



# Social Media

## User Guide

# Introduction

These are the official guidelines for social media use at YOUR AGENCY. If you're an employee, intern, student or contractor/consultant creating or contributing to any kind of social media, these guidelines are for you. We want you to be part of the conversation and our online community – to share your insight, your experiences and engage with your colleagues, friends, volunteers and the people we support. We expect all who participate in social media at YOUR AGENCY 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.

## Social Media – What is It?

Social media sites, like facebook, Twitter and YouTube are exciting avenues for communication in our professional and personal lives. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to use social media tools to:

- Engage in the public awareness activities of YOUR AGENCY
- Keep up to date on information, issues and trends
- Participate in events and activities

Currently, YOUR AGENCY has a facebook 'fan' page, a YouTube channel, and a twitter account. These accounts are maintained, along with the corporate website, by Public Relations staff. All official media, event and news related to YOUR AGENCY is promoted via Public Relations through those main social media streams. You, the people we support and our members, donors and volunteers are all invited to participate in it!

## A Few Things...

With any new media, comes new things we need to remember to ensure that we get the most out of them. Below are a few things you should keep in mind when participating in social media at work, or at home. In fact, they're so important, you may read them more than once.

**Don't forget your day job!** Social media activities should never interfere with your duties. See 'Consequences and Discipline' section on page 4.

**Live the AGENCY Mission:** In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as being employed by the AGENCY, you are creating perceptions about the AGENCY and your expertise. Remember that social media is about building relationships.

**Understand and use privacy settings.** 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. Build your own reputation. Care about what you are talking about.

## How Does the AGENCY Use Social Media?

Social media presents new ways for the AGENCY to build relationships and engage our stakeholders in a conversation, which includes not only the people we support and their families, but staff. Social media also helps us expand our donor, membership and volunteer base.

Traditional practices of public relations, event promotion, advocacy, donor solicitation, storytelling and fund raising have been revolutionized by web 2.0. Sites like facebook, twitter, youtube and blogging allows us to understand our audiences in new ways; with real-time insight into not only how many people are reading and following what we're doing, but how they feel about it. Story telling in particular has improved with the ability to instantly use audio, visual and textual elements to share stories.

All official media, event and news related to the AGENCY is promoted via Public Relations through those main social media streams.

Any employee wanting to create a work-related page should discuss this with their manager and Public Relations beforehand.

# Social Media and our Mission and Vision

Our online presence includes various tools that people can use to share their stories, best practices and connect with each other. While each may have distinct functionality, they all help to further the vision and mission of the AGENCY.

Our mission tells the public what the AGENCY promises to do. Our vision tells us how we (staff, members, donors, volunteers and the people we support) will do that, and the core values that drive our work:

These values should drive our social media use at the AGENCY. Engage in the conversation by sharing your knowledge and expertise.

## Key things to Remember

### **You Are Responsible For What You Post**

A general rule of social media is 'edit twice, publish once.' Remember privacy, slander/libel, harassment and copyright laws all apply to social media. Recognize that you are legally liable for anything you write or present online. Employees can be disciplined for commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment. You can also be sued by company employees, competitors, and any individual or company that views your posting.

### **Disclosure Alert – Don't Tell Secrets!**

It's easy to share more than you should so it's important to remember that once something is posted online it's there forever. Remember you shouldn't be revealing anything considered 'internal' - that includes operations of the AGENCY, finances or projects that are not yet public. If you're not sure whether you should post something, check with Public Relations or refer to the Policy and procedures Manual. Again – respect privacy laws when posting names, photos and other information related to the people you support.

## **Be Up Front & Transparent**

We've already said it, but yes, be yourself and indicate that you are part of the AGENCY. Never misrepresent yourself, post anonymously or pretend to be someone else – remember everything is traceable online. Be clear that you are speaking for yourself and not the AGENCY.

Only official AGENCY pages and accounts should have the AGENCIES logo, mission and public photographs and images, and those of our partners. If you have an idea or project that would mean including official branding, contact Public Relations to discuss it first.

## **Sharing Personal Information – How Much Is Too Much?**

Protecting your personal privacy, as well as that of others should be top of mind when using social media tools. Check before posting photos, or other personal information - even if you know them well, they may not want to be thanked via your status line on facebook. At the AGENCY, posting event photos on your personal page is not permitted – our publicity release agreements do not cover posts on your pages. Instead, post it on our AGENCY'S wall, or ask us to post it for you.

Remember it's not a competition – post when you have something to say, we don't need to know you're making muffins (unless you're bringing them to the office).

## **Be Respectful!**

Anti-harassment, code of conduct and general policies apply to social media so remember to be respectful of your colleagues and the AGENCY. If you discover a negative comment or a comment that could impact the AGENCY'S reputation, refer to the contact list at the end of this User Guide.

## **Remember Your Day Job!**

Yes! Remember your day job! Social media is fun, quick and everyone seems to be online all the time. However, social media use – whether on behalf of the AGENCY or not – should never interfere with your job duties and responsibilities. Or your life, for that matter.

## **Personal Use of Social Media**

Personal posts can have an impact on the AGENCY'S reputation and your own; that photo of you with a lampshade on your head is funny, but is there for your colleagues to see. And while your wall posts may be private to only your friends, someone who's posting onto your wall may not have the same setting, leaving your comment thread open to colleagues and work 'friends.'

Ditto for status updates – read twice, publish once. What do you really mean? It's easy for your colleagues to assume you're talking about work when you're really venting about construction on your street. Avoid this potential embarrassment, and flack, by being clear about what you're posting about.

### **Mistakes happen.**

If you make a mistake, admit it quickly. Most of the time, you can then move on. If not, contact Public Relations and let us help you fix it; explain the situation and we can work together to find a solution.

## Consequences and Discipline

Social media is increasingly permeating every aspect of our lives, including our work. But remember there is work to do and spending all day on social media and not doing our regular work – which is our mission – will result in consequences, as outlined in the Human Resources Policy and Procedures Manual.

Most importantly, failure to abide by these guidelines and our Human Resource or General Policy and Procedures manual could put your participation at risk, and result in consequences that range from: a warning to withdrawal of social media participation up to and including termination of your employment at the AGENCY.

We expect all who participate in social media on behalf of the AGENCY to not only inform Public Relations that they're engaging in the conversation, but to be trained, to understand, and to follow these guidelines. Failure to do so could put your future participation at risk.

# I've Still Got Questions, Who Should I Contact?

Still have questions? Not sure whether you should post something? See something online you think we should know about? Don't know what a 'hashtag' is or what we mean by a 'wall'?

You can speak to your Manager, Public Relations or Communications dept.