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# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

## Overview

Social media usage has become widespread in the business environment and we understand that many of our employees enjoy sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm for our industry online and we encourage these activities. We also encourage employees to expand their knowledge and understanding of our industry by interacting with their colleagues online and in traditional meeting environments.

At the same time, management is responsible to protect the privacy, security and image of our company, customers and stakeholders. This policy is intended to foster an open and expressive environment whilst at the same time maintaining corporate security.

As a general rule, unless you are specifically asked to do so, you are not authorized to speak on behalf of the company. When sharing information about our industry or your area of expertise, please make it clear that you are offering your own, personal opinions that do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the company or our other employees.

The same principles and guidelines found in our other policies and three basic beliefs apply to your activities online.

1. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online.
2. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved.
3. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow staff members or otherwise adversely affects members, customers, suppliers, people who work on behalf of [*insert company name]* or our legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

As social media is a fast-developing means of communication, any suggestions that may help us adapt to new issues or improve on these guidelines are welcomed.

## Definition

Social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else’s web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with [Employer], as well as any other form of electronic communication.

# 1. Policy statement

* 1. This policy is intended to help staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media including blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, [*insert any other relevant social media websites*] and any other form of online publishing.
	2. This policy outlines the standards we require staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor your use of social media and the action we will take for breaches of this policy.
	3. The provisions of this policy are applicable to original material that is published or posted on Social Media sites by our employees as well as any material that they re-post or share via any means whatsoever which then makes them the secondary publisher of that information, and therefore liable for such content.
	4. This policy supplements our *[insert name of any related policy such as your Internet and Email Policy*].
	5. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

# Who is covered by the policy

1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).

# Scope of the policy

1. All staff must comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our company and our services, employees, partners, customers, and competitors.
	1. Breach of this policy may be dealt with under our [*refer to your Disciplinary Procedure*] and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct which could result in dismissal.

# Responsibility for implementation of the policy

1. The [*position of relevant person*] has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
	1. The [*position of relevant person*] is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our operations.
	2. All staff are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to [*position of relevant person*].
	3. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to

[*position of relevant person*].

# Using social media sites in our name

**[N.B: *include this section where you want to restrict who is allowed to make official company statements on social media sites*]**

1. Only the [*position of relevant persons*] is/are permitted to post material on a social media website in our name and on our behalf. Any breach of this restriction will amount to gross misconduct.
	1. Requests to use social media sites can be directed to [*position of relevant persons*] in writing. Confirmation of permission to use social media sites must be obtained in writing. Such permission is not guaranteed and will be assessed per request. The decision of the [*position of relevant persons*] is final.
	2. Any and all communications the company makes using social media which promote our services or products can only be made once permission has been obtained through our formal approval process mentioned above.
	3. Otherwise, you must not make any communication using social media which promotes our services or products. This means that broadly:
2. you must not recommend, advise, discuss, promote or mention any specific company services or products on any social media site;
3. you must not discuss or recommend our services or products on any social media site; or
4. you must not invite or encourage any customer or potential customer to contact you through a social media site in order to do either of the above.
	1. Using social media for the purposes mentioned above will constitute official company use of social media sites and prior permission must be obtained.
	2. In terms of our Disciplinary Code, any breach of these restrictions will amount to gross misconduct.
	3. If you are in any doubt as to what you can and cannot say using social media, then please contact [*position of relevant person*].

# 6. Using work-related social media

**[*include this section where you want to allow all your employees to use work-related social media*]**

* 1. We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about our company and our services, employees, partners and customers. We also recognise the importance of our staff joining in and helping shape industry conversation and direction through interaction in social media.
	2. You are therefore permitted to interact on [approved] social media websites about industry developments and regulatory issues.

[*include the following if you wish to limit which social media websites are suitable for work related use:*] Approved social media websites are:

* + 1. [*insert list of approved social media websites*].
	1. This list may be updated by [*position of relevant person*] from time to time.
	2. Before using work-related social media you must:
		1. have read and understood this policy and *[insert other relevant policies]*; and
		2. have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from *[position of relevant person]*.
	3. In terms of our Disciplinary Code, any breach of these restrictions will amount to gross misconduct.
	4. If you are in any doubt as to what you can and cannot say using social media, then please contact [position of relevant person].

# 7. Personal use of social media sites

**[*include this section where you want to allow personal use of social media during work hours or using company facilities*]**

* 1. We permit the incidental use of social media websites for personal use subject to certain conditions as set out below. However, this is a privilege and not a right. It must neither be abused nor overused and we reserve the right to withdraw our permission at any time at our unilateral discretion.
	2. The following conditions must be met for personal use of social media to continue:

(a) use must be minimal and take place substantially out of normal working hours (that is, during lunch hours, before 9 am or after 5.30 pm);

(b) use must not breach any of the rules set out in paragraph 9 below.

 (c) use must not interfere with business or office commitments;

1. use must comply with all other company policies including *[refer to your relevant policies e.g. Anti-Harassment Policy, Data Protection Policy; Marketing Policy and Disciplinary Procedure, etc.*].
	1. In terms of our Disciplinary Code, any breach of these restrictions will amount to gross misconduct.
	2. If you are in any doubt as to what you can and cannot say using social media, then please contact *[position of relevant person]*.

# 8. Rules for use of social media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

**[T*hese are some examples of appropriate rules, delete those which may not be relevant to your organisation. Add additional rules that your company may require in addition to those suggested below:*]**

* 1. Always write in the first person, identify who you are and what your role is, and use a clear disclaimer.
	2. Samples of acceptable social media disclaimers include:
1. “*The views expressed are my own and don’t necessarily reflect the views of my employer or any other member of staff*”.
2. "*I work for <company name> but this is my personal opinion*."
3. "*I am not an official spokesperson of <company name> and my personal opinion is...*"
	1. Do not upload, post, forward or post a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
	2. Any member of staff who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform [*insert position of relevant person*].
	3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private or confidential information. Never reveal information that is covered by any non-disclosure agreement that you signed with the company. In addition, never disclose information that has not already been made public by the company. This includes, but is not limited to, new product announcements, financial data and staffing changes.
	4. Do not share specifics of the company's Security or Information Technology practices. In addition, never share specific information regarding the layout of our physical plant. Such details can be abused by unethical individuals to breach company security.
	5. Do not use company logos or trademarks without obtaining prior permission from [*insert position of relevant person].*
	6. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these prohibited categories, you should discuss this with [*insert position of relevant person].*
	7. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
	8. Always respect copyright and ensure that you have the right to use content before publishing, posting or re-posting it.
	9. It is acceptable to quote a very small excerpt from an article, particularly for the purposes of commenting on it or criticising it. Always quote accurately, include references and when in doubt, rather list a link and don't copy.
	10. Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it. All links must be done so that it is clear to the user that they have moved to the third party's website.
	11. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
	12. Do not post, upload, forward or post a link to chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip.
	13. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people’s perceptions of us as a company. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be prompt in admitting and correcting it.
	14. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be aware that what you publish will be public for many years and may have an impact on perceptions of you (and of the company) – both in a private and a business capacity.
	15. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, always be respectful and where possible use quoted facts to lower the tone of the discussion and/or correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset, rather return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.
	16. If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn’t do it. If in doubt, always discuss it with [*position of relevant person*] first.
	17. Don’t discuss colleagues, competitors, customers or suppliers without their prior approval.
	18. Always consider others’ privacy and avoid discussing topics that may have undesirable consequences for you or for the company. Be respectful of our company as well as its employees, customers, vendors and competitors at all times when using Social Media. Remember that you are ultimately responsible for your online behavior and you should avoid content or actions that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or threatening. You can be sued by employees, competitors or any other individuals affected by such content and you may also face Disciplinary action.
	19. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details without first obtaining their express consent.
	20. Before your first contribution on any social media site, observe the activity on the site for a while before launching in yourself to get a feel for the style of contributions, the nature of the content and any ‘unwritten’ rules that other contributors might follow.
	21. Activity on social media websites during office hours should complement and/or support your role and should be used in moderation.
	22. If you notice any content posted on social media about us (whether complementary or critical) please report it to [*position of relevant person*].
	23. If you notice any inappropriate content posted in social media about one of your colleagues please report it to the employee directly as well as to [*position of relevant person*].

# 9. Monitoring use of social media websites

* 1. Staff should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether accessed for work purposes or not) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken in terms of our Disciplinary Procedure.
	2. We reserve the right to restrict or prevent access to certain social media websites if we consider personal use to be excessive or the site to be inappropriate in our view. Monitoring is only carried out to the extent permitted or as required by law and as necessary and justifiable for business purposes.
	3. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us. It may also cause embarrassment to us and to our clients. You are required to act responsibly and with integrity at all times when using social media, whether privately or in the course of business.
	4. In particular uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

(a) pornographic material (i.e. writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit, arousing or inappropriate nature);

(b) a false and/or defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

(c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to us, our clients or our staff;

(d) confidential information about us or any of our staff or clients (which you do not have express authority to disseminate);

(e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or us); or

1. material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.
2. inappropriate comments are made regarding your employment via personal or company personas and regardless of the time of day it occurs.

Any such actions will be addressed in terms of our Disciplinary Procedure and may result in dismissal.

* 1. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with this policy and in terms of our Disciplinary Procedure,involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those delegated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
	2. If you notice any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this policy please report it to [*position of relevant person*].

# 10. Monitoring and review of this policy

* 1. The [*position of relevant person*] shall be responsible for reviewing this policy on [*insert frequency e.g. annually*] to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.