company will have. They provide honest and unbiased feedback while giving you more ideas about what they want to see and buy. Customers love to share your brand with other people and social media allows them to do that. If you make the customer happy and allow them to share their opinions online, your customer base will not only grow but will remain loyal.

## THEY PROVIDE GREAT FEEDBACK

When trying to find good feedback from customers, sometimes the best way is to get it *'straight from the horse's mouth'*. When provided with an outlet, customers are more than willing to share their thoughts and opinions about a company's products and services, good and bad. They will provide helpful insights to what is and isn't working, and can provide fresher ideas for the company. Most importantly, their feedback allows you to better know the needs of your customers and meet their demands to keep them happy and loyal.

## **Example ways of obtaining customer feedback:**

- Opinion cards or surveys
- Personal follow up calls
- Debates and forums online
- Incentives in exchange for a rating

## **IT MAKES THEM HAPPY**

When customers feel as though they are being listened to and acknowledged, it makes them happier to deal with the company and use its products. Sounds simple, right? However, there is no easy method of calculation to achieve this, a company can always make their customers happy by taking the time to hear their points of view and listen to what they have to contribute. Establish ways to let the customer do the talking and discover ways you can always obtain their feedback. Many employees affect a customer in some way, and using great customer service to listen to what the consumers have to say is the key to not only making them happy, but it keeps them coming back.

## **IMPROVES YOUR BRAND**

We've learned that social media is a great way to expand business and expand your customer database. But what about the company name – the brand? Is it getting around enough? Are other people sharing it as well? While we can share our own brand around several places online, it doesn't get very far since we can be considered a biased source.

Customers are the best way to expand your brand across the web and share it through various social media sites. Happy customers will share your company and brand with their friends and family and will often post their own positive testimonials with it. When you take the effort to listen to your customers and invest in what they have to say, they will take their time to invest in you and share their results with everyone they know.

### **IMPROVES PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Sometimes we need a little help deciding how to start something or get a product off the ground. Your customers can help! Many companies offer some sort of forum or survey application where customers can give their insights and opinions about not only current products, but on new product ideas as well. Once you know what product or products you want to hear about, you can establish several different types of ways to collect it, such as posing a question on the website or offering an open chat room for customers to exchange ideas. Since customers think in different ways, using different methods can give everyone a chance to speak. Customers know what they want, and they can tell you if they are getting what they want or if they need you to develop something they will love even more!

### **PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Jeremy was reviewing the customer comments about one of the juice products. He noticed one in particular, from customer Kay, who claimed that she loved the beverage and the company, but wanted to know if the

drink came in various sizes. She apparently used the beverage for parties and family events and wanted to know if she could buy the juice in larger bottles. Jeremy thought this was a great idea and decided to write Kay back and thank her for her feedback. He thanked her for her opinions and let her know that he thought she made a valid point, so he was going to send this information to his supervisor to look into it.

Shortly after, Kay wrote Jeremy back and was very pleased that someone had read and noticed her comment out of all the other posts. Kay exclaimed that she will continue using the juice drink and would be sure to tell her friends not only about the great product, but the company's great customer service!

*Social media is like a snowball rolling down the hill. It's picking up speed. Five years from now, it's going to be the standard.*

J E F F   A N T A Y A

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

- **Karie Willyerd & Jeanne C. Meister:** More companies are discovering that an über-connected workplace is not just about implementing a new set of tools — it is also about embracing a cultural shift to create an open environment where employees are encouraged to share, innovate, and collaborate virtually.
- **Chris Brogan:** The difference between PR and social media is that PR is about positioning, and social media is about becoming, being, and improving.
- **Aliza Sherman:** To utilize social media tools effectively and properly, you must absolutely generate spontaneous communications in direct response to what others are saying or to what is happening in that moment. Be yourself. Be conversational. Be engaged.
- **Matt Goulart:** Social Media is about the people! Not about your business. Provide for the people and the people will provide for you.



**Rick Chisholm** made history when he single-handedly changed the professional Audio Visual industry by breaking all the rules and capitalised over 50% market share in Australia with very little capital, no partners, mergers or lenders and set up the first franchise operation of its kind in the world in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

As a 7x founder of companies and 30x businesses such as Innovest, AI Machine, Lightsounds, LSW, Light Emotion with revenue in excess of \$300 million and having employed more than 1,000 staff over the last 35 years. Rick is known as the Start-Up and SME Guru and is Author of a number of books including Business Success for Life. Unlike many mentors, he actually walks the talk and has a number of businesses under management in such areas as Automation, Events management, Importing, Distribution, Retailing and E-commerce.

His BIG passion is Business Education empowering Businesses Owners through knowledge and skills. Whilst Rick has experienced great success, he has also endured many failures. Rick has faced and overcome the exact same challenges you are facing now.



**Tala Chisholm** is an SME specialist who has owned and managed several small to medium sized businesses in the last 20 years, several of which were eventually sold. She has extensive experience in the fields of retail, franchising, licensing, dealerships, education, importing, distribution and consulting.

Her expertise lies in building and implementing customised cross-platform database and software solutions for businesses, automation, IT, web marketing, advertising, graphic design, business administration, process refinement and implementation. Her business experience ranges from bricks-and-mortar Giftware retailing to highly technical fields such as Security, CCTV, Entertainment Lighting and Audio sales, hire and installations as well as e-commerce.

Throughout her career she also trained and mentored Franchise business owners as well as internal division managers. Some areas of training included retail operations, management practices, business strategy, accounting, cash-flow, marketing, customer service and IT. She has also headed up the drafting of Operating Compliance Manuals for Franchise operations and implementation of all the elements involved.



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