

Social media is used for connecting with students, alumni, faculty, staff, colleagues, and other audiences. Effective use of social media is used within the Division of Student Services in promoting organizations and events while encouraging engagement. Utah State University (USU) supports faculty, staff, and student participation in online communities.

One of the advantages of using social media forums is to create dialogue among users. Before setting up a social network, think carefully about the kinds of dialogue you want to encourage. The 12 guidelines listed below will help you use social networking tools effectively, while protecting your personal and professional reputation, as well as the image of the University.

Guidelines and Best Practices for Managing Social Networking Sites

- 1. Be honest and respectful.** Be honest about your identity, thoughtful about your posts, and understand the implications of your behavior online. You are more likely to achieve your goals or influence others if you are constructive and respectful while discussing ideas or disagreeing with a concept or person.
- 2. Think before you post.** Not all social media mistakes have legal consequences. Poorly drafted comments can create ethical dilemmas and embarrass the employee or University. Social media postings are permanent and can go viral in a matter of hours. Always proofread your posts for grammar and punctuation.
- 3. Identify yourself and your role.** Posting anonymously on social networking sites is not recommended. If you are posting on behalf of the University, clearly identify yourself and your role. If you are promoting a personal opinion, state it is as such.
- 4. Be accurate and aware of copyright issues.** Make sure you have all the facts before you post. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly.
- 5. Maintain personal social media on your own time.** It's appropriate to post at work if you are managing a social media site for a University group or seeking information directly related to your job/function. Your time should be used for University-related business.
- 6. Remain impartial and tolerant.** Be mindful of the things you post, reflecting a tolerance for diverse viewpoints. Lay aside any personal agendas or biases. Also, use appropriate pronouns in your posts. For example: saying, "We think that..." is preferred over "I think that..."
- 7. Keep your site active.** A vibrant, engaged social networking site enhances the image of USU. A stagnant page can do the opposite. Post new content at least once or twice a week. If your group decides not to maintain the site, take it down. Plan a posting schedule that works well for you. Post press releases, photos, videos, and other links—not all content has to be original.
- 8. Monitor interaction.** Ask questions or introduce topics to engage and encourage dialogue. Let the staff in Marketing and Communications help ensure you are linked to key social media sites.

9. **Link back.** To build a community, link your sites to the USU's main social media sites – Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Let the staff in Marketing and Communications know about your site and asked to be linked back to main USU social media sites.
10. **Use university logos and word marks appropriately.** The use of these marks identifies your site as part of Utah State University and helps strengthen the University brand. Follow the graphics standards guide provided by Marketing and Communications. Do not use the USU logo to promote a political candidate/cause, product, or service.
11. **Maintain confidentiality.** Be careful about providing personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Additionally, do not post confidential or proprietary information about Utah State University, students, alumni, and staff. Use good ethical judgment and follow University policies and federal requirements, including FERPA.
12. **Seek Advice and Support.** [Amanda DeRito](#), Social Media Coordinator in [Marketing and Communications](#), is a key resource in helping you build your social media presence.

Adapted with permission from Weber State University Division of Student Affairs and University Communications, August 2012.

Resources and References

Utah State University: [Marketing and Communications](#)

DePaul University: http://brandresources.depaul.edu/vendor_guidelines/g_socialmedia.aspx

Mountain Pacific Association of Colleges and Employers:
<http://mpace.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=298>

National Association of Colleges & Employers: <http://www.nacweb.org/j042012/social-media-career-center/?print=yes>