



Top Social Media Policy Tips

1. Have a strategy before you have a policy.
2. Good policies are built around **trust, safety, and security**. Use your social media policy to make those in your organization want to engage as opposed to restrict them from engaging.
3. **Avoid getting too legal with your language**. Make it easy to understand and engage with.
4. Do you need something that is one size fits all or individualized?
5. Avoid zero tolerance policies.
6. Make it consistent.
7. Prepare for mistakes. Be gracious and figure out how to work through it together.
8. Remember, mistakes happen but the big ones aren't that common.
9. You should have two social media policies: one for employees using social media for their job and one for employees using social media in their personal lives.

Where to Start: An Example (Social Fish)

Preamble

These are the official guidelines for social media use on behalf of SocialFish. If you're a SocialFish employee, intern or contractor creating or contributing to any kind of social media both on and off socialfish.org, these guidelines are for you. We expect all who participate in social media on behalf of SocialFish to understand and follow these guidelines, and to be aware that they will continually evolve as social media evolves. Check back periodically to make sure you're up to date.

Main Guideline Points

Live the SocialFish philosophy. In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a representative of SocialFish, you are creating perceptions about SocialFish and your expertise. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your abilities and SocialFish's philosophy (that social media is about building relationships—not a numbers game).

Understand and use privacy settings on outposts. We don't expect all of your social media use to be work-related, but we do expect you to keep the items you share with your close personal friends separate from what you share with your work “friends”.

Be yourself. You are responsible for the content you post. Never impersonate someone else, or purposely obscure your identity as a SocialFish. Build your own reputation. Care about what you are talking about.

State when it's your personal opinion versus the SocialFish opinion. For your personal blog, Twitter account, or Facebook page we have a handy disclaimer that you can use. Always disclose if you've received something in exchange for a review of a product or service.

Write what you know. Stick to your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on what's going on at SocialFish and in the world.

Don't tell secrets. Respect proprietary information and content, confidentiality, brand, trademark, copyright, and fair use. Know the laws and don't break them. Don't discuss client work without permission.

Don't spam. Ever. You can link to other SocialFish blog posts or information about services but do it subtly and only in response to a specific query. We have other ways of sharing our awesomesauce.

Give credit where credit is due. Always cite when quoting someone else. Make sure images are shareable through Creative Commons, and attribute them, too. Never use copyrighted material without permission.

Mistakes happen. If you make a mistake, admit it quickly. Most of the time, you can then move on. If not, let the team help you fix your mistakes; explain the situation and the team can come together to find a solution to any problem.

Share the love. We believe in sharing and linking to the best content from all over the web. A link is not an endorsement, so don't be shy about sharing something from a competitor if you feel it is worthwhile to our clients and friends.

Be a good conversationalist. Monitor and reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate. Add value to the conversation.

Be clear, but not defensive. Be polite and professional, especially when you disagree with someone. Once the words are out there, you can't get them back. If you find yourself working too hard to defend your position, take a step back, let the community defend for you (because they will if you're justified).

Remember everything online is discoverable. If you can't show it to your mother or a judge, don't post it. If in doubt, ask.

Always be learning. This space is fast-moving and ever-evolving. Read more than you write. Ask questions. Link to others and always build relationships. That's what our work is all about.

Conclusion

We trust that you will live and breathe these policies. If, for any reason an incident occurs that violates the policy, we expect you to bring the issue to our attention immediately so that we

can work together toward a resolution. We'll work through each issue on a case-by-case basis, and we'll listen to every side of the story. We promise that any consequences will be commensurate with the violation.

Social Media Policy Tool

1.) Please enter your company's full legal name:_____

2.) Please enter the name that your company is commonly known as: (e.g. *Bob's Widgets*)_____

3.) Who can use social media in your company?

- Everybody?
- Some people?
- Which level?

Note: Is social media a company-wide initiative or only something for specific job descriptions? If only particular employees can use social media then describe who they are.

4.) Must employees obtain permission from someone to use social media?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please indicate the title of the person who can give permission to use social media:_____

Note: It can sometimes be a good idea to require permission before allowing your employees to use social media so that you can be aware of where they are engaging online and what they are saying there.

5.) May employee login ID's or user names include your organization's name without approval?

- Yes
- No

If no, please indicate the title of the person who can grant approval to use the company name for user names or login ID's:

Note: If the goal of your employee's use of social media is to promote broader brand awareness then you might want to let them use your company name. For example, the London Free Press journalists all use firstameatlfpress as their Twitter handle.

6.) Are there certain well known employees who must follow these rules even for personal social media?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please indicate their title and name _____

Note: Some employees continue to promote and represent the company outside of a typical 9 to 5. Requiring them to follow this policy at all times may prevent potential embarrassments.

7.) Are there any ethical standards that your employees must normally follow for publishing or commentary?

- Yes
- No

Note: If you already have an ethics policy that governs other behavior then make sure that your social media policy is consistent with that.

8.) Do you offer internal assistance in setting up social media accounts and settings?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please indicate the title of the person who can offer internal assistance in setting up social media accounts and settings: _____

Note: "Your employees, if given the right incentives and tools, can become the biggest champions of your brand. They are the most important audience in any brand effort because they both deliver the brand experience and influence public opinion." The Social Work Place

9.) Must the user's social media profiles be consistent with your organization's website or publications?

- Yes

