

Social Media Tips for Best Practices

By Charles R. Smith



Social media is a great way for individuals, businesses, and non-profit organizations to increase their online presence within the community. However, depending on how you plan to use social media, there are certain do's and don'ts to keep in mind that go beyond simply following the website's terms of service or creating your own policies and terms of use.

planned postings, prepare postings in advance for recurrent holidays or events, and investing in a social media manager to oversee and prepare content. As with any other user, non-profit organizations should also consider privacy concerns and avoid posting non-public information, as well as obtaining permission before posting photos of individuals. Non-profits may also consider requiring approval before anyone posts to the account to limit the chances of inappropriate content.

Usage of strong and unique passwords is highly recommended, with a change of passwords on a regular interval. Never share passwords outside your immediate "circle of trust," and never allow access to unknown or unauthorized persons. Businesses and non-profits should consider sharing social media management responsibilities among a small collaborative group, and assign responsibility to ensure daily review for content additions and inappropriate comments. Most social media sites permit "hiding" inappropriate comments and banning persons who seriously violate your terms of use.

Visit the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team's website (<https://www.us-cert.gov>), part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, for even more tips on using social media. You can also visit the Better Business Bureau's website and search "Social Media" for information on making the most out of your individual, business, or non-profit social media platforms.

Individuals utilize social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram for a number of reasons, including staying in touch with friends and family, keeping up-to-date with news and current events, sharing photos and videos, and general networking with others. Regardless of your reason, there are certain things to consider when using social media. For example, you may consider restricting access to your information by adjusting your privacy settings and limiting viewers to pre-approved friends. You may also consider requiring approval before allowing someone to post on your account, as this will give you more control over what is being shared to your page, and avoid the release of non-public or sensitive information with the world. It is also important to avoid giving out your exact location, or details such as being away from home or out of town, as this could present safety and security concerns.

More businesses are taking advantage of social media than ever before, as it is a great way to increase brand recognition, boost web traffic and gain potential customers, decrease marketing costs, promote upcoming events, and provide a richer customer experience. Just as individual users, businesses should consider several do's and don'ts when managing their social media accounts. Businesses may consider the creation of a content plan to manage regular postings. For recurrent holiday or events, businesses may consider advance preparation of postings in order to maximize the reach of their audience. Certain social media platforms even allow for timed release of postings for easier planning. Businesses may also consider using a social media manager to provide their social media platforms with strategic and operational oversight. There are several social management companies available which provide a number of features, including scheduling and managing posts, tracking analytics across multiple platforms, generating leads with social contests, and removal of posts that contain offensive, violent, or discriminatory content. As with individual users, businesses should also consider privacy concerns and avoid posting non-public information, and obtaining permission before posting photos containing individuals. Businesses may also consider requiring approval on all posts to the account, as well as using strong profanity filters.

Similar to businesses, several non-profit organizations have jumped on the social media bandwagon as a means of expanding membership, gaining and recognizing volunteers, engaging with existing and potential donors, building stronger community ties, and raising awareness on their goals and educational resources. A good way for non-profit organizations to set themselves apart from other companies is to clearly state their mission and tax-exempt status. Like businesses, non-profit organizations should consider creating a content plan to manage regular and pre-