



State of Utah Social Media Guidelines

September 29, 2009

Introduction

Social media is content created by people using highly accessible Internet based publishing technologies. Social media software tools allow groups to generate content and engage in peer-to-peer conversations and exchange of content (examples are Blogger, Twitter, Wikispaces, YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, etc.)

The decision to utilize social media technology is a business decision, not a technology-based decision. It must be made at the appropriate level for each department or agency, considering its mission, objectives, capabilities, and potential benefits. The goal of the Department of Technology Services (DTS) is not to say “No” to social media websites and block them, but to say “Yes”, with effective and appropriate information assurance, security, and privacy controls. The decision to authorize use of social media websites is a business decision.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for use of social media at the State of Utah. Agencies may utilize these guidelines as a component of agency policy development for sanctioned participation using Social Media services, or simply as employee guidelines. If you are a State employee or contractor creating or contributing to blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media both on and off the utah.gov domain, these guidelines are applicable. The State expects all who participate in social media on behalf of the State, to understand and to follow these guidelines. These guidelines will evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge.

Engagement

Emerging platforms for online collaboration are changing the way we work, and offer new ways to engage with customers, colleagues, and the world at large. It is a new model for interaction and social computing that can help employees to build stronger, more successful citizen and agency business relationships. It is a way for State employees to take part in national and global conversations related to the work we are doing at the State.

If you participate in social media, follow these guiding principles:

- Ensure that your agency sanctions official participation and representation on social media sites.

- Stick to your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on what is going on at the State, and in other larger contexts.
- Post meaningful, respectful comments, no spam, and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive.
- Pause and think before posting. Reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
- Respect proprietary information, content, and confidentiality.
- When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.
- Ensure that your participation is consistent with the provisions of [Utah Administrative Rule R477-9. Employee Conduct](#).
- Participation must comply with the posted [Privacy Policy](#) of the State.
- Know and follow the State's [Acceptable Use Policy](#), [Information Protection 5000-1700](#), and [Confidential Information 5000-1701](#) policies.
- Use social media collaboration tools explicitly authorized in the State's Internet based [Collaboration Tool Standard 4300-0012](#).
- Follow applicable agency social media policies.

Rules of Engagement

- **Transparency.** Your honesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If you are blogging about your work at the State, use your real name, identify that you work for the State of Utah, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out.
- **Judicious.** Make sure your efforts to be transparent do not violate the State's privacy, confidentiality, and any applicable legal guidelines for external communication. Get permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to the State. All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. Never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties the State may be in litigation with without the appropriate approval. If you want to write about other government entities, make sure you know what you are talking about and that you have any needed permissions. Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and any sensitive or restricted confidential and sensitive information. What is published is widely accessible, not easily retractable, and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.
- **Knowledgeable.** Make sure you write and post about your areas of expertise, especially as related to the State and your assignments. If you are writing about a topic that the State is involved with but you are not the State expert on the topic, you should make this clear to your readers. Write in the first person. If you publish to a Website outside the State, please use a disclaimer something like this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the State of Utah's positions,

strategies, or opinions." Respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, disclosure of processes and methodologies, confidentiality, and financial disclosure laws. If you have any questions about these, see your agency legal representative. Remember, you are personally responsible for your content.

- **Perception.** In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. By identifying yourself as a State employee, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the State by legislative stakeholders, customers, business partners, and the general public, and perceptions about you by your colleagues and managers. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the State's values and professional standards.
- **Conversational.** Talk to your readers like you would talk to people in professional situations. Avoid overly "composed" language. Bring in your own personality and say what is on your mind. Consider content that is open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments. Broaden the conversation by citing others who are commenting about the same topic and allowing your content to be shared or syndicated.
- **Excitement.** The State of Utah is making important contributions to the State and nation, to the future of government, and to public dialogue on a broad range of issues. Our activities are focused on providing services and on government innovation that benefits citizens and stakeholders. Share with the participants the things we are learning and doing, and open up social media channels to learn from others.
- **Value.** There is a lot of written content in the social media environment. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will value. Social communication from the State should help citizens, partners, and co-workers. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, build their businesses, do their jobs, solve problems, or understand the State better, then it is adding value.
- **Leadership.** There can be a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. Do not denigrate others or the State. It is not necessary to respond to every criticism or barb. Frame what you write to invite differing points of view without inflaming others. Some topics, like politics, slide easily into sensitive territory. Be careful and considerate. Once the words are out there, you cannot get them back. Once an inflammatory discussion gets going, it is hard to stop.
- **Responsibility.** What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of the State is not a right but an

- **Pause.** If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, do not post the statement. Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what is bothering you, then fix it. If you are still unsure, you might want to discuss it with your manager or agency legal representative. Ultimately, what you publish is yours, as is the responsibility, and any possible repercussions.
- **Mistakes.** If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you are posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post. Make it clear that you have done so.

Moderating Comments

In some social media formats such as Facebook, Blogs, Twitter responses, etc., you may encounter comments which cause you concern as a moderator or responsible party. If user content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then the content should be allowed to remain, regardless of whether it is favorable or unfavorable to the State. If the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, then the content should be rejected and removed.