



FREE TIP SHEET: HOW TO SET A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Equinet
THE INBOUND
AGENCY

WHY YOU NEED A SOCIAL POLICY

One of the great liberating things about social media as a communications channel is that anyone can do it. But, for a business, this is both a blessing and a curse.

This is where a social media policy comes in. If you have existing guidelines on email etiquette, phone use or business communications, these could be adapted for social.

Here are 19 great tips on how to get your social policy right.



Explain the consequences

Explain the kind of behaviour that won't be tolerated and the disciplinary measures that might follow inappropriate action.



Signpost where to get help

Emphasise "if in doubt – don't post", give suggestions of who to ask if in doubt – line manager, colleagues etc.



Do your research

Do some research, check out case studies of social media gaffes on the internet and ask yourself if they could happen in your organisation.



Think it through

What activity would be beneficial to the business and what would be harmful – this will be different for different businesses.



Protect confidential information

What areas of the business should be considered commercially sensitive and needs protecting.



Define where to draw the line

Find the divide between personal and company social media and the difference between posting as an employee and posting as a representative of the company.



Make it clear who is talking

Include a clear statement on whether your social media account is personal or a company account.



Include guidelines for personal social use at work

Employees should not be spending time updating their own accounts just to interact with friends during working hours.



Do offer support

Assure employees that honest mistakes will not be penalised, but emphasise the quick and open notification of issues.



Check your permissions

The importance of copyright and intellectual property issues - employees should check they have the right to post images etc.



Explain legal context

A brief overview of the legal issues around social media – explaining that the laws of libel, defamation etc. Still apply to social media.



Stay positive

Although designed as a means of controlling conduct, the overall tone of the policy should not be negative and prohibitive but positive and encouraging.



Don't contradict yourself

Make sure the new policy doesn't contradict any other company policies.



Keep it alive

A neglected social account is worse than no account at all. You want to be one of the first to spot an issue rather than the last to hear of it.



Don't engage with trolls

Define a process for dealing with negative comments. Acknowledge negative comments quickly and politely, and move them offline.



Get buy in from the top

Brief senior management on the need for a policy, run through the proposed policy and make sure senior management are behind it.



Share internally

Once complete, publicise your policy internally – especially with managers and communicators.



Train your staff

Carry out a programme of training outlining how to use social media under the policy. This could include some live role-playing of different situations.



Don't forget your newbies

Make social media policy awareness and training part of the induction process.

When something goes wrong

If an infraction of the policy is committed by an employee – and this is bound to happen sooner or later – your organisation will be judged by the manner in which it handles the incident.

Here are the five steps you should take **IMMEDIATELY**:

1. Remove the offending post and apologise in the same medium.
2. Make it clear to followers that this was against the social media policy of the organisation and outline what steps you have taken/are taking.
3. Find out whether the post was deliberate or just posted in ignorance.
4. Carry out the disciplinary measures outlined in the policy or provide coaching and or training to the employee involved.
5. Review and update procedures and, if necessary, update the social media policy in the light of events.

A social media policy is not simply a "nice-to-have" document, it is an essential first step to sensible engagement in social media. With a policy as your safety net, you are free to make the most of the medium and use its powerful alchemy for the good of your organisation.



ABOUT EQUINET

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We specialise in inbound marketing, websites, and sales and work within the manufacturing sector, professional services and SaaS sectors enabling our clients to generate more business through attracting quality leads with remarkable content.

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This eBook is designed to give you what you can't get from social media software "how-tos". It is designed to make you think and to help you approach social media in a way that will lead to success rather than disappointment.



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