

Social media & legal tips - an employee's guide

Social media are the communications and marketing tools of the moment. A large number of people have some form of social media involvement, whether that is through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or one of the many other platforms.

Blogs and social media offer exciting and innovative ways for companies to thrive and can help promote the business.

Below are some helpful guidelines if your job requires you to represent your company by using social media:

Add value

Consider the value of your contribution before you post. If what you are doing helps others to solve a problem, eg customers, then you are adding value. If your contribution enhances or improves the image of the company, products or services, it is worthwhile.

Make sure that your online postings and communications reflect your level of expertise and that you limit comments to your area of knowledge. Before posting content, take the time to review the context and what others have said, to be sure you are adding value with your contribution.

Avoid arguments

Engaging in arguments and inflammatory debates can tarnish the credibility and reputation of the company. If you choose to disagree with fellow bloggers, do so respectfully and objectively. Be courteous to others in the online community, even your competitors.

Comply with company policies

Be alert to the fact that if any post would contravene any company policy in another forum, it will also do so in an online forum. Do not disclose confidential information, discriminate against or harrass others.

Protect customers and contacts

You should not cite or refer to any customers or contacts without getting their explicit permission in advance. It is never advisable to conduct or discuss business with a customer or contact in an online forum.

Contact

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Comply with the terms of the sites you visit

It is important to review the terms of use of all social media sites you visit and ensure your use complies with them. Particular attention should be paid to prohibitions or restrictions on the use of the site and the ownership of intellectual property. For example, Facebook's statement of rights and responsibilities (its terms of use) prohibits businesses from promoting themselves through Facebook without Facebook's prior written consent.

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