TORONTO

Guidelines for Social Media Use by Employees

Using Social Media for City Business Purposes

The City supports the appropriate use of social media for business purposes. Social media can help City staff to collaborate, share information, and support dynamic discussions with the public. It can provide opportunities to enhance outreach and inclusion, engaging individuals, communities and groups that may not otherwise participate in City initiatives.

When using social media for City business purposes, employees should conduct themselves as they would in any other work situation such as a meeting, conference or public event. The City has developed the following guidelines to help City staff to use social media appropriately and effectively in their work.

1. Keep Work and Personal Uses Separate

Social media can be used for a variety of purposes, and some employees use it in both their work and personal lives. While conducting City business, employees should only use social media accounts set up specifically for work purposes. The section below on Personal Use of Social Media outlines how City policies apply to personal use.

2. Know That You Are On the Record

Communication in social media sites or accounts should always be considered public and permanent. Online communities are not private; your posts may be accessed by a wider audience than intended or copied by others and published elsewhere without your permission or knowledge.

If you would not say or write something down in a public setting, then don't post it online. City employees must not post confidential or sensitive information acquired through their work, and should take care not to put themselves into a conflict of interest in online discussions of City issues – even if you are speaking from your personal perspective, people may assume you are speaking on behalf of the City.

3. Be Clear and Purposeful in Your Communication

When representing the City of Toronto, employees should only comment and post about their own program area. If you don't know the answer to a question, refer it to someone who does. Avoid talking about a program area you do not work for, even if you are familiar with that area. Only respond to news media inquiries if you are authorized to do so.

Although social media makes it possible to respond instantly to a question or complaint, it's a good idea to take a few minutes to formulate your comments, and to have another person read your response to reduce the chance that it will be misinterpreted.

Do not create posts or comments that are unrelated to the social media site's purpose, and never post commercial content, spam, or confusing, or misleading or out-of-date information or web links. Do not post links to news items and media stories, unless there is a specific sponsorship or partnership agreement in place with a media outlet.

The City monitors content posted on social media sites and may take steps to modify or remove any posts that contravene City policies or guidelines or relevant Provincial and Federal legislation.

4. Be Transparent and Accountable

When using social media for business purposes, employees should disclose their true identity and affiliation with the City of Toronto. City-managed social media sites or accounts are official City websites or accounts and should be easily identifiable as such through logos and text.

The public expects City employees to be accountable for their communications. Be courteous and stick to facts. If you make a mistake, be honest and upfront about it, and try to correct it as quickly as you can in order to restore trust with your audience.

4. Be Respectful of Others

Privacy, libel and human rights laws and policies apply to social media sites and accounts as they do to other forms of communication. Do not post obscene or racist content; personal attacks, insults or threatening language; or potentially libellous statements.

Respect copyright laws: do not post documents, logos, photographs, graphics or other material owned by others without written permission, unless such postings fall under an exception to copyright protection.

If you are moderating a social media site, you should remove or not approve posts that violate these rules.

For external (i.e. non-City) social media platforms, City employees must also comply with the terms and conditions of use that have been established by the service provider.

5. Collaborate and Engage with other City Social Media Sites

Existing City-managed social media sites or accounts provide an established window for communication with the public. Employees should encourage, support and participate in City-managed sites or accounts and coordinate their activities with the site's sponsor. A list of City social media sites is available here.

Personal Use of Social Media

In addition to using social media for business purposes, City employees, in their private capacity as a citizen, may want to use social media to share information and communicate with friends, family and co-workers.

Even though they are using social media for personal purposes, some City policies apply to the use of social media by employees when they are off-duty. These policies are summarized below. A complete list is available at http://insideto.toronto.ca/policies/social_media_use.htm#appendixa.

Employees who identify themselves as City employees or who are identified as City employees in their personal social media use should consider the following:

- Even if you don't explicitly identify yourself as a City employee, others may identify you as a City employee by your name, your place of work, a photograph, or by the content you post.
- Identifiable City of Toronto employees should make it clear that their position does not officially represent the City's position. Use phrases such as "in my personal opinion" or "Personally…" to communicate that you are expressing your personal views.

- Do not use visual cues that suggest you represent the City: do not post City-owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the City's authorization, as described under the City's Corporate Identity Program.
- Do not place yourself in a conflict of interest, including revealing confidential or privileged City information, as described in the City's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Do not reveal anyone's personal information gained through work, such as client or employee information, as described under the City's Privacy Guidelines and Workplace Access and Privacy Protocol.
- Do not identify or comment about other City employees without their consent.
- In their personal use, self-identified or identifiable City employees must abide by the Fraud Policy, Human Rights and Anti-Harassment Policy, Hate Activity Policy and other applicable City policies that govern employee behaviour.