

Social Media Policies and Procedures

by [Daniel Hoang](#) on February 21, 2009

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It's a fact of life, social media is here to stay. Sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are all reaching critical mass. It's not just a network for college students or adolescence teenagers anymore. We're starting to see professionals, [celebrities](#), and even [politicians](#) publishing profiles, blogs, and even [tweets](#). Rather than use a wait and see approach, companies should be proactive and take steps to build a framework for a well developed company policy on the use of social media.

Companies should develop and formalize official company policies and procedures for the use of social media and social networking. For purposes of this post, I refer to social media as any usage of Web 2.0 technologies and sites such as blogging, microblogging (twitter, plurk), photosharing (flickr, twitpic), video sharing (YouTube, Vimeo), lifecasting (blogtv, qik), networking (LinkedIn, Plaxo), and so forth. If you don't understand what social networking is, refer to the short video in the media box.

Developing formal company policies on social media

The [Virginia Lawyer's Weekly](#) published an article suggesting that companies develop formal policies regarding employee blogging to manage risks. Increasing use of social media, for professional and personal reasons, calls for the needs to clearly defined allowable uses of these tools.

A good policy should clearly define the extent and definition of social media and social networking. It includes blogs, networking sites, photo sharing, video sharing, microblogging, podcasts, as well as comments posted on the sites. Because social media is relatively new and growing exponentially fast, policies should be general enough to encompass new technologies and media, yet be specific enough to cover all areas of concern.

Putting disclaimers and disclosures

If you work for a corporation, nonprofit, or government agency, it's always a good idea to be clear to your readers and network that the information you post is not reflective of the company you work for.

Here is an example of a disclosure statement to include in your personal blog to ensure that readers are aware that the content of your blog is yours and yours alone and do not represent the views of the company:

“The posts on this site, including but not limited to images, links, and comments by left by readers, are my own and don’t necessarily represent my employers positions, strategies or opinions.”

Sample Social Networking Policies

Below are some suggested policies that you can incorporate into an official company policy:

The following is the company’s social media and social networking policy. *The absence of, or lack of explicit reference to a specific site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.* Where no policy or guideline exist, employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. Consult with your manager or supervisor if you are uncertain.

1. Personal blogs should have clear disclaimers that the views expressed by the author in the blog is the author’s alone and do not represent the views of the company. Be clear and write in first person. Make your writing clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the company.
2. Information published on your blog(s) should comply with the company’s confidentiality and disclosure of proprietary data policies. This also applies to comments posted on other blogs, forums, and social networking sites.
3. Be respectful to the company, other employees, customers, partners, and competitors.
4. Social media activities should not interfere with work commitments. Refer to IT resource usage policies.
5. Your online presence reflects the company. Be aware that your actions captured via images, posts, or comments can reflect that of our company.
6. Do not reference or site company clients, partners, or customers without their express consent. In all cases, do not publish any information regarding a client during the engagement.
7. Respect copyright laws, and reference or cite sources appropriately. Plagiarism applies online as well.
8. Company logos and trademarks may not be used without written consent.

Remember that this is only a sample and framework for social media policies. In developing policies and procedures for your company, you should tailor the language to reflect the culture and the company environment. Depending on the usage of social media, policies should be more or less explicit, particularly in defining terms.

Resources

The following is a list of social media policies. If you have any other good resources, please let a comment so I can update the list for others.

[Company Policies:](#)

- [IBM Social Computing Guidelines](#) - IBM has a well developed set of policies for social computing.
- [Sun Microsystems Guidelines on Public Discourse](#) – SUN also has a well developed guidelines for publishing online.
- [Harvard Law Blogging Policy](#) – They have a very legalese disclaimer language you can use for your own blog.
- [Ernst & Young Facebook Page](#) – E&Y has a well developed careers page on Facebook. They are clear with their participants on their policies.

Blog posts on social media policies:

- [Fast Wonder Social Media Policies](#) – Good post and includes some explicit topics to include in your policies, as well as things to NOT include, particularly over bureaucratic processes.
- [Jeremiah Owyang Variance of Corp Social Media Policies](#) – Forrester researching polling the community of social media practices. Jeremiah is a leading resource for all things social media.
- [Blogging Policy Examples](#) – Another Forrester researcher on blogging policies, for company and personal blog policies. Also see [Forrester Blogging Report](#) – You have to register to get the report (for free).
- [About.com Social Media Policy Sample](#) – This is another fairly comprehensive policy. It's one of the most well developed policies out there and can be a great starting point to developing your own.
- [30 Tips to Manage Employees Online](#) – Ari includes a fairly exhaustive list of online guidelines.



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