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## 10 Best Practices for Social Media Helpful guidelines for news organizations

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2010-11 ASNE ETHICS AND VALUES COMMITTEE

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# Best practice guidelines for editors crafting social media policies

MARCH 2011

## Executive summary –

Social media platforms continue to emerge as essential newsgathering tools. These mediums offer exciting opportunities for reporters to collect information and for news organizations to expand the reach of their content, but they also carry challenges and risks. Putting in place overly draconian rules discourages creativity and innovation, but allowing an uncontrolled free-for-all opens the floodgates to problems and leaves news organizations responsible for irresponsible employees.

We offer these guidelines as a framework to help editors form their own policies.

We reviewed publicly available social media policies for mainstream news organizations and several others sent to us by ASNE members. An appendix at the end of this report includes the full text of what was collected. We identified 10 best-practice themes at the heart of the best policies.

Each theme gets its own page here, with a brief explanation of why it's included, a “teachable moment,” and excerpts from social media guidelines released by news organizations that have been leading the way.

Here are the 10 key takeaways:

1. Traditional ethics rules still apply online.
2. Assume everything you write online will become public.
3. Use social media to engage with readers, but professionally.
4. Break news on your website, not on Twitter.
5. Beware of perceptions.
6. Independently authenticate anything found on a social networking site.
7. Always identify yourself as a journalist.
8. Social networks are tools not toys.
9. Be transparent and admit when you're wrong online.
10. Keep internal deliberations confidential.

## Traditional ethics rules still apply.

Reporters should act the same way online as they would in person. They shouldn't say anything they wouldn't want to see on the front page of their newspaper, and they shouldn't post anything that would embarrass them personally or professionally or their organization. This seems like common sense, but to many journalists it's not obvious.

There's no reason that traditional ethics guidelines should go out the window. That is first and foremost the message that should come across in social media guidelines. John Robinson, the editor of The Greensboro (N.C.) News & Record, responded to an email about his social media guidelines this way: "We have a code of ethics and professionalism that covers our behavior, period. That said I've told my staff that my social media policy is this: Don't be stupid." He said it works for them.

### Teachable moment:

Hiroko Tabuchi, a New York Times reporter, expressed her anger with Toyota's press operation by railing against the automaker on Twitter in a way that is generally not acceptable in reporter copy. "Akio Toyoda took very few questions, ignored reporters incl me who tried to ask a follow-up. I'm sorry, but Toyota sucks," she wrote on Twitter after a news conference. Her tweet was widely picked up and caused the business editor to consider pulling her off the Toyota story at the time, which he didn't. Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/11/opinion/11pubed.html>

### Sample policies:

**THE WASHINGTON POST:** "When using these networks, nothing we do must call into question the impartiality of our news judgment. We never abandon the guidelines that govern the separation of news from opinion, the importance of fact and objectivity, the appropriate use of language and tone, and other hallmarks of our brand of journalism...Post journalists must refrain from writing, tweeting or posting anything — including photographs or video — that could be perceived as reflecting political, racial, sexist, religious or other bias or favoritism that could be used to tarnish our journalistic credibility."

**ORLANDO SENTINEL:** "Integrity is a core value. Our ethical principles do not change, even as we work across multiple platforms and in differing media. Put another way, the standards that guide our behavior as journalists, including those listed elsewhere in the Tribune Code and in local guidelines, apply online as they do offline."

## Assume everything you write online will become public.

That's true even if it's on an account that's not explicitly linked to your employer. Privacy settings are constantly changing, and what you write behind someone's wall one day might be in the public purview the next. Or, more likely, it might get leaked by an antagonist.

Keeping separate spheres is not feasible anymore, as it might have been a few years ago. If something goes on a private page, employees should know they need to be ready to defend it publicly. Some editors have encouraged employees to consider accounts for their professional and personal lives. That's completely acceptable, but you can't expect a private Facebook page to stay private even with a public fan page.

In the new world order, more reporters are building their own personal brands. It's acceptable to put personal content on a public forum, but balance is necessary. Too much personal information muddies the water and cheapens the brand. Reporters creating new Twitter accounts should consider adding their publication's name somewhere in the username or handle so that they're clearly identified as part of the team.

### Teachable moment:

Raju Nariseti, a managing editor at The Washington Post, protected his Tweets through his Twitter settings. He thought only 90 of his friends and others he gave access to would see what he wrote. He was wrong.

"We can incur all sorts of federal deficits for wars and what not. But we have to promise not to increase it by \$1 for healthcare reform? Sad," he wrote in late 2009.

"Sen Byrd (91) in hospital after he falls from 'standing up too quickly.' How about term limits. Or retirement age. Or commonsense to prevail," he wrote in another.

Chastised by the executive editor and criticized by the paper's ombudsman, Nariseti temporarily shut down his Twitter account. The episode motivated the paper to speed up the release of new guidelines on social networking.

Source: [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/ombudsman-blog/2009/09/post\\_editor\\_ends\\_tweets\\_as\\_new.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/ombudsman-blog/2009/09/post_editor_ends_tweets_as_new.html)

### Sample policies:

**POLITICO:** "With Facebook's evolving and fishy privacy settings, there is real danger in thinking something is private when it's accessible to third-party sites. Operate on the assumption that everything is visible to everyone. As a rule of thumb, just make sure you log out of Facebook when you shut down your computer [to prevent hackers from taking over your account and posting something in your name that could be embarrassing]. Monitor what other people post to your page. It's often these things that can trip people up. And monitor what photos people tag you in. The same guidelines apply to other social networks as well, such as Foursquare, Digg and Yahoo Buzz. Just as politicians learn, to their regret, that they should always assume the mike is live, we should assume that we are always on."

**LOS ANGELES TIMES:** "Your professional life and your personal life are intertwined in the online world, just as they are offline. Attempts, for instance, to distinguish your high school friends from your professional associates are fine, but in all spaces one should adhere to the principle that as an editorial employee you are responsible for maintaining The Times' credibility."

**ROANOKE TIMES:** “A blog or message board posting is akin to having a personal conversation in a very public place. As a newsroom employee, everything you say or write or do can and will be viewed in light of your connection with the newspaper.”

**NPR:** “Information from your Facebook page, your blog entries, and your tweets — even if you intend them to be personal messages to your friends or family — can be easily circulated beyond your intended audience. This content, therefore, represents you and NPR to the outside world as much as a radio story or story for NPR.org does.”

**DENVER POST:** “For work-based accounts, especially on Twitter, it’s recommended you publish a mix of your own content (stories, photos, videos, graphics and audio), content from your Post colleagues that you find important or interesting, content from other reputable sources related to your beat, and content that showcases your own personal interests and affinities from time-to-time, so long as they don’t present a potential conflict of interest.”

## Engage with readers, but professionally.

A major value of these networks is that they offer the chance to engage with readers and sources in ways not previously possible. Reporters and editors can see what's generating buzz, gather information in real time during disasters and enhance community journalism efforts.

Too many news executives see social media platforms as merely a way to broadcast what they're doing. It's a two-way form of communication. Reporters have an obligation to interact and respond.

There are limits to the value of engagement. Policies should encourage reporters to not get into flame wars with trolls or unreasonable readers. This diminishes the credibility of the paper and elevates the visibility of the antagonist. It is subjective, and it's often a gray area. Caution is required, and reporters should be cognizant of the dangers with engagement.

### Teachable moment:

Someone managing The Washington Post's official Twitter account got into an intensive back-and-forth with the gay rights group GLAAD over an op-ed that the paper published by conservative activist Tony Perkins about anti-gay bullying. The group tweeted that The Post shouldn't have published the article, and an unknown staffer said they were only trying to offer "both sides." The group objected that there were not two sides to the issue of teen suicide. The result was a protracted debate that heightened the controversy. Managing editor Raju Narisetti sent an all-staff email urging that Post-branded and personal accounts should not be used to speak on behalf of The Post.

Sources: <http://blogs.forbes.com/velocity/2010/10/18/wapos-twitter-based-scuffle-with-glaad-when-social-media-engagement-goes-wrong/>  
The full text of staff

memo: <http://www.tbd.com/articles/2010/10/washington-post-editor-no-responding-to-critics-on-twitter-21988.html>

### Sample policies:

**GUARDIAN (U.K.):** "1. Participate in conversations about our content, and take responsibility for the conversations you start. 2. Focus on the constructive by recognising and rewarding intelligent contributions. 3. Don't reward disruptive behaviour with attention, but report it when you find it. 4. Link to sources for facts or statements you reference, and encourage others to do likewise. ... 7. Encourage readers to contribute perspective, additional knowledge and expertise. Acknowledge their additions."

**REUTERS:** "Think before you post. One of the secrets to social media's success is how easy it has become to participate. But that also makes it easy to respond or repeat before you have thought through the consequences. Whether we think it is fair or not, other media will use your social media output as your news organization's comment on topical stories. And you will play into the hands of your critics unless you take care: Resist the temptation to respond in anger to those you regard as mistaken or ill-tempered."

**DOW JONES:** "Don't engage in any impolite dialogue with those who may challenge your work — no matter how rude or provocative they may seem."

**ROANOKE TIMES:** "Postings shall not include defamatory personal attacks of any type. Particular care should be taken in responding to posts critical of specific news coverage or personal attacks on specific newsroom employees."

## Break news on your website, not on Twitter.

Social media can become a gigantic time suck, distracting reporters from conducting traditional reporting or executing their job duties.

In a news climate that values speed, there are great temptations and added incentives to break news on Twitter or Facebook instead of waiting for it to move through the editorial pipeline. This undercuts one of the main values of social media for news organizations, which is to drive traffic and increase the reach of high-quality journalism. Competitors have been known to snap up scoops first hinted at on Twitter or to accelerate the publication of a story if it becomes clear on Twitter that someone at another outlet is moving forward with a similar story.

The operative word is balance. There are times when it is advisable to post on Twitter before a story posts on your website. When tweeting about press releases or from a press conference that's being televised, for instance, precision reporting is not compromised. On breaking news stories, there are instances when getting the information out takes precedence over waiting for a story to move through the editorial pipeline.

It's a good policy to tell employees they should include links whenever possible to a story on their employer's site. This way it goes through an editor and increases traffic.

The need to stay competitive puts the onus on web developers and managers to reduce the amount of time it takes to get material online.

### Teachable moment:

Sports writers regularly put scoops on Twitter before news breaks on their employers' websites. This came into view during the baseball trading season of 2010 when reporters from Sports Illustrated, Yahoo and ESPN, and other news organizations, reported that certain players would stay or leave their teams. Business Insider rounded up eight examples of reporters breaking news on social media pages before writing stories for their employer and without including a link to drive traffic. MLBTradeRumors.com capitalized on one Tweet by posting a story based on a Tweet before the reporter did. Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/why-do-sports-reporters-give-away-their-scoops-on-twitter-2010-7/-1>

### Sample policies:

**DENVER POST:** "The default should be to break news on denverpost.com — not on a social network. Once the story is live on the site, you should then post it on your social network and link to the story. There will be cases when we hold exclusive news for the paper, or when we will choose to push updates out on social media, but those decisions should be made in consultation with your editor."

**POLITICO:** "Remember, your first priority is to report stories for Politico, not to drive Twitter traffic. ... Don't break a major story via Twitter until you can include a link back to the Politico story. We don't want to give our exclusives away without being able to maximize our traffic from those stories. Also, you don't want your Twitter feed to scoop a Politico story."

**ORLANDO SENTINEL:** "If you have a personal blog or want to start one, clear the subject matter with your supervisor before proceeding. You must not mix work and personal material on a personal blog. The company expects you to exercise good judgment, including avoiding any posts about subjects that you cover for your newsroom; attempting to build a commercial enterprise that competes with subjects your newsroom covers; and avoiding controversial subjects."



## Beware of perceptions.

Avoid the appearance of conflict of interest on your beat by offering clear disclaimers.

Reporters should make clear that retweeting or linking to items that might interest their followers is not an endorsement of the content. A political reporter, for instance, might retweet something that a politician says to pass along news. To a journalist, that's not expressing support for what they had to say. For readers or outsiders, it may not be so clear. This can be cleared up by modifying the tweet or with a simple disclaimer, such as "RT's don't = endorsements."

Take caution in friending sources on Facebook. There's some disagreement among editors about whether accepting or making "friend" requests is okay. As Facebook has become more ubiquitous and the connotation of the verb "friend" has been diluted, being "friends" with someone you cover is more acceptable than it might have looked a few years ago.

There is a risk that reporters endanger their sources by being their "friend," but there's also important information that's only visible to people who accept or make such requests. Some networks, like Facebook, allow you to hide your list of friends. This is advisable, but it shouldn't be taken for granted and it could nonetheless put sources at risk even if they don't realize it. Be thoughtful and develop a coherent approach to dealing with friend requests.

Another problem on Facebook is "likes" and "fan pages." To watch Tim Pawlenty's video that announced he was creating an exploratory committee for a presidential run—an important news story—reporters had to click a "like" button, which then generated an entry on their own Facebook page that they liked Pawlenty. But there was no other choice. Sarah Palin often makes news on Facebook, as another example, and people need to sign up for her fan page to have her messages appear in their news feeds.

Because joining groups is increasingly unavoidable, try to aim for balance when joining them. Don't only join groups or pages that lean one ideological direction. Try to manage privacy settings where possible to avoid giving the impression that you're a member of a group or have a conflict.

### Teachable moment:

CNN's Senior Editor of Mideast Affairs, Octavia Nasr, tweeted condolences for a virulently anti-American Hezbollah sheikh. "Sad to hear of the passing of Sayyed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah. One of Hezbollah's giants I respect a lot," she wrote. Her explanation was that she appreciated his support for women's rights and encouragement of men to not beat their wives. Only after an uproar did she clarify that she didn't respect his support for terrorism or suicide bombers. She lamented later that she couldn't express all the nuances in 140 characters. CNN didn't care. They fired her in July 2010. Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/07/AR2010070704948.html>

### Sample policies:

**LOS ANGELES TIMES:** "Be aware of perceptions. If you 'friend' a source or join a group on one side of a debate, do so with the other side as well. Also understand that readers may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you're looking for story ideas or simply collecting information. Consider that you may be an observer of online content without actively participating."

**NPR:** “Your simple participation in some online groups could be seen to indicate that you endorse their views. Consider whether you can accomplish your purposes by just observing a group’s activity, rather than becoming a member. If you do join, be clear that you’ve done so to seek information or story ideas. And if you ‘friend’ or join a group representing one side of an issue, do so for a group representing the competing viewpoint, when reasonable to do so.”

**ORLANDO SENTINEL:** “Be aware of perceptions. ‘Friending’ or ‘following’ people is fine. But if you ‘friend’ a source or join a group on one side of a debate, you should do so with those on the other side as well. Understand that users or sources may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you’re looking for story ideas or collecting information ... In reporting, be aware of inadvertent disclosures. ‘Friending’ a professional contact may publicly identify that person as one of your sources. Authentication is essential: Interview sources by phone or in person or otherwise verify sourcing after collecting information online ... Most readers understand that linking does not necessarily constitute endorsement. Still, you should avoid pointing to anything that is an affront to common decency. You may generally link to the websites of institutions and causes, but as with other forms of publishing, you should strive for balance when there are differing points of view.”

**DENVER POST:** “Following sources on Twitter is critical for reporting. On Facebook, the action of ‘friending’ sources is a murky area at best, mostly because it’s seen as a far more serious relationship. ‘Following’ someone on Twitter is considered to be more casual. If you have a Facebook page and you have sources as ‘friends,’ be mindful of neutrality and Post representation when posting views or opinions. In addition, if you are including sources on your personal Facebook page, do not exclude any source — include sources on all ideological sides of an issue or beat.” . . . “What about joining groups on Facebook or other social networks? Joining groups, and ‘liking’ or following certain brands, businesses and people is an essential part of doing your job today as a journalist. Often, these sources will break news on their social media accounts instead of issuing standard press releases. Lance Armstrong, for instance, first tweeted that the 2010 Tour de France would be his last. The news made international headlines.”

**THE ROANOKE TIMES:** “Recognize that even seemingly benign actions can be misinterpreted. You may sign up for a group or become a ‘fan’ of something, perhaps even to get story ideas, but others could construe that as bias toward a business or organization that the newspaper covers. Be aware that the actions of your online friends also can reflect poorly on you and, by extension, the newspaper. ... Be careful and consistent about joining groups and supporting causes. Either avoid them entirely, or sign up for lots of groups. If you become a fan of a political party, become a fan of the other parties as well. Similarly, if you join a group representing a controversial cause (as a reporting tool to learn about their meetings, etc.), take care to join a group that represents the other side of the issue. ... Manage your friends carefully. Having one source on your friends list but not another is easily construed as bias. As above, be consistent. Accept no sources or people you cover as friends, or welcome them all. Manage your friends’ comments. Delete comments and de-friend people who damage your reputation. Even friendly actions such as posting certain links on your wall can be damaging.”

**SOURCEMEDIA GROUP, CEDAR RAPIDS, IA (THE GAZETTE NEWSPAPER):** “Make it clear to your readers that the views you express are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of SourceMedia. To help reduce the potential for confusion, put the following notice – or something similar – in a reasonably prominent place on your site (e.g., at the bottom of your “about me” page): *The views expressed on this website/blog are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer. Views expressed are by the author and not necessarily SourceMedia’s.*”

## Verify anything seen on a social networking site before reporting elsewhere.

Not all information on social networking sites is created equal. The web's democratic nature means a lot of inaccurate buzz, which makes the filtering role of news organizations more important than ever. Some reporters have been too eager to pounce on anything they see online, but being a good gatekeeper means carefully authenticating any information found on Twitter or Facebook. Just like a tip received from a source over the phone, it's a starting point for more reporting. The old rules of double sourcing still apply.

Another factor in using information seen on social networking sites: It's important to get consent if using material from people's pages where they'd have a reasonable expectation of privacy. On a breaking news story, with heavy deadline pressure and a desire to get as much information as possible, it's tempting to yank details from someone's Facebook page and throw them on the web. This is risky because people lie or mislead. You need to be sure that you're looking at the page for the person you're writing about, and there's an obligation to be careful with the information being culled. Public figures are fair game, but editors need to take extra care with minors who might not realize that adult reporters will prowl their pages.

### Teachable moments:

Washington Post columnist Jonathan Capehart was had by a make-believe Congressman on Twitter. Instead of checking to see that "RepJackKimble (R-Calif.\*)" was an actual member of Congress, he wrote a blog post riffing on a Tweet he thought was real from a parody account that mimicked a conservative. "Bush fought 2 wars without costing taxpayers a dime," the Tweet said. The Post added a "correction/clarification" at the end of the post.

Source: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog\\_upshot/20100908/us\\_yblog\\_upshot/washington-post-writer-falls-for-twitter-hoax](http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_upshot/20100908/us_yblog_upshot/washington-post-writer-falls-for-twitter-hoax)

Sometimes mistakes are made by web producers who mistakenly think old stories are new stories. The official Los Angeles Times Twitter account posted a tweet on May 15, 2009, with a link to a Los Angeles Times story reporting that the California Supreme Court had overturned Proposition 8. The problem was that the story was actually from May 15, 2008. The court wouldn't rule a second time for several more weeks. The person managing the account got caught up in a prank that had Twitter abuzz with the year-old story.

Source: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/05/false-report-on-proposition-8-being-overturned-lights-up-twitter.html>

### Sample policies:

**LOS ANGELES TIMES:** "Authentication is essential: Verify sourcing after collecting information online. When transmitting information online — as in re-Tweeting material from other sources — apply the same standards and level of caution you would in more formal publication."

**ROANOKE TIMES:** "Information gathered using social networks should be independently confirmed offline. Verify that the person you've contacted online is in fact the person you think you've contacted. Interview sources in person or over the phone whenever possible. As always, verify claims and statements."

"We should approach sourcing Twitter or any social media with the same skepticism we'd apply elsewhere. What's important in making this decision is our comfort level with and experience in using the medium. Is that Twitter account really the official site of the Roanoke Regional Airport or Roanoke County government? Have you seen it before and judged it to be accurate and valid?"

"Above all, consider Twitter a starting point — make the follow-up call to confirm what you're seeing online. In the meantime, and after consultation with an editor, quote with accuracy and transparency. Use transparent attribution language such as 'posted on a (or his/her) Twitter account.' Consider if adding the time of the tweet will enhance the relevancy of what you're reporting. And now that you've committed to this, continue to follow the feed for updates or corrections."

**ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR:** “We do not publish or re-post information from public or private social media without independent documentation. However, there may be times when the need to know trumps that principle. These guidelines must be considered before we publish or re-post information from social media:

- The top editor in the newsroom will make the decision. The top editor will alert the publisher and/or corporate news, if necessary.
- We must document the source or poster. We must know that the site is what it purports to be. If necessary, as in the case of re-posting or publishing anonymously, the editor must know who the source is. For instance, when we get anonymous documents we establish their authenticity. We will apply a similar process to information from social media. Among, but not necessarily limited to these, we will consider:
  - Facts independently known about a person should match those contained in online profiles.
  - There should be evidence that the site has been in use for an extended period of time.
  - Postings and relationships noted on the sites should correspond to what’s known about a story.
  - Through the networking site’s email, we will contact the purported author. Other efforts to contact will be made via phone calls, face-to-face interviews and outreach through other email accounts.
- Without direct contact and confirmation, it is less likely we will use the information, unless there is a compelling reason to use the information. We must have exhausted all reasonable means of reporting and documenting the news and the identity of the poster before considering re-posting or publishing. We will consider whether there was no other source of the information, and whether there was intense local and/or national interest in the story.
- We will be mindful of the line between contextual reporting and tabloid fare. Because social media is often intensely private, we will permit only that information that is necessary to advance the story.
- We will exercise care with those who may not grasp the lack of privacy in social media. High school students, for example, may have less familiarity with the ‘what happens on the Web stays on the Web forever’ aspects of social networking.”

**NPR:** “While widely disseminated and reported, material gathered online can be just as inaccurate or untrustworthy as some material collected or received in more traditional ways. As always, consider and verify the source. Content gathered online is subject to the same attribution rules as other content.”

**ORLANDO SENTINEL:** “If you wish to publish an interesting email or other message you have received from a reader, you must be clear in your post that the email or message is from another person and that the words are not your own. You must also check the accuracy of the comment because you are responsible for the accuracy of comments you personally republish.”

## Always identify yourself as a journalist.

Anonymity is no more acceptable in online forums than it is at a political event or other traditional reporting venues. One can linger online in public places, but they should not misrepresent themselves to obtain access to material that is not public. When asking someone for information, especially if they plan to publish it, there's an expectation that reporters will be up front in identifying themselves.

News organizations should require their employees to be transparent when they use social networks. Don't pretend to be someone else to obtain information. The Denver Post flatly requires that reporters identify themselves as working for the Denver Post in their profiles, for example. Being above board is as important as ever.

Also never assume something you intend to stay anonymous will remain that way in an online forum. A nasty review on Yelp, written under a private pseudonym, could end up getting linked back to the original poster and his news organization through a not-necessarily-foreseeable series of events.

### Sample policies:

**THE WASHINGTON POST:** "When using social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, My Space or Twitter for reporting, we must protect our professional integrity. Washington Post journalists should identify themselves as such. We must be accurate in our reporting and transparent about our intentions when participating. We must be concise yet clear when describing who we are and what information we seek."

**THE MANHATTAN (KAN.) MERCURY:** "Outside Postings: When employees interact with the public online, they must remember that they represent the company and must conduct themselves appropriately. The use of 'false identities' by employees online is not allowed on company websites and is only likely to exacerbate problems with inappropriate conduct online."

**NPR:** "Journalism should be conducted in the open, regardless of the platform. Just as you would do if you were working offline, you should identify yourself as an NPR journalist when you are working online. If you are acting as an NPR journalist, you must not use a pseudonym or misrepresent who you are. If you are acting in a personal capacity, you may use a screen name if that is allowed by the relevant forum. You should always explain to anyone who provides you information online how you intend to use the information you are gathering."

**ORLANDO SENTINEL:** "Be honest about who you are, identifying yourself as a Tribune employee online if you would do so in a similar situation offline. This applies to your Twitter and Facebook accounts, for example, as well as personal blogs and comments you post on other blogs or stories. Be cautious, for example, about online sites such as Yelp that enlist personal reviews or ratings. Do not assume an anonymous identity to respond to comments."

**ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR:** "When you use the sites for reporting or for sourcing: Be transparent; make sure your intentions are clear. Identify yourself fully, including your name and the newspaper and Web site for which you work. If you are going to be writing about and reporting on what's being said, make that clear. Tell contacts what you are working on, why, and how you plan to use the information they supply. Explain that all information is on-the-record and for attribution."

## Social networks are tools, not toys.

In an April Fools kind of way, some journalists have reported phony information on social media sites. Since journalists are representing their news organizations, they should not abandon their role as truth tellers when they venture onto Twitter or Facebook.

But that's why even when something appears to be authenticated, it's important to make clear where it came from when passing it along. Part of the ethos of social networking is crediting the original source. Reporters should always give credit to bloggers or citizen journalists or reporters from other mainstream news organizations, when warranted, because it's the right thing to do and it offers important cover.

### Teachable moment:

Mike Wise, a star sports writer at The Washington Post, thought it would be funny if he posted a made-up scoop on Twitter to see who fell for it. In August 2010, he posted that he'd been told Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger would be suspended for five games. It took more than half an hour for his second tweet to make clear that he was joking. In that time the tweet was picked up by the Miami Herald, NBC and others. They all credited it to Wise. The news organizations looked silly when the truth came out, but the attribution protected them from greater embarrassment. Wise, meanwhile, was suspended for one month by The Post.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/31/AR2010083104105.html>

### Sample policies:

**ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR:** "When reporting information from a social media site, the following should happen:

- The source must be clear. 'A MySpace page registered to John Smith,' for example.
- We will tell the reader that information contained on the site matches what we learned through independent sources. When possible, we will note how long a person has been posting on the site.
- We will explain the ways we contacted the poster. For example, 'Efforts to reach Smith through the social networking site were unsuccessful. Calls to a person listed by that name were not returned.'
- When quoting from the site, be careful in attribution.
  - Yes: 'On a site registered to John Jones, a message was posted stating ...' or 'A person posting as John Jones said ...'
  - No: 'John Jones said ...' or 'John Jones' site stated ...' (Unless you've confirmed the person and they corroborate that they posted.)"

## Be transparent and correct mistakes where you make them.

Quickly admit when you're wrong. Mistakes happen, just like in print. But there are temptations on social media that can compound them. Fitting with the theme that the same standards which apply to traditional reporting also apply to reporting done on the Internet, journalists must understand that they are responsible for being transparent and open about their mistakes. They should also be quick to proffer new information that challenges or burnishes what they've posted on the site. This suits the real-time medium, where readers don't need to wait to see corrections until the next day.

### Teachable moment:

Howard Kurtz, The Daily Beast's Washington bureau chief, wrote a piece in November, 2010 that quoted Republican Rep. Darrell Issa of California. Kurtz had actually spoken with Issa spokesman Kurt Bardella, who he believed was Issa. In early January, Kurtz corrected his story on the Daily Beast website when he learned of the mix-up. However, Hunter Walker, a writer for The Daily, tweeted more than 150 times demanding that Kurtz issue a correction on Twitter since he had promoted the original story in a tweet. Days later, Kurtz posted a tweet noting the correction.

Source: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog\\_theoutline/20110114/bs\\_yblog\\_theoutline/kurtz-tweets-correction-after-beeing-prodded-for-days-by-reporter](http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_theoutline/20110114/bs_yblog_theoutline/kurtz-tweets-correction-after-beeing-prodded-for-days-by-reporter)

### Sample policy:

**DENVER POST:** "If you do publish something on a social media service that is incorrect, and realize it instantly, delete the tweet or Facebook post. Issue a correction tweet or Facebook post thereafter. Do not repeat the error.

"If you realize it much later, also issue a correction. Don't try to hide the error by deleting the original message and then re-issuing the news. Many Twitter clients, for example, download tweets and store them on users' computers or hand-held devices, so they won't be deleted from someone's stream even if you delete the tweet. The same applies for Facebook."

## Keep internal deliberations confidential.

Social media networks can threaten the integrity of the editorial process. Painstaking editorial decisions were traditionally made behind closed doors, and outsiders saw only the final product. Twitter and Facebook offer windows into reporting that make some editors nervous. Sources write about being interviewed. Some reporters tweet through the reporting and editing process. Editorial employees writing about newsroom decision making, which may not be explainable in 140 characters, creates controversies and causes much unneeded heartburn. Some journalists pursue transparency at the expense of professional responsibility.

### Teachable moment:

New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller wanted to keep his staff in the loop about planning for a pay wall. At a meeting, though, several reporters tweeted what he said. They spilled the beans, which were quickly picked up by a myriad of blogs and other news organizations. What he said became a story, and then a subsequent chiding of the staff for tweeting led to more stories. Now the ground rules are clear at meetings. Reporters are expected not to tweet private deliberations, whether in a Page One conference or a staff meeting. Source: <http://www.observer.com/2009/media/twitter-culture-wars-itimesi>

### Sample policies:

**THE WASHINGTON POST:** “Personal pages online are no place for the discussion of internal newsroom issues such as sourcing, reporting of stories, decisions to publish or not to publish, personnel matters and untoward personal or professional matters involving our colleagues. The same is true for opinions or information regarding any business activities of The Washington Post Company. Such pages and sites also should not be used to criticize competitors or those who take issue with our journalism or our journalists.”

**DENVER POST:** “Do not post material about The Post’s internal operations or meetings or about personal misgivings with other employees and readers. Don’t air complaints with someone you do business with on behalf of The Post on social media. That must be done in private.”

**ROANOKE TIMES:** “No unpublished images, audio, video or reporting gathered by news employees for The Roanoke Times or roanoke.com may be posted to personal blogs. Postings shall not reveal pending news coverage before it appears on roanoke.com or in The Roanoke Times. Postings should not discuss sources and methods of news coverage. Postings shall not discuss internal company policies, personnel decisions, financial results or other matters that are confidential in nature and covered by the company confidentiality policy.”

**ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR:** “Personal or professional use: You should never post or discuss articles that have not been published or information that has not been shared with the public, including discussions at meetings you have attended or interviews you have done. You should never disparagingly comment on colleagues or competitors. The internal processes of the newsroom and the editorial board are confidential, as are the business practices and decisions of the company.”

**FREEDOM COMMUNICATIONS:** “Unless specifically instructed, associates are not authorized, and therefore restricted, to speak on behalf of the Company. Associates may not publicly discuss clients, products, associates or any work-related matters, whether confidential or not, outside company-authorized communications. Associates are expected to protect the privacy of Freedom Communications, Inc., its associates, its clients, etc. and are prohibited from disclosing personal associate and non-associate information and any other proprietary and nonpublic information to which associates have access. Such information includes, but is not limited to, customer information, trade secrets, financial data, strategic business plans, etc.”



# Appendix: Social media policies from various news organizations

AS OF 1/1/2011

## Bloomberg

Social media platforms are a powerful way to reach millions of new readers and expand the impact of our reporting. Social media is a useful complement to our work so long as principles of fairness, accuracy and transparency are upheld. Common U.S. social networks include Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, Tumblr and Posterous, although this list is by no means exhaustive.

The ubiquity and rapid evolution of social networks can make it difficult to define the line between personal and professional expression. To be clear, as a journalist at Bloomberg anything we publish is considered a professional act. This doesn't preclude keeping a personal profile. It simply means that we are responsible for the content of that profile, and that anything we communicate must meet the company's guidelines and standards.

The guidelines that follow are designed to help journalists steer clear of common pitfalls of participating on social media networks. These principles are designed to extend broadly across any social site a Bloomberg News employee may participate on. The ethics section of the Bloomberg Way provides useful additional guidance, as well.

Lastly, when in doubt, remember: Ask questions first. Tweet later.

## Social Media Guidelines

### **JOINING SOCIAL NETWORKS**

- Every social network has its own set of terms and conditions that govern the data that appears on the site. In many cases, social networks reserve the right to display portions of a user's personal information or updates without additional consent.
- Some social networks offer privacy settings to help protect the spread of information outside of a user's friends and followers on a social network. These protections, while useful, are fallible. Assume anything posted on the Web is publicly available.
- Deleting a post does not ensure its removal from the Web. Assume anything posted will be available in perpetuity.

### **PERSONAL CONDUCT**

- We should not use social networks to express political opinions or to advocate on behalf of a particular issue or agenda. Posts should never express bias based on race, sex, religion, or nationality.
- Reporters and editors cannot use social media to express opinions related in any way to their professional assignment or beat. We must be mindful readers depend on our reporting for observation and insight derived from fact – not from opinion or gossip.
- We must be transparent at all times about our occupations. Most social networks include a personal profile section, which is usually the best opportunity to provide background information.

- Do not join groups on social networks dedicated to a particular political opinion or cause.
- Do not engage in arguments with those critical of our work or critical of Bloomberg News.
- Do not disparage the work of others.
- Assume internal Bloomberg discussions and meetings are “off-the-record” unless otherwise stated.

#### **REPORTING / SHARING OUR WORK**

- Social media is an excellent means of promoting our work. As such, there should be a preference for linking to Bloomberg.com stories. However, it’s good Web and social media etiquette to give credit in the form of a link to work that is interesting or valuable, regardless of the source.
- Be cognizant that reposting (on Twitter, “retweeting”) updates from other sources may be viewed as an implicit endorsement of a specific viewpoint or fact. As such, we must apply the same standards of fairness and verification as we would to any other posting.
- We should not share work in progress or use social media as a vehicle for breaking news. As ever, news must always break first on the Bloomberg Terminal.

#### **ACCURACY**

- Be skeptical of any information forwarded on a social network. Memes and misinformation spread more rapidly online than anywhere else. We must apply the same standards of verification as we would to any other source.
- Any update benefits from a second review before posting. Because of the nature of social media, the “two pairs of eyes” rule may not always be practical. However, remember our posts are always available for public and editorial review.
- In the event of an erroneous post, delete and issue a corrected version, noting the correction. Above all else, we must avoid any action that could call our impartiality into question. When in doubt, contact an editor for guidance.

## The Denver Post

Social media and social networking have fundamentally transformed the way we and our audiences consume, share and distribute information.

Facebook, the largest social networking website in the world, claims more than 500 million users - more than 5 percent of the world's population. More than 165 million people have joined Twitter, another popular social network.

It has become paramount that our reporters, editors and others within the newsroom use social media to connect and engage with our audience and community. When used effectively, social media allows for healthy interaction with our audience, opportunities for faster, more authentic newsgathering, and an ability to be transparent about the reporting process.

First, we encourage you to join these networks. Doing so can be an easy way to promote your work to friends, family and colleagues, and also help you connect with our community. Some news organizations, including the BBC, have said that those journalists not using social media are not doing their jobs.

However, social media tools are not without their pitfalls. Information in the form of status updates, blog posts, tweets, photos, videos can easily escape beyond your intended audience.

With that in mind, The Post provides these guidelines in an effort to determine what conduct is appropriate for our newsroom staff. It is not The Post's intention to attempt to control private lives, but an employee's use of social media outlets could compromise the person's professional credibility and The Post's.

As a general rule, always assume that what you post and what you receive on social media websites will be read by the outside world and that your perspectives and opinions will be, by default, considered in the context of your working as a journalist for The Post. Information from your Facebook page and posts to your Twitter account - even if just personal messages to your friends and family - can be construed as representing you and The Post to others as much as your stories, photos, video and other content does when published.

Ultimately, we ask you to use common sense when expressing yourself and sharing information on social media websites. Assume everything you express on social media is public. These guidelines don't stray from our general ethics policy and are being created to help augment the existing policy and confront the new challenges associated with social media.

If you have any questions about whether a statement, post or tweet is appropriate for social media, consult with the social media editor . . .

### **WHAT SHOULD WE PUBLISH ON SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS?**

For work-based accounts, especially on Twitter, it's recommended you publish a mix of your own content (stories, photos, videos, graphics and audio), content from your Post colleagues that you find important or interesting, content from other reputable sources related to your beat, and content that showcases your own personal interests and affinities from time-to-time, so long as they don't present a potential conflict of interest.

Ultimately, bring your followers and fans inside the action. Be transparent. Links could include a photo of the press box from your phone, or the site of a story you're covering. It doesn't all have to be stories.

Do not post material about The Post's internal operations or meetings or about personal misgivings with other employees and readers. Don't air complaints with someone you do business with on behalf of The Post on social media. That must be done in private.

## **WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH FOLLOWERS OR FANS?**

Social media is, at its core, social. It's important to engage in two-way conversation. Being a one-way feed of your own reporting and links won't gain you the most influence you can. Interacting with your readers is a way to respond to their questions and gain insight into what kinds of stories they're looking for. We encourage you to help them shape your reporting and use the crowd for answers to questions you have.

The more you interact with your followers, the stronger their bond to The Post becomes. This, of course, comes with necessary limitations. If readers or others call out mistakes in our work, be courageous enough to admit them. Your readers will find you refreshingly human and respect you more for it (of course, we want to avoid mistakes when at all possible.)

You may find fans or followers who want to criticize your work. Respectfully engage them, but don't get bogged down in a war of words, and learn to recognize when it's time to stop communication. On Facebook, you're encouraged to respond to comments on stories you post. If you're unsure what to do about a question or comment, contact the social media editor for guidance and advice.

## **IF I WANT TO SET UP AN ACCOUNT, HOW DO I DO THAT?**

Consult with the social media editor, who will help you set up an account for The Post. If you've already set up an account for The Post, we'll need the user name and password for our records. It will, among other things, allow us to tweet or post critical information if you're absent.

There is one rule: If you have a Twitter account that follows this structure: @myname, you must, in the interest of transparency, identify yourself as a Denver Post journalist.

As mentioned later, consider using two accounts: One for your professional life, and one for personal. If you use one, professional standards apply. If you're in business, consider using LinkedIn.com to develop a contact list.

If you leave the company, you retain the rights to your own handle or screenname. If it includes an extension - i.e., "DP," "Post," or something else that identifies your affiliation with The Post in the user name in conjunction with your own name, like "@danielpettyDP" - you must remove the extension upon your departure. If it's an institutional account - like @avsnews or @PostBroncos - the followers/friends stay with the company.

## **SHOULD I "FRIEND" OR FOLLOW SOURCES ON FACEBOOK OR TWITTER?**

Following sources on Twitter is critical for reporting. On Facebook, the action of "friending" sources is a murky area at best, mostly because it's seen as a far more serious relationship. "Following" someone on Twitter is considered to be more casual. If you have a Facebook page and you have sources as "friends," be mindful of neutrality and Post representation when posting views or opinions. In addition, if you are including sources on your personal Facebook page, do not exclude any source - include sources on all ideological sides of an issue or beat.

You may sign up for two Facebook pages: one that's a personal profile page, and a second "fan page" just for work contacts and readers. Having two personal accounts is a violation of Facebook's terms of service. Even with two pages, recognize that everyone may view you as a representative of The Post.

## **WHAT ABOUT EXPRESSING VIEWS ABOUT POLITICS, POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS OR CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES ON SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS?**

Newsroom staff members who are not columnists or editorial writers should avoid posting opinions on social media outlets that would raise questions about their objectivity, which is consistent with our ethics policy. While employees may vote and engage in private debate, so long as their views are expressed as their own and not representing the views of the newspaper, the same luxuries can't be expected on social media websites, where statements are easily taken out of context and capable of being widely distributed. Columnists and opinion writers have more leeway in expressing opinion on social media outlets.

## **WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO POST CONTENT ON MY FACEBOOK WALL OR TAG ME IN UNSEEMLY PHOTOS?**

We can't prevent or ask you to take down content that others post on your wall. If other people post photos of you that you'd rather not others see, you can "untag" yourself or adjust your privacy settings (addressed in the next question).

## **HOW SHOULD I MANAGE MY PRIVACY SETTINGS ON FACEBOOK?**

Facebook, especially for journalists, is a place where close friends, professionals and sources can potentially connect with us. In real life, you share different pieces of information with different groups. Use the most stringent and customized privacy settings on these networks available when appropriate. On Facebook, for example, you can use lists, as outlined in this how-to guide from the tech blog Engadget. We encourage you to follow their suggestions for managing who sees what information you post on Facebook. But remember, above all else, that anything you post on a social network is potentially public, and you should be prepared to explain yourself as an employee for The Post. If you use two accounts on Twitter, one for personal and one for professional purposes, protect your tweets on the personal account. If you have any questions about how to best adjust your privacy settings, contact the social media editor.

## **CAN I LINK TO DENVER POST CONTENT ON MY PERSONAL PROFILES?**

Absolutely! Sharing our content on these networks, when done collectively across the newsroom, ensures our reach is extended. We ask that you don't post copyrighted material, unless you have prior permission from the social media editor. For example, don't post Denver Post photos into a personal photo gallery, but rather link to the photo gallery on the web. Traffic generation online is critical for our advertising-based impression revenue model. The same applies for stories and video. Always link back to our site whenever possible.

## **WHAT ABOUT BREAKING NEWS ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK?**

Make sure you consult with your editor on breaking news. The default should be to break news on denverpost.com - not on a social network. Once the story is live on the site, you should then post it on your social network and link to the story. There will be cases when we hold exclusive news for the paper, or when we will choose to push updates out on social media, but those decisions should be made in consultation with your editor.

#### **WHAT ABOUT MISTAKES AND CORRECTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA?**

If you do publish something on a social media service that is incorrect, and realize it instantly, delete the tweet or Facebook post. Issue a correction tweet or Facebook post thereafter. Do not repeat the error.

If you realize it much later, also issue a correction. Don't try to hide the error by deleting the original message and then re-issuing the news. Many Twitter clients, for example, download tweets and store them on users' computers or hand-held devices, so they won't be deleted from someone's stream even if you delete the tweet. The same applies for Facebook.

#### **CAN I HAVE A PERSONAL TWITTER OR FACEBOOK ACCOUNT THAT ISN'T TIED TO WORK AND DOESN'T IDENTIFY ME AS A JOURNALIST?**

Yes. If you feel more comfortable separating your Twitter personalities into professional and personal accounts, please do. Separation can be accomplished on Facebook either with separate pages, or configuring one profile with lists, as referenced above. But again, assume that what you say on all accounts can be public, no matter the privacy settings. If you are working as a journalist for The Post and use social media to contact subjects or sources, you must identify yourself as such. No personal account should imply the endorsement of The Post, though others may assume that anyway.

#### **WHAT ABOUT JOINING GROUPS ON FACEBOOK OR OTHER SOCIAL NETWORKS?**

Joining groups, and "liking" or following certain brands, businesses and people is an essential part of doing your job today as a journalist. Often, these sources will break news on their social media accounts instead of issuing standard press releases. Lance Armstrong, for instance, first tweeted that the 2010 Tour de France would be his last. The news made international headlines.

Be aware that your membership in these groups may be seen as an endorsement of their activities. If possible, try to observe their activity without following them. Often, however, this is impractical. Instead, putting a disclaimer in your profile can be a way to be transparent.

Example: "Retweets, links and those whom I follow are not endorsements."

#### **ANY OTHER CONCERNS?**

Ensure that passwords for social media accounts are strong and difficult to guess. Use a mix of numbers, characters and letters - both capital and lower case - to make a difficult password. That cannot be stressed enough. Several high-profile media companies, including The New York Times and Fox News, have suffered significant embarrassment after their accounts were hacked.

THESE GUIDELINES APPLY TO ALL NEWSROOM STAFF MEMBERS.

THESE POLICIES, LAST REVISED ON NOV. 5, 2010, HAVE BEEN ADAPTED FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, NPR, THE ST. PAUL PIONEER-PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS. IN SOME INSTANCES, THE SENTENCES HEREIN INCLUDE SIMILAR PHRASING AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

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# NPR

POSTED OCTOBER 15, 2009

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter have become an integral part of everyday life for millions of people around the world. As NPR grows to serve the audience well beyond the radio, social media is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our interaction and our transparency with our audience and with a variety of communities. Properly used, social networking sites can also be very valuable newsgathering and reporting tools and can speed research and extend a reporter's contacts, and we encourage our journalists to take advantage of them.

The line between private and public activity has been blurred by these tools, which is why we are providing guidance now. Information from your Facebook page, your blog entries, and your tweets - even if you intend them to be personal messages to your friends or family - can be easily circulated beyond your intended audience. This content, therefore, represents you and NPR to the outside world as much as a radio story or story for NPR.org does. As in all of your reporting, the [NPR Code of Ethics](#) should guide you in your use of social media. You should read and be sure you understand the Code.

What follows are some basic but important guidelines to help you as you deal with the changing world of gathering and reporting news, and to provide additional guidance on specific issues. These guidelines apply to every member of the News Division.

First and foremost - you should do nothing that could undermine your credibility with the public, damage NPR's standing as an impartial source of news, or otherwise jeopardize NPR's reputation.

Recognize that everything you write or receive on a social media site is public. Anyone with access to the web can get access to your activity on social media sites. And regardless of how careful you are in trying to keep them separate, in your online activity, your professional life and your personal life overlap.

Use the highest level of privacy tools available to control access to your personal activity when appropriate, but don't let that make you complacent. It's just not that hard for someone to hack those tools and make public what you thought was private.

You should conduct yourself in social media forums with an eye to how your behavior or comments might appear if we were called upon to defend them as a news organization. In other words, don't behave any differently online than you would in any other public setting.

- While we strongly encourage linking to NPR.org, you may not repost NPR copyrighted material to social networks without prior permission. For example, it is o.k. to link from your blog or Facebook profile to a story of yours on the NPR site, but you should not copy the full text or audio onto a personal site or Web page. You may accomplish this through the NPR API or widgets that NPR provides to the public under the same terms of use as apply to anyone else.
- Remember that the terms of service of a social media site apply to what you post and gather on that site. The terms might allow for material that you post to be used in a different way than you intended. Additionally, law enforcement officials may be able to obtain by subpoena anything you post or gather on a site without your consent — or perhaps even your knowledge.
- Remember the same ethics rules as apply offline also apply to information gathered online.
- Journalism should be conducted in the open, regardless of the platform. Just as you would do if you were working offline, you should identify yourself as an NPR journalist when you are working online. If you are acting as an NPR journalist, you must not use a pseudonym or misrepresent who you are. If you are acting in a personal capacity, you may use a screen name if that is allowed by the relevant forum.

- You should always explain to anyone who provides you information online how you intend to use the information you are gathering.
- When possible, clarify and confirm any information you collect online by later interviewing your online sources by phone or in person.
- While widely disseminated and reported, material gathered online can be just as inaccurate or untrustworthy as some material collected or received in more traditional ways. As always, consider and verify the source.
- Content gathered online is subject to the same attribution rules as other content.
- You must not advocate for political or other polarizing issues online. This extends to joining online groups or using social media in any form (including your Facebook page or a personal blog) to express personal views on a political or other controversial issue that you could not write for the air or post on NPR.org.
- Your simple participation in some online groups could be seen to indicate that you endorse their views. Consider whether you can accomplish your purposes by just observing a group's activity, rather than becoming a member. If you do join, be clear that you've done so to seek information or story ideas. And if you "friend" or join a group representing one side of an issue, do so for a group representing the competing viewpoint, when reasonable to do so.
- Realize that social media communities have their own culture, etiquette, and norms, and be respectful of them.
- If you are writing about meetings and gatherings at NPR - always ask first if the forum is on or off the record before distributing information or content about it.

And a final caution - when in doubt, consult with your editor.

Social media is a very dynamic ecosystem so don't be surprised if we continue to revise or elaborate on our guidelines at a later date. In the meantime, we welcome your feedback.

[http://www.npr.org/about/aboutnpr/ethics/social\\_media\\_guidelines.html](http://www.npr.org/about/aboutnpr/ethics/social_media_guidelines.html)



## Orlando Sentinel

Integrity is a core value. Our ethical principles do not change, even as we work across multiple platforms and in differing media. Put another way, the standards that guide our behavior as journalists, including those listed elsewhere in the Tribune Code and in local guidelines, apply online as they do offline.

Social networks, blogs, instant messaging and online forums provide valuable links to the world around us; enable us to strengthen our relationships with users and sources; and serve as an outlet to promote and distribute our work. As journalists take part in this vibrant conversation, that may mean sharing personal information, revealing personality and otherwise connecting with the audience in a more direct manner.

With that in mind, please be aware of these general guidelines:

- Assume that your professional life and your personal life will merge online regardless of your care in separating them.
- Avoid writing or posting anything that would compromise the integrity of Tribune or your local business unit, affect your ability to do your job or otherwise diminish users' or sources' trust in you and the organization. Just as political bumper stickers and lawn signs are to be avoided in the offline world, so, too, are partisan expressions online.
- Even if you use privacy tools (determining who can view your page or profile, for instance), assume that everything you write, receive or exchange on a social media site is public.
- Be aware of perceptions. "Friending" or "following" people is fine. But if you "friend" a source or join a group on one side of a debate, you should do so with those on the other side as well. Understand that users or sources may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you're looking for story ideas or collecting information.
- Be honest about who you are, identifying yourself as a Tribune employee online if you would do so in a similar situation offline. This applies to your Twitter and Facebook accounts, for example, as well as personal blogs and comments you post on other blogs or stories. Be cautious, for example, about online sites such as Yelp that enlist personal reviews or ratings. Do not assume an anonymous identity to respond to comments.
- If you wish to publish an interesting email or other message you have received from a reader, you must be clear in your post that the email or message is from another person and that the words are not your own. You must also check the accuracy of the comment because you are responsible for the accuracy of comments you personally republish.
- If you have a personal blog or want to start one, clear the subject matter with your supervisor before proceeding. You must not mix work and personal material on a personal blog. The company expects you to exercise good judgment, including avoiding any posts about subjects that you cover for your newsroom; attempting to build a commercial enterprise that competes with subjects your newsroom covers; and avoiding controversial subjects.
- In reporting, be aware of inadvertent disclosures. "Friending" a professional contact may publicly identify that person as one of your sources. Authentication is essential: Interview sources by phone or in person or otherwise verify sourcing after collecting information online.
- Most readers understand that linking does not necessarily constitute endorsement. Still, you should avoid pointing to anything that is an affront to common decency. You may generally link to the websites of institutions and causes, but as with other forms of publishing, you should strive for balance when there are differing points of view.
- It is difficult to ask others to respect our copyrights if we don't extend the same courtesy to them. Accordingly, we should use photographs from non-Tribune websites only when (1) the image is in the public domain and is no longer subject to

copyright protection, (2) the copyright holder has given explicit permission; or (3) if such use is “fair” under established fair use principles. If you think you should be able to use copyrighted text, images, video or audio files based on “fair use” principles, please consult your editor first.

- Using social media networks means that you (and the content you exchange) are subject to the networks’ terms of service. This can have legal implications, including the possibility that your interactions could be subject to a third-party subpoena. Any information might be turned over to law enforcement without your consent or even your knowledge.

## St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Social Media: Because the social media and digital landscape is changing rapidly, it is impossible to (write a policy that anticipates) anticipate the challenges, questions and issues that could be posed by new tools that emerge in the future. When you face such challenges or questions, it's always best to discuss them with your supervisor or senior newsroom leaders or, when appropriate, your colleagues before making a decision on how to handle the situation.

We encourage your interaction in social networks. We also, as always, expect newsroom staff to abide by our ethics policy — in social networks as well as the “real world.” In general, our expectation is that you:

- Remember that your actions online reflect on your integrity as a journalist and on the Post-Dispatch.
- Identify yourself and where you work.
- Remember nothing posted online can be assumed to be private.

Keep these principles in mind when:

- Posting comments, photos and other material.
- Deciding when to “friend” others on social networks.
- Signing up for groups, fan pages, or causes online.

# The Roanoke Times/roanoke.com

## Blogs and Internet postings

### **COMPANY-SPONSORED BLOGS**

Roanoke Times-sponsored blogs are governed by the same standards of accuracy and fairness that apply to other news articles and images.

### **PERSONAL BLOGS**

News employees of The Roanoke Times should exercise caution in maintaining a personal blog or posting to other blogs or message boards on the Web. Personal bloggers who are news employees always must keep in mind the balance between their exercise of creative expression and their responsibility to adhere to our standards of fairness. A blog or message board posting is akin to having a personal conversation in a very public place. As a newsroom employee, everything you say or write or do can and will be viewed in light of your connection with the newspaper. As with our policies on participating in civic life, any personal Internet postings should be crafted with concern for how they might reflect on our news products or our reputation for fairness and professionalism. Personal bloggers should notify their immediate supervisor that they have a blog, and talk through any potential conflicts of interest or complications. In the end, the newspaper's standards will govern all blogs. These specific prohibitions apply to newsroom employees who maintain personal blogs or who post to other blogs or discussion groups:

- No unpublished images, audio, video or reporting gathered by news employees for The Roanoke Times or roanoke.com may be posted to personal blogs.
- Postings shall not reveal pending news coverage before it appears on roanoke.com or in The Roanoke Times.
- Postings should not discuss sources and methods of news coverage.
- Postings shall not discuss internal company policies, personnel decisions, financial results or other matters that are confidential in nature and covered by the company confidentiality policy.
- Postings shall not include defamatory personal attacks of any type.
- Particular care should be taken in responding to posts critical of specific news coverage or personal attacks on specific newsroom employees.
- Postings should not be made on company time or using company computers.

## Social Networking Tools

### **AS A REPORTING TOOL**

Social networks are ubiquitous enough that journalists who insist on avoiding them are likely to miss good opportunities and great stories. To that end, we encourage responsible use of such networks to form connections, find story ideas and locate sources.

- Making connections is good. And journalists should ensure they are using a full array of tools for gathering information, including face-to-face interviews and shoe leather reporting. Sites like Facebook and MySpace are not a substitute for actual interviews by phone or in person, or other means of information gathering, and should not be solely relied upon.
- It is the journalist's job to consider the variety and diversity of sources used for stories, and the same applies to sources found on social networking sites. Consider if finding sources this way leads you to a predominance of people of a certain race, ethnicity, political persuasion, belief system, world view, age or income.
- Information gathered using social networks should be independently confirmed offline. Verify that the person you've contacted online is in fact the person you think you've contacted. Interview sources in person or over the phone whenever possible. As always, verify claims and statements.
- Ensure informed consent. It's easy for sources to misunderstand your intentions. Identify yourself as a reporter for The Roanoke Times/roanoke.com and advise the source that you are gathering information from them for publication.
- Consult an editor before using social networking sites to contact children and others who may not be able to fully comprehend the consequences of speaking to a journalist.
- Before using photos copied or downloaded from social networking sites, be careful to verify that the photos are what you think they are. All other standards for photographs used in our publications naturally apply.
- Be transparent with the audience as well as sources. Let them know how you contacted people, in what context you gathered the information and how you verified it (or didn't verify it). If information was obtained from a Facebook page, for example, say that.

## **PROMOTING OUR WORK**

It is important and valuable to promote our work through social networks, though you have no obligation to use your personal page to promote your work for The Roanoke Times/roanoke.com. Should you choose to promote your work in this medium, consider these guidelines:

- Be accurate in headlines and summaries for your stories or other work when posting them. It's easy to sensationalize or oversimplify.
- Be clear. If you are not a good headline writer, seek some training.
- Avoid expression of opinion, or anything that might be construed as opinion, on the content you are posting about. Naturally, critical writing such as music or movie reviews are an exception.
- Do not publish material collected for a story but which was not published in the newspaper or on roanoke.com. This includes photographs, quotations, information about how a story was reported or any other form of outtake. The newspaper holds the copyright to this material and is under no obligation to defend you if questions or a claim of libel arise.
- Always include a link to what you're promoting and make sure the link works.
- Editors and online staff should identify work that should be branded and promoted on an institutional basis.

## **BALANCING THE PERSONAL AND THE PROFESSIONAL**

Some journalists use social networks as a professional tool. Others use it as a strictly personal endeavor. Still others blend the functions. It is increasingly difficult to keep your social networking page strictly private and personal. To that end, journalists must recognize that everything on their social networking page has the potential to influence their reputation and, by extension, the credibility of this newsroom.

### **DON'T POST INFORMATION THAT COULD DISCREDIT YOU OR THIS NEWSROOM, EVEN IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR PAGE IS PRIVATE.**

- The standards for your actions in the virtual community of a social networking site are no different than those in your actual community. For example, just as you should not put a political sign in your yard or bumper sticker on your car to maintain your and the newspaper's credibility, neither should you join political groups on Facebook or add political content or statements to your page.
- Recognize that even seemingly benign actions can be misinterpreted. You may sign up for a group or become a "fan" of something, perhaps even to get story ideas, but others could construe that as bias toward a business or organization that the newspaper covers.
- Be aware that the actions of your online friends also can reflect poorly on you and, by extension, the newspaper.

## **TIPS AND STRATEGIES**

- Use the tools, such as limited profiles and private settings, to restrict access to your most private information.
- State your intentions often, in wall posts and other notifications. When appropriate, tell groups when you are signing up that you are looking for story ideas.
- Be careful and consistent about joining groups and supporting causes. Either avoid them entirely, or sign up for lots of groups. If you become a fan of a political party, become a fan of the other parties as well. Similarly, if you join a group representing a controversial cause (as a reporting tool to learn about their meetings, etc.), take care to join a group that represent the other side of the issue.
- Manage your friends carefully. Having one source on your friends list but not another is easily construed as bias. As above, be consistent. Accept no sources or people you cover as friends, or welcome them all.
- Manage your friends' comments. Delete comments and de-friend people who damage your reputation. Even friendly actions such as posting certain links on your wall can be damaging.

## Twitter

### **BUILD OFF OUR INSTITUTIONAL VOICE**

We should generally send out our original reporting through our institutional @roanoketimes Twitter account (or niches such as @nrvcurent or @BRBusinessJ). Members of the online team and key managers have access to these accounts. We may identify exceptions to this, but they will be vetted and widely communicated to the staff.

The biggest reason for this is Twitter can come across as many unorganized voices screaming at the same time. When we, a 123-year-old institution, post in that environment, we bring the stature and credibility of our brand. People will believe us – and retweet us.

One anticipated exception might be a major and highly trafficked story causing an overload on roanoke.com and blocking it from loading. In that case, Twitter might be the best option to get news out quickly.

We also might ask a reporter to push out news on a personal Twitter account if he or she is one of several reporters at a scene and the tweets serve as a supplementary account of what’s happening. In that case, we would immediately retweet this information through our @roanoketimes account to reach a wider audience.

Overall, though, reporters are not expected to nor encouraged to push original reporting through their personal Twitter feed. As is the case with any social networking, they should carefully consider the public and private personas they are conveying online. We believe it may be harder to blend the private and personal on Twitter, in comparison to Facebook, because the account holder has less ability to manage followers versus friends.

One option may be to identify the account by your beat or blog name, as Lindsey Nair has done with RTFridgeMagnet. This gives her room to have her own personal Twitter account.

#### **KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE**

While Twitter represents a growing audience for us online, it still is small in comparison to our other established breaking news channels – namely, our breaking news posts on roanoke.com. For this reason, we should generally post breaking news first on the site, then tweet the URL. From there, the magnification power of Twitter can take effect as our breaking news tweets are repeatedly passed along by individuals exponentially through retweets.

That said, we should aggressively use Twitter to push out links to breaking news on our site. It is also a valuable tool in soliciting sources or providing further affirmation as a breaking news event develops.

#### **APPROACH SOURCING WITH CAUTION**

We should approach sourcing Twitter or any social media with the same skepticism we’d apply elsewhere. What’s important in making this decision is our comfort level with and experience in using the medium. Is that Twitter account really the official site of the Roanoke Regional Airport or Roanoke County government? Have you seen it before and judged it to be accurate and valid?

Above all, consider Twitter a starting point — make the follow-up call to confirm what you’re seeing online. In the meantime, and after consultation with an editor, quote with accuracy and transparency. Use transparent attribution language such as “posted on a (or his/her) Twitter account.” Consider if adding the time of the tweet will enhance the relevancy of what you’re reporting. And now that you’ve committed to this, continue to follow the feed for updates or corrections.

<http://www.roanoke.com/newsservices/wb/xp-59614#48>

# The Wall Street Journal, Newswires and MarketWatch

MAY 2009

These policies are intended to give additional guidance for appropriate professional conduct for news personnel of The Wall Street Journal, Newswires and MarketWatch. As with the Code of Conduct, these words are intended as a “reaffirmation of enduring values and practices” and serve to bring together in one place several sets of guidelines on various subjects. The most important wisdom about dealing with these questions is: When in doubt, ask. . . .

## ONLINE ACTIVITIES

The use of social and business networking sites by reporters and editors of the Journal, Newswires and MarketWatch is becoming more commonplace. These ground rules should guide all news employees’ actions online, whether on Dow Jones sites or in social-networking, email, personal blogs, or other sites outside Dow Jones.

- Never misrepresent yourself using a false name when you’re acting on behalf of your Dow Jones publication or service. When soliciting information from readers and interview subjects you must identify yourself as a reporter for the Journal, Newswires or MarketWatch and be tonally neutral in your questions.
- Base all comments posted in your role as a Dow Jones employee in the facts, drawing from and citing your reporting when appropriate. Sharing your personal opinions, as well as expressing partisan political views, whether on Dow Jones sites or on the larger Web, could open us to criticism that we have biases and could make a reporter ineligible to cover topics in the future for Dow Jones.
- Don’t recruit friends or family to promote or defend your work.
- Consult your editor before “connecting” to or “friending” any reporting contacts who may need to be treated as confidential sources. Openly “friending” sources is akin to publicly publishing your Rolodex.
- Let our coverage speak for itself, and don’t detail how an article was reported, written or edited.
- Don’t discuss articles that haven’t been published, meetings you’ve attended or plan to attend with staff or sources, or interviews that you’ve conducted.
- Don’t disparage the work of colleagues or competitors or aggressively promote your coverage.
- Don’t engage in any impolite dialogue with those who may challenge your work — no matter how rude or provocative they may seem.
- Avoid giving highly-tailored, specific advice to any individual on Dow Jones sites. Phrases such as “Travel agents are saying the best deals are X and Y...” are acceptable while counseling a reader “You should choose X...” is not. Giving generalized advice is the best approach.
- All postings on Dow Jones sites that may be controversial or that deal with sensitive subjects need to be cleared with your editor before posting.
- Business and pleasure should not be mixed on services like Twitter. Common sense should prevail, but if you are in doubt about the appropriateness of a Tweet or posting, discuss it with your editor before sending.

Obtained by LA Observed [http://www.laobserved.com/archive/2009/05/wsj\\_staffers\\_told\\_to\\_be\\_n.php](http://www.laobserved.com/archive/2009/05/wsj_staffers_told_to_be_n.php)



## SourceMedia Group (Cedar Rapids, IA)

Social media tools are authorized for use, subject to the normal standards of reasonable use per The GFOC Computer Usage Policy. SourceMedia defines social media as online interactions on social networking sites, in comments on Websites and any other public or quasi-public interactions online. While these tools are inherently personal, employees shall avoid any use of the tools that includes the following activities:

- Any illegal, disruptive, offensive, harassing, or threatening messages, including offensive comments about race, gender, appearance, disabilities, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious beliefs and practice, political beliefs, or national origin.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential material.
- Sending SPAM.
- Soliciting or advertising personal items for sale while at work.

Journalism/Photojournalism staff are encouraged to use social media approaches in their journalism but also need to make sure to be fully aware of the risks — especially those that threaten our and your hard-earned reputation. SourceMedia's reputation for impartiality and objectivity is crucial. The public must be able to trust the integrity of our products and services. This is a fast-changing world and you will need to exercise judgment in many areas. Our recommendations are designed to support rather than inhibit your exploration of these important new approaches.

Social media which do not identify the person as a SourceMedia employee, do not discuss SourceMedia products or services and are purely about personal matters would normally fall outside this guidance.

### RESPONSIBILITY

We do encourage you to participate in the online social media space, but urge you to do so properly, exercising sound judgment and common sense. Assume all content put on the internet is public and permanent.

Social Media falls within the guidelines of all SourceMedia policies and the Employee Handbook. Anything you post that can potentially tarnish the Company's image will ultimately be your responsibility.

Employees can be held personally liable for any commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous. For these reasons, employees should exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations. Outside parties actually can pursue legal action against you for postings.

Any confidential, proprietary, or trade secret information is off-limits for your social media per the Confidentiality Agreement you have signed with SourceMedia. To obtain a copy of your agreement, please contact Human Resources. Staff members should respect the privacy and the feelings of others. If you are in doubt about posting information, check with your supervisor.

### DISCLAIMER

Make it clear to your readers that the views you express are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of SourceMedia. To help reduce the potential for confusion, put the following notice – or something similar – in a reasonably prominent place on your site (e.g., at the bottom of your “about me” page): *The views expressed on this website/blog are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer. Views expressed are by the author and not necessarily SourceMedia's.*

### **BE CONSCIOUS WHEN MIXING YOUR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL LIVES.**

The distinction between the private and the professional has largely broken down online and you should assume that your professional and personal social media activity will be treated as one no matter how hard you try to keep them separate. You should also be aware that even if you make use of privacy settings, anything you post on a social media site may be made public. You should think carefully about what personal content would be appropriate for professional streams.

### **GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE AND DON'T VIOLATE OTHERS' RIGHTS.**

DO NOT claim authorship of something that is not yours. If you are using another party's content, make certain that they are credited for it in your post and that they approve of you utilizing their content. Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rightsholder(s).

### **BE RESPONSIBLE TO YOUR WORK.**

The Company understands that associates engage in online social media activities at work for legitimate purposes and that these activities may be helpful for Company affairs and adds to industry conversation. However, the Company encourages all associates to exercise sound judgment and common sense to prevent online social media sites from becoming a distraction at work.

### **FULL DISCLOSURE**

The Company requires all associates who are communicating as an employee of SourceMedia to always disclose their name and their affiliation. It is never acceptable to use aliases or otherwise deceive people. Apply the same precautions online that you would use in other forms of newsgathering and do not use anything from the Internet that is not sourced in such a way that you can verify where it came from. Also, be aware that you may reveal your sources to competitors by using "following" or "friending" functionality on social networks.

### **SEEK THE PERMISSION OF YOUR MANAGER BEFORE SETTING UP A PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE ON A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE**

Effective use of social media may also require you to share a lot of content and you need to be clear that this does not conflict with our product and company objectives. Personal profiles do not need to be approved by your manager, only those related to your work for the company. Discuss with your supervisor about setting up a personal and professional social media page.

### **LINKING TO PRODUCTS/BLOGS**

We do not want to dilute our content by only posting on Social Media sites. Content collected on the company's behalf must be linked back to the blog/topical website or one of our products to promote and not distract or compete from our products and services. Social networking messages (for example a tweet) are permissible without a link if they promote upcoming content.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Staff that is publicly representing the company should never indicate a political allegiance on social networking sites, either through profile information or through joining political groups. Any rare exception to this must be agreed in advance by a line manager. For instance, it may be appropriate to join a Social Media group related to political causes for reasons of political research. Where this is agreed we should be transparent and should consider how membership of the group can be balanced. We do understand that some journalists choose to "follow" certain groups to follow their news items. This is permissible but a disclaimer is required.

**ISSUE: IS RE-POSTING OR PUBLISHING INFORMATION TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ACCEPTABLE?**

Generally, no. Content from social networking sites is undocumented and unverified. It can be incorrect. We treat it as we would other confidential or anonymous source information. Printing or re-posting information based only on, or primarily on, confidential or anonymous sources can undermine our credibility. We discourage the use of anonymous or confidential sources as the sole or primary basis for publication or posting. We recognize there may be rare occasions in investigative or enterprise reporting when source confidentiality may be necessary. Re-posting or publishing information taken from social networking sites opens us to inaccuracies and damages our credibility. It may also expose us to legal consequences. Information from social networking sites, like Twitter, Facebook or MySpace, can be used as a “tip” for additional reporting. In rare instances, if the public’s need to know outweighs all other consideration, posting or publishing information from social networking sites may be acceptable – but never without the top editor’s approval.

We recognize there may be rare occasions in investigative or enterprise reporting when source confidentiality may be necessary. Each newspaper should develop and implement a decision-making process that ensures credibility is maintained if anonymous or confidential information must be published or posted.

We acknowledge there are differences between (1) the public social media sites of businesses, organizations, elected public officials and public figures, and (2) the private social media sites of individuals.

**THE PUBLIC SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:** Information taken from public social media sites is subject to thorough reporting prior to re-posting or publication, but we consider such content to be public record with appropriate documentation and attribution. A word of caution: Because it is easy to post inaccurate information or post pretending to be someone else, we should verify information and sources before re-posting or publishing.

**THE PRIVATE SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:** We will treat content from private social media sites with extra care because posters may not be aware of the extent to which their postings are visible. Content from private social media sites should not be published or re-posted without the top editor’s approval.

# Rockford Register Star

## ISSUE: CAN JOURNALISTS BE MEMBERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES LIKE TWITTER, FACEBOOK AND MYSPACE?

Yes – with reservations. Social media provides opportunities to connect to sources, discover and share information, deliver news and promote our work. These sites can provide powerful connections for journalists. But there are several things to remember:

- **When you use the sites for reporting or for sourcing:** Be transparent; make sure your intentions are clear. Identify yourself fully, including your name and the newspaper and Web site for which you work. If you are going to be writing about and reporting on what's being said, make that clear. Tell contacts what you are working on, why, and how you plan to use the information they supply. Explain that all information is on-the-record and for attribution. Verify information separately; interview sources independently of the social networks. If what you are doing is “work stuff,” you are “on the clock” and the hours should be approved by your supervisor.
- **When you use the sites for your personal use:** You are always a journalist; what you do on your social media site can and does reflect on you personally and professionally and on the company. Personal use of a social media may not require that you use your full name; but it is always a good idea to do. Social media for work requires the transparency of your full identity. Whether you use social media for work or personal, be wary. You are always a journalist and the ways you conduct yourself can affect your career. Get rid of “friends” who may damage your reputation personally or professionally.
- **Consider creating a “work” account and a “personal” account:** Mixing work “friends” and sources with personal and family “friends” is difficult and should be avoided. Do not “friend” sources that may need to be treated as confidential without the approval of the top editor. Many journalists find that creating separate work and personal accounts on social media sites helps keep work and home separated more successfully.
- **Personal or professional use:** You should never post or discuss articles that have not been published or information that has not been shared with the public, including discussions at meetings you have attended or interviews you have done. You should never disparagingly comment on colleagues or competitors. The internal processes of the newsroom and the editorial board are confidential, as are the business practices and decisions of the company.

### HOW TO IMPLEMENT THESE GUIDELINES:

We do not publish or re-post information from public or private social media without independent documentation. However, there may be times when the need to know trumps that principle.

These guidelines must be considered before we publish or re-post information from social media:

- The top editor in the newsroom will make the decision. The top editor will alert the publisher and/or corporate news, if necessary.
- We must document the source or poster. We must know that the site is what it purports to be. If necessary, as in the case of re-posting or publishing anonymously, the editor must know who the source is. For instance, when we get anonymous documents we establish their authenticity. We will apply a similar process to information from social media. Among, but not necessarily limited to these, we will consider:
  - Facts independently known about a person should match those contained in online profiles.
  - There should be evidence that the site has been in use for an extended period of time.
  - Postings and relationships noted on the sites should correspond to what's known about a story.
  - Through the networking site's email, we will contact the purported author. Other efforts to contact will be made via phone calls, face-to-face interviews and outreach through other email accounts.

- Without direct contact and confirmation, it is less likely we will use the information, unless there is a compelling reason to use the information. We must have exhausted all reasonable means of reporting and documenting the news and the identity of the poster before considering re-posting or publishing. We will consider whether there was no other source of the information, and whether there was intense local and/or national interest in the story.
- We will be mindful of the line between contextual reporting and tabloid fare. Because social media is often intensely private, we will permit only that information that is necessary to advance the story.
- We will exercise care with those who may not grasp the lack of privacy in social media. High school students, for example, may have less familiarity with the “what happens on the Web stays on the Web forever” aspects of social networking.

#### **ATTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT**

When reporting information from a social media site, the following should happen:

- The source must be clear. “A MySpace page registered to John Smith,” for example.
- We will tell the reader that information contained on the site matches what we learned through independent sources. When possible, we will note how long a person has been posting on the site.
- We will explain the ways we contacted the poster. For example, “Efforts to reach Smith through the social networking site were unsuccessful. Calls to a person listed by that name were not returned.”
- When quoting from the site, be careful in attribution.
  - Yes: “On a site registered to John Jones, a message was posted stating ...,” or “A person posting as John Jones said ...”
  - No: “John Jones said ...” or “John Jones’ site stated....” (Unless you’ve confirmed the person and they corroborate that they posted.)

#### **USE OF PHOTOS**

- We will not re-post or publish visual images or video posted on social media sites without securing permission to use the image, up to and including securing the copyright. This applies to all images, including, but not limited, to photographs, videos, podcasts, graphics and mug shots.

# Los Angeles Times

NOVEMBER 19, 2009

Colleagues,

As you know, the Standards and Practices Committee issued newsroom guidelines in March on using social media. We have now revised and organized them in a way we believe is easier to use (see below).

Although the document addresses a few new situations that have arisen in the last several months, the underlying principle is unchanged, one best expressed in the opening passage of our Ethics Guidelines: The Times is to be, above all else, a principled news organization. In deed and in appearance, journalists must keep themselves – and The Times – above reproach.

Your professional life and your personal life are intertwined in the online world, just as they are offline. Attempts, for instance, to distinguish your high school friends from your professional associates are fine, but in all spaces one should adhere to the principle that as an editorial employee you are responsible for maintaining The Times' credibility.

As in March, we note that the guidelines apply to all editorial employees, whether you work in print or on the Web, or you are a reporter, editor, photographer, blogger, producer, designer, artist – whatever your job. Even if you aren't using social media tools yet, you might want to someday, so please familiarize yourself with the standards.

This document is part of a series of guidelines crafted to help all of us navigate the continually changing world of covering the news. The methods and mediums may change, but our standards do not. These guidelines and those about moderating reader comments, using photos online, handling corrections and dealing with obscenity issues can always be found on The Times' library's intranet site.

There you also will find the complete Los Angeles Times Ethics Guidelines, the statement of principles and standards from which all others follow. – *Russ Stanton and Henry Fuhrmann, on behalf of the Standards and Practices Committee*

## Social media guidelines

Social media networks – Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and others – provide useful reporting and promotional tools for Los Angeles Times journalists. The Times' Ethics Guidelines will largely cover issues that arise when using social media, but this brief document should provide additional guidance on specific questions.

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

- Integrity is our most important commodity: Avoid writing or posting anything that would embarrass The Times or compromise your ability to do your job.
- Assume that your professional life and your personal life will merge online regardless of your care in separating them.
- Even if you use privacy tools (determining who can view your page or profile, for instance), assume that everything you write, exchange or receive on a social media site is public.
- Just as political bumper stickers and lawn signs are to be avoided in the offline world, so too are partisan expressions online.
- Be aware of perceptions. If you “friend” a source or join a group on one side of a debate, do so with the other side as well. Also understand that readers may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you're looking for story ideas or simply collecting information. Consider that you may be an observer of online content without actively participating.

## GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING

- Be aware of inadvertent disclosures or the perception of disclosures. For example, consider that “friending” a professional contact may publicly identify that person as one of your sources.
- You should identify yourself as a Times employee online if you would do so in a similar situation offline.
- Authentication is essential: Verify sourcing after collecting information online. When transmitting information online – as in re-Tweeting material from other sources – apply the same standards and level of caution you would in more formal publication.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Using social media sites means that you (and the content you exchange) are subject to their terms of service. This can have legal implications, including the possibility that your interactions could be subject to a third-party subpoena. The social media network has access to and control over everything you have disclosed to or on that site. For instance, any information might be turned over to law enforcement without your consent or even your knowledge.
- These passages from the “Outside affiliations and community work” section of the Ethics Guidelines may be helpful as you navigate social media sites. For the complete guidelines, please see The Times’ library’s intranet site or, if you are outside the company network, see the Readers’ Representative Journal.

Editorial employees may not use their positions at the paper to promote personal agendas or causes. Nor should they allow their outside activities to undermine the impartiality of Times coverage, in fact or appearance.

Staff members may not engage in political advocacy – as members of a campaign or an organization specifically concerned with political change. Nor may they contribute money to a partisan campaign or candidate. No staff member may run for or accept appointment to any public office. Staff members should avoid public expressions or demonstrations of their political views – bumper stickers, lawn signs and the like.

Although The Times does not seek to restrict staff members’ participation in civic life or journalistic organizations, they should be aware that outside affiliations and memberships may create real or apparent ethical conflicts. When those affiliations have even the slightest potential to damage the newspaper’s credibility, staff members should proceed with caution and take care to advise supervisors.

Some types of civic participation may be deemed inappropriate. An environmental writer, for instance, would be prohibited from affiliating with environmental organizations, a health writer from joining medical groups, a business editor from membership in certain trade or financial associations.

– *Standards and Practices Committee*

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/readers/2009/11/updated-social-media-guidelines.html>

# The New York Times

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY POLICY ON ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

## **B5. WEB PAGES AND WEB LOGS**

- 126.** Web pages and Web logs (the online personal journals known as blogs) present imaginative opportunities for personal expression and exciting new journalism. When created by our staff or published on our Web sites, they also require cautions, magnified by the Web's unlimited reach.
- 127.** Personal journals that appear on our official Web sites are subject to the newsroom's standards of fairness, taste and legal propriety. Nothing may be published under the name of our company or any of our units unless it has gone through an editing or moderating process.
- 128.** If a staff member publishes a personal Web page or blog on a site outside our company's control, the staff member has a duty to make sure that the content is purely that: personal. Staff members who write blogs should generally avoid topics they cover professionally; failure to do so would invite a confusion of roles. No personal Web activity should imply the participation or endorsement of the Times Company or any of its units. No one may post text, audio or video created for a Times Company unit without obtaining appropriate permission.
- 129.** Given the ease of Web searching, even a private journal by a staff member is likely to become associated in the audience's mind with the company's reputation. Thus blogs and Web pages created outside our facilities must nevertheless be temperate in tone, reflecting taste, decency and respect for the dignity and privacy of others. In such a forum, our staff members may chronicle their daily lives and may be irreverent, but should not defame or humiliate others. Their prose may be highly informal, even daring, but not shrill or intolerant. They may include photos or video but not offensive images. They may incorporate reflections on journalism, but they should not divulge private or confidential information obtained through their inside access to our newsroom or our Company.
- 130.** Bloggers may write lively commentary on their preferences in food, music, sports or other avocations, but as journalists they must avoid taking stands on divisive public issues. A staff member's Web page that was outspoken on the abortion issue would violate our policy in exactly the same way as participation in a march or rally on the subject. A blog that takes a political stand is as far out of bounds as a letter to the editor supporting or opposing a candidate. The definition of a divisive public issue will vary from one community to another; in case of doubt, staff members should consult local newsroom management.
- 131.** A staff member's private Web page or blog must be independently produced. It should be free of advertising or sponsorship support from individuals or organizations whose coverage the staff member is likely to provide, prepare or supervise during working hours. Care should be taken in linking to any subject matter that would be off limits on the Web page itself.

To see the entire ethics policy, go to: <http://www.nytco.com/company-properties-times-coe.html#B5>



## Guardian (U.K.)

BEST PRACTICE FOR JOURNALISTS BLOGGING AND/OR RESPONDING TO COMMENTS ON GUARDIAN.CO.UK

1. Participate in conversations about our content, and take responsibility for the conversations you start.
2. Focus on the constructive by recognising and rewarding intelligent contributions.
3. Don't reward disruptive behaviour with attention, but report it when you find it.
4. Link to sources for facts or statements you reference, and encourage others to do likewise.
5. Declare personal interest when applicable. Be transparent about your affiliations, perspectives or previous coverage of a particular topic or individual.
6. Be careful about blurring fact and opinion and consider carefully how your words could be (mis)interpreted or (mis)represented.
7. Encourage readers to contribute perspective, additional knowledge and expertise. Acknowledge their additions.
8. Exemplify our [community standards](#) in your contributions above and below the line.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/info/2010/oct/19/journalist-blogging-commenting-guidelines>

# Reuters

5 SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS FROM THE REUTERS HANDBOOK OF JOURNALISM

## THINK BEFORE YOU POST

One of the secrets to social media's success is how easy it has become to participate. But that also makes it easy to respond or repeat before you have thought through the consequences. Whether we think it is fair or not, other media will use your social media output as your news organization's comment on topical stories. And you will play into the hands of your critics unless you take care:

- Resist the temptation to respond in anger to those you regard as mistaken or ill-tempered
- Think about how you would feel if your content was cited on the front page of a leading newspaper or website or blog as your news organization's comment on an issue
- Don't suspend your critical faculties. It's simple to share a link on Twitter, Facebook and other networks but as a journalist if you repeat something that turns out to be a hoax, or suggests you support a particular line of argument, then you risk undermining your own credibility and that of your news organization.

## AVOID RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FREEDOM FROM BIAS

Your Facebook profile, Twitter stream or personal blog give clues to your political and other affiliations and you should take care about what you reveal. A determined critic can soon build up a picture of your preferences by analyzing your links, those that you follow, your "friends", blogroll and endless other indicators. We all leave an "online footprint" whenever we use the Web and you need to think about whether your footprint might create perceptions of a bias toward or against a particular group.

- Think about the groups that you join — it may be safest not to join a group or to follow participants on just one side of a debate
- Think about using "badges" expressing solidarity with some cause
- Think about whether it would be best to leave your political affiliation out of your Facebook profile
- Think about whether you link only or mainly to voices on one side of a debate
- Think about making use of the privacy settings on social networks and basic ways in which you can conceal your use of the Web like clearing your cache regularly

**BE TRANSPARENT.** We're in the transparency business and you are encouraged to be open about who you are.

- On your personal blog or social networking profile make it clear that you are a journalist and that any opinions you express are your own.
- When you post comments do so under your real name.

## **IF YOU USE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND PRIVATE ACTIVITY THEN USE SEPARATE ACCOUNTS**

Many people are using social networks like Facebook or Twitter both as part of your newsgathering and as part of your personal social networking. In the online world private and professional are increasingly intertwined but you are expected to maintain a professional face at all times in your work and this extends to your use of social media. Put simply, you're expected to apply standards to your professional use of social media that will probably differ to those you would use for your personal activity. For this reason it's recommended that you set up separate profiles for your professional and private activity. This is not to say that you should strip out all personal content from your professional streams, but that you should think carefully about what personal content would be appropriate.

- Use a separate professional account for your newsgathering and professional community-building activity.
- Social networking encourages you to share personal details but don't overload your professional network with personal content.

## **SEEK THE PERMISSION OF YOUR MANAGER BEFORE SETTING UP A PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE ON A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE**

- Effective use of social media requires a commitment of time and you should clear this with your manager before you get involved.
- Effective use of social media may also require you to share a lot of content and you need to be clear that this does not conflict with our commercial objectives. Again, your manager should be consulted on this.
- Be aware that you may reveal your sources to competitors by using "following" or "friending" functionality on social networks.

[http://handbook.reuters.com/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://handbook.reuters.com/index.php/Main_Page)

# The Washington Post

## NEWSROOM GUIDELINES FOR USE OF FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks are communications media, and a part of our everyday lives. They can be valuable tools in gathering and disseminating news and information. They also create some potential hazards we need to recognize. When using social networking tools for reporting or for our personal lives, we must remember that Washington Post journalists are always Washington Post journalists. The following guidelines apply to all Post journalists, without limitation to the subject matter of their assignments.

### **USING SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS FOR REPORTING**

When using social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, My Space or Twitter for reporting, we must protect our professional integrity. Washington Post journalists should identify themselves as such. We must be accurate in our reporting and transparent about our intentions when participating. We must be concise yet clear when describing who we are and what information we seek.

When using these networks, nothing we do must call into question the impartiality of our news judgment. We never abandon the guidelines that govern the separation of news from opinion, the importance of fact and objectivity, the appropriate use of language and tone, and other hallmarks of our brand of journalism.

Our online data trails reflect on our professional reputations and those of The Washington Post. Be sure that your pattern of use does not suggest, for example, that you are interested only in people with one particular view of a topic or issue.

### **USING SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS FOR PERSONAL REASONS**

All Washington Post journalists relinquish some of the personal privileges of private citizens. Post journalists must recognize that any content associated with them in an online social network is, for practical purposes, the equivalent of what appears beneath their bylines in the newspaper or on our website.

What you do on social networks should be presumed to be publicly available to anyone, even if you have created a private account. It is possible to use privacy controls online to limit access to sensitive information. But such controls are only a deterrent, not an absolute insulator. Reality is simple: If you don't want something to be found online, don't put it there.

Post journalists must refrain from writing, tweeting or posting anything — including photographs or video — that could be perceived as reflecting political, racial, sexist, religious or other bias or favoritism that could be used to tarnish our journalistic credibility. This same caution should be used when joining, following or friending any person or organization online. Post journalists should not be involved in any social networks related to advocacy or a special interest regarding topics they cover, unless specifically permitted by a supervising editor for reporting and so long as other standards of transparency are maintained while doing any such reporting.

Post journalists should not accept or place tokens, badges or virtual gifts from political or partisan causes on pages or sites, and should monitor information posted on your own personal profile sites by those with whom you are associated online for appropriateness.

Personal pages online are no place for the discussion of internal newsroom issues such as sourcing, reporting of stories, decisions to publish or not to publish, personnel matters and untoward personal or professional matters involving our colleagues. The same is true for opinions or information regarding any business activities of The Washington Post Company. Such pages and sites also should not be used to criticize competitors or those who take issue with our journalism or our journalists.

If you have questions about any of these matters, please check with your supervisor or a senior editor.

NOTE: THESE GUIDELINES APPLY TO INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS ON ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS, WHEN USED FOR REPORTING AND FOR PERSONAL USE. SEPARATE GUIDELINES WILL FOLLOW REGARDING OTHER ASPECTS OF POST JOURNALISM ONLINE.

[http://www.asne.org/article\\_view/articleid/783/the-washington-post-newsroom-guidelines-for-use-of-facebook-twitter-and-other-online-social-networks.aspx](http://www.asne.org/article_view/articleid/783/the-washington-post-newsroom-guidelines-for-use-of-facebook-twitter-and-other-online-social-networks.aspx)

## Charlotte Observer

EXCERPT ON SOCIAL MEDIA FROM THE LONGER ETHICS POLICY

**POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT.** Newsroom employees shall not display politically oriented materials, including bumper stickers on their automobiles or political yard signs on their property. They shall not make political declarations of any sort on their personal Web pages, or on their pages on social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace.

## The Journal Gazette (Fort Wayne, Ind.)

LAST REVISED JUNE 2008

**BLOGS AND OTHER PERSONAL WEB SITES.** A staff member assigned or interested in publishing a Web log on a topic related to the staff member's work assignment will do so through The Journal Gazette's Web site, where it would be subject to editing and oversight. Postings and comments on blogs and on the discussion board on that site are also subject to oversight, and employees posting or commenting shall do so using their own names. In the case of a Web log devoted to a hobby or other interest outside of the newsroom, staff members should advise a supervisor of the posting. The content of the Web log must not suggest any affiliation with The Journal Gazette.

The words used and even the topics selected can appear to betray a prejudice. Be careful with the topics you select and the words you use online.

Staff members are welcome to have personal pages on social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook, and may say on those pages how they are employed. But they should remember that those sites are public sites and can be seen by more than their circle of friends. They should not post on such pages information about JG stories or sources, nor should they comment on JG matters.

## The Manhattan (Kan.) Mercury

FROM EMPLOYEE GUIDELINES

**Outside Postings:** When employees interact with the public online, they must remember that they represent the company and must conduct themselves appropriately. The use of 'false identities' by employees online is not allowed on company websites and is only likely to exacerbate problems with inappropriate conduct online.

## News & Record (Greensboro, N.C.)

Editor John Robinson emails: We have a code of ethics and professionalism that covers our behavior, period. That said I've told my staff that my social media policy is this: Don't be stupid. It seems to work.

# Freedom Communications, Inc.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

EFFECTIVE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011

## **PURPOSE**

The Company recognizes that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, wikis, chat rooms and other similar forms of online journals, diaries or personal newsletters not affiliated with Freedom Communications, Inc. However, associates' use of social media can pose risks to the Company's confidential and proprietary information, reputation and brands and can jeopardize the Company's compliance with business rules and laws applicable to our industry.

To minimize these business and legal risks, to avoid loss of productivity and distraction from associates' job performance and to ensure that the Company's IT resources and communication systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, Freedom Communications, Inc. expects all its associates to adhere to the following rules and guidelines regarding use of social media.

## **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

Social media includes the following, but is not limited to, video, wiki postings, Facebook, Twitter, chat rooms, personal blogs or other similar forms of online journals, diaries or personal newsletters not affiliated with Freedom Communications, Inc. Unless specifically instructed, associates are not authorized, and therefore restricted, to speak on behalf of the Company. Associates may not publicly discuss clients, products, associates or any work-related matters, whether confidential or not, outside company-authorized communications. Associates are expected to protect the privacy of Freedom Communications, Inc., its associates, its clients, etc. and are prohibited from disclosing personal associate and non-associate information and any other proprietary and nonpublic information to which associates have access. Such information includes, but is not limited to, customer information, trade secrets, financial data, strategic business plans, etc.

## **AUTHORIZED SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Apart from personal use of social media in accordance with this policy, The Company encourages its associates to participate in these media as a means of generating interest in the Company's products and services and creating business opportunities by promoting and raising awareness of the Freedom Communications, Inc. brands, search for potential new markets, communicate with associates and customers, to brainstorm issues or respond to breaking news or publicity and discuss corporate, business-unit and department-specific activities and events.

When social networking, blogging or using other forms of web-based forums, the Company must ensure that use of these communications maintains its brand identity, integrity and reputation while minimizing actual or potential legal risks, whether used internally or externally.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH RELATED POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS**

All of the Company's other policies that might apply to the use of social media remain in full force and effect. Associates should always adhere to these policies when using social media. In particular, the following policies should be kept in mind:

- Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Code of Business Conduct
- Confidentiality and Proprietary Information
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

- Information Technology and Security Policy
- Prevention of Workplace Violence Policy
- Vehicle Safety Cell Phone and PDA Use Policy
- Workplace Safety Policy

Social media should never be used in a way that violates any other Freedom Communications, Inc. policies or employee obligations. If your post would violate any of the Company's policies in another forum, it will also violate them in an online forum. For example, associates are prohibited from using social media to:

- Violate Freedom Communications, Inc.'s IT resources and communication systems policies.
- Violate Freedom Communications, Inc.'s confidentiality and proprietary rights policies.
- Circumvent Freedom Communications, Inc.'s ethics and standards of conduct policies.
- Defame or disparage Freedom Communications, Inc. or its affiliates, customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders.
- Harass other associates in any way.
- Circumvent policies prohibiting unlawful discrimination against current associates or applicants for employment.
- Violate Freedom Communications, Inc.'s privacy policies (for example, never access private password protected sites of co-workers or other Freedom Communications, Inc. stakeholders without permission).
- Violate any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by creating an artificial "buzz" around our business, products or services).

Associates who violate Freedom Communications, Inc. policies will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

#### **PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

We recognize that associates might work long hours and occasionally may desire to use social media for personal activities at work or by means of the Company's computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. The Company authorizes such occasional use so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity. Circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations, or promotion of outside organizations unrelated to the Company's business are also prohibited.

#### **NO EXPECTATION OF PRIVACY**

All contents of Freedom Communications, Inc.'s IT resources and communications systems are the property of the Company. Therefore, associates should have no expectation of privacy whatsoever in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post, conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on the Company's electronic information and communications systems. You are expressly advised that in order to prevent misuse, Freedom Communications, Inc. reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, every associate's activities using the Company's IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, and you consent to such monitoring by your acknowledgement of this policy and your use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.



The Company also may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created, and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

Do not use the Company IT resources and communications systems for any matter that you desire to be kept private or confidential from the Company.

The Company reserves the right to use content management tools to monitor, review or block content on social network sites that violate company policies and procedures.

## **VIOLATIONS**

### **Reporting Violations**

The Company requests and strongly encourages associates to report any violations or perceived violations of this policy to supervisors, managers or Human Resources. Violations include discussions of the Company, its associates and clients, any discussion of proprietary information and any unlawful activity related to blogging, social networking, etc. as outlined in this policy.

### **Discipline for Violations**

The Company investigates and responds to all reports of violations related to social networking and other related policies. Violation of the Company's social media policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Discipline will be determined based on the nature and factors of any blog, social networking, etc.

Freedom Communications, Inc. reserves the right to take legal action where necessary against associates who engage in prohibited or unlawful conduct.

Associates are required to sign a written acknowledgement that they have received, read, and understood and agreed to comply with the Company's social media policy and any other related policy.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ASSOCIATES' RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The above material covers specific rules, policies and contractual obligations that associates must follow in using social media, whether for personal or business purposes, in consideration of their employment and subject to discipline for violations. The following sections of the policy provide associates with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely, in the best interests of Freedom Communications, Inc. These guidelines reflect the "duty of loyalty" every associate owes its employer, and are intended to add to, not contradict, limit or replace, the applicable mandatory rules, policies and contractual obligations above.

## **PROTECT THE COMPANY'S GOODWILL, BRANDS AND BUSINESS REPUTATION**

Freedom Communications, Inc.'s Associate Handbook/Confidentiality and Proprietary Rights policy prohibits you from posting disparaging or defamatory statements about the company or its business interests, but you should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the company's goodwill and business reputation, even indirectly.

Make it clear in your social media postings that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use your personal email address when communicating via social media. You are personally responsible for what you communicate in social media. Remember that what you publish might be available to be read by the masses (including the Company itself, future employers, and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind before you post content.

If you disclose your affiliation as an associate of Freedom Communications, Inc., it is recommended that you also include a disclaimer that your views do not represent those of your employer. For example, consider such language as “the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer.”

If you communicate about your work or Freedom Communications, Inc. in general, you should disclose your connection to and role at Freedom Communications, Inc., but be sure to reiterate that your views do not necessarily represent those of Freedom Communications, Inc. Use good judgment about what you post and remember that anything you say can reflect on Freedom Communications, Inc., even if you do include a disclaimer. Always strive to be accurate in your communications about Freedom Communications, Inc. and remember that your statements have the potential to result in liability for yourself or Freedom Communications, Inc. Be respectful to Freedom Communications, Inc. and be professional and honest in your communications.

If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with your supervisor or Human Resources.

If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on Freedom Communications, Inc. or its stakeholders, you should contact your supervisor or Human Resources. Protecting Freedom Communications, Inc.’s goodwill, brands and reputation is every associate’s job.

#### **RESPECT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

Freedom Communications, Inc.’s Confidentiality and Proprietary Rights Agreement/Associate Handbook restricts associate’s use and disclosure of the company’s confidential information and intellectual property. Beyond these mandatory restrictions, you should treat the company’s valuable trade secrets and other confidential information and intellectual property accordingly and not do anything to jeopardize them through your use of social media. In addition, you should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals, which can create liability for yourself and for Freedom Communications, Inc.

Do not use the Company’s logos, brand names, taglines, slogans or other trademarks, or post any confidential or proprietary information of the Company, without prior written permission from the Freedom Communications, Inc. legal department.

To protect yourself and the Company against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, reference sources of particular information you post or upload and cite them accurately. If you have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate the copyright or trademark of any person or company (outside of “fair use” exceptions), ask the Freedom Communications, Inc. legal department before making the communication.

#### **RESPECT YOUR COWORKERS AND OTHER FREEDOM COMMUNICATIONS, INC. STAKEHOLDERS**

Do not post anything that your co-workers or Freedom Communications, Inc.’s customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other Freedom Communications, Inc.’s stakeholders would find offensive, including ethnic slurs, sexist comments, discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

Do not post anything related to your co-workers or Freedom Communications, Inc.’s customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other Freedom Communications, Inc. stakeholders without their written permission.

Obtained by Jim Romenesko

<http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/romenesko/119459/freedom-communications-releases-social-media-policy-to-staff/>