

HOW-TO SERIES

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Because social media's mass appeal is a relatively new phenomenon, legal questions surround it: How much responsibility do businesses have for employee activity? What happens if an employee violates another organization's copyright? To make matters more complicated, organizations have also been criticized for exerting too much control over staff participation in social media activities.

The best way to address the challenges of this newly charted territory is to articulate a company policy for social media participation and to ask each team member to read and sign it. Clearly stating expectations for appropriate topics, confidentiality, intellectual property, appropriate language, etc., is the first step toward setting a company-wide standard for usage.

Best practices suggest that the following topics should be addressed clearly in your organization's social media policy:

- Definition of social media
- Guidelines for engagements
- Accommodation of changing definitions over time
- Guidelines for the organization's social media "voice"
- Appropriate topics
- Global nature of Internet
- Treatment of company brand
- Appropriate language
- Protection of proprietary information
- Steps to take if mistakes occur
- Dangers of slander
- Position on transparency
- Privacy concerns for the company and others
- Need to check back regularly for policy updates
- Copyright law



TIP:

SocialMediaGovernance.com has over 80 examples of social media policies, from basic to detailed.



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