

# SOCIAL MEDIA & GOVERNANCE

**Does social media have anything to do with nonprofit governance? Yes!** Has your board discussed how social media impacts its roles and responsibilities and your organization? Probably not! While social media is far from being a new conversation topic, not all nonprofit boards have seen the connection between governance and social media. In reality, there are ways that your board can — and in some cases, should — engage with social media.

## 1. BE A SOCIAL MEDIA CHAMPION.

One of a board's responsibilities is to make sure the organization is leveraging its networks to advance its mission. Social media is an important tool in accessing these networks. Is your organization budgeting for training and implementation? It's the board's responsibility to ask that question. Ideally, every organization either shares social media responsibilities across the organization or hires a staff person with social media expertise to plan, implement, and evaluate effectiveness. Advocating for resources is a great way to be a social media champion.

## 2. DEVELOP POLICIES THAT GUIDE AND PROTECT YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Given the interactivity of social media, every nonprofit that uses social media should have policies that pertain to it. Why? Because they provide a type of “insurance” — internally and externally. They provide guidelines and boundaries for social media use and set professional standards and best practices for staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders, such as those who engage in social media interactions with your organization. While violations are rare, your organization will be happy it has a policy to fall back on if and when boundaries are crossed. Staff generally drafts and implements social media policies but the board should ensure that they exist, cover the critical elements, and are shared at board and staff orientations and included in employee handbooks and board materials. Policies that pertain to external users of your social media should be publicly shared on your organization's website and referred to on your social media platforms.

## 3. USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BE AN ORGANIZATIONAL AMBASSADOR.

Once your organization has an internal social media policy in place, board members should think about the ways that they can use their personal social media to share the story of the organization with their personal and professional networks. Become a fan of your organization's Facebook page. Follow your organization's Twitter page. Facebook shares and Twitter retweets may seem like insignificant contributions, but they can be fun and easy ways to help your organization tell its story and can possibly help people in your network find a volunteer or donation opportunity. And should you be new to or hesitant about fundraising, you may find that talking about your organization on social media makes fundraising conversations easier.

*This resource was adapted from an article written for BoardSource by Emily Davis, BoardSource senior governance consultant and president of Emily Davis and Associates Consulting.*

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## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES

The sample policies mainly guide employees in appropriate social media interactions.

### **SAMPLE 1** This policy provides straightforward guidelines for responsible social networking.

1. Be honest about your identity.
1. Make it clear that the views expressed are yours alone.
2. You speak for yourself, but your actions reflect back to XYZ.
3. Use your common sense.
4. Play nice.
5. Remember that all communication remains in the cyberspace.
6. Respect the privacy of offline conversations.
7. Don't write anything you can't say in public.

*Adapted with permission from The Ford Motor Company.*

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### **SAMPLE 2** These guidelines are for employees who communicate about work outside of the official organizational media.

As XYZ employees, you are encouraged to interact and be a part of social media communities where XYZ is present. As you are participating in these social networks, you represent XYZ.

- Blogs, wikis, and other forms of online discussions are individual interactions, not company communications. Use common sense and be mindful that what you write will be public for a long time.
  - Identify yourself—name and, when relevant, your role at XYZ—when you post something about our organization. Clarify that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of XYZ.
  - If you blog outside of XYZ, and it relates to your work, use a disclaimer such as this: “The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent XYZ's positions, strategies, or opinions.”
  - Respect copyright, fair use, and financial disclosure laws.
  - Don't cite or reference clients, partners, volunteers, or vendors without their approval.
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### **SAMPLE 3** This template will help you draft a comprehensive policy. It specifies which circumstances may require a response or action from the organization.

XYZ understands that many employees participate in social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest) and chat rooms, and create and maintain personal websites and blogs.

XYZ respects employees' online social networking and personal Internet use. However, your online presence can affect XYZ as your words, images, posts, and comments can reflect or be attributed to XYZ. As a team member, you should be mindful to use electronic media, even on your own personal time, responsibly and respectfully to others.

Because employees' online comments and postings can impact XYZ and/or the way employees are spending their time at work, XYZ has adopted the following guidelines that employees must observe when participating in social networking sites and/or engaging in other forms of Internet use on and off duty. It shall be considered a

breach of acceptable team member conduct to post on any public or private website or other forum, including but not limited to discussion lists, newsgroups, listservs, blogs, information sharing sites, social media sites, social or business networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., or any other electronic or print communication format, any of the following:

1. Anything that may harm the goodwill or reputation of XYZ or any disparaging information about XYZ.
2. Any disparaging, discriminatory or harassing information concerning any customer, employee, vendor, or other person associated with XYZ. XYZ's policies prohibiting harassment apply online as well as offline.
3. Any confidential information, trade secrets, or intellectual property of XYZ obtained during your employment, including information relating to finances, research, development, marketing, customers, operational methods, plans and policies.
4. Any private information relating a customer, employee or vendor of XYZ.

In compliance with applicable regulations of the Federal Trade Commission, employees endorsing XYZ's products or services must disclose their employment relationship with XYZ and must ensure that endorsements do not contain representations that are deceptive or cannot be substantiated. If you are speaking about job-related content or about XYZ, you must either clearly identify yourself as a XYZ employee, or speak in the first person and use a disclaimer to make it clear that the views expressed belong solely to you. In addition, the following statement must be used, "The opinions expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of XYZ."

This policy applies regardless of where or when employees post or communicate information online. It applies to posting and online activity at work, home, or other location and while on duty and off duty. XYZ reserves the right to monitor and access any information or data that is created or stored using XYZ's technology, equipment, or electronic systems, including without limitation, e-mails, internet usage, hard drives and other stored, transmitted or received information. Employees should have no expectation of privacy in any information or data (i) placed on any XYZ computer or computer-related system or (ii) viewed, created, sent, received or stored on any XYZ computer or computer-related system, including, without limitation, electronic communications or internet usage.

Employees who violate XYZ's social networking policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.