

7.13 Social Media

The purpose of policy 7.13 Social Media is to assist departments who participate in Internet-based social media outlets to be effective and conscious while using the resources of social media entities. Social media include tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Tumblr or Google+. These are promotional mixes of advertising, marketing and public relations meant to create and establish online relationships and conversation; encourage a blended mix of culture, community, sharing and connecting while making agency and business relationships with external audiences more transparent.

The decision to utilize social media technology is a business decision, and not a technology-based decision which must be made at the appropriate level for each department, while considering the mission, objectives, capabilities, and potential benefits for the department. BIT acts as a liaison or resource guide assisting departments who are utilizing social media to gain positive results from the technology and stays abreast on trends and evolving media strategies.

State employee or contractors creating or contributing to blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds or any other kind of social media, whether the media is hosted on the technology infrastructure of the State or on the Internet, must follow policy 7.13 Social Media. All individuals utilizing social media on behalf of their agency must review, understand, and follow policy 7.13 Social Media.

When soliciting constituent comments to include discussions, State agencies must:

- For discussions on State managed web sites such as locations on the technology infrastructure of the State:
 - Agency reviews content on regular basis;
 - Agency or BIT removes inappropriate material as soon as possible.
- For discussions on independently managed web sites where agency initiates discussion thread:
 - Agency ensures 'content challenge' allowed by site administrator;
 - Agency reviews content on a regular basis;
 - Agency gets site owner to remove inappropriate material as soon as possible.
- When posting content to the Internet, State agencies must:
 - Agency management approves content;

7.13.1 Guidelines

Policy 7.13.1 Guidelines will evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge.

7.13.1.1 Engagement

Emerging platforms for online collaboration are changing the way individuals work, and offer new ways to engage with customers, colleagues, and the public.

Social computing can help employees build stronger and more successful citizen, agency, and business relationships. State employees can take part in national and global conversations that relate to the work of the State.

Guiding principles for an employee participating in social media:

- Ensure that the department of the employee sanctions official participation and representation on social media sites;
- Stick to the area of expertise of the individual, and provide unique, personal perspectives on what is going on at the State, and in other larger contexts;
- Be professional:
 - Post meaningful and respectful comments;
 - Posting spam or providing remarks that are off-topic or offensive is prohibited;
- Before posting:
 - Pause;
 - Think;
 - When a response is appropriate, reply to comments in a timely manner;
- Respect proprietary information, content, and confidentiality.
- When disagreeing with opinions of others, keep the post:
 - Appropriate;
 - Polite;
 - Professional;
- Follow policy 7.13 Social Media.

7.13.1.2 Transparency

Creating a culture in state government centered around serving the citizens, the voters and the taxpayers is a primary goal for the current administration. This administration is creating a better state government for the people of South Dakota by continuing to cut red tape and by keeping government information open, accessible and online.

Honesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. The information must be upfront, focused and accessible to the public.

7.13.1.3 Judicious

Efforts to be transparent must not violate the privacy, confidentiality or any applicable legal guidelines for external communication of the State. Prior to publishing conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal to the State, obtain permission in writing from the involved parties. All statements must be true, and not misleading, and all claims must be substantiated and approved. **Content must be carefully considered as items published through social media tools are widely accessible, difficult to retract, and will be available for a long time.**

An individual should never comment on anything related to legal matters such as litigation or any parties the State may be in litigation with, without the appropriate approval. If an employee wants to write about other government entities, the individual should make sure to obtain the facts about the situation, and to obtain any needed permissions for the discussion. The privacy of the individual to include individual protection, sensitive information, and confidential information must be taken into consideration in any discussion or comments.

7.13.1.4 Knowledgeable

An individual must post content on areas of State expertise, and should not post information that is not related to individual duties for the State. If a topic arises about the State outside the expertise of an individual, the readers need to be clear on which employees are best suited to address the specific topic for the State.

When utilizing social media tools, an individual should write in first person. If an employee publishes to a resource outside the technology infrastructure of the State, a disclaimer should be used such as the postings on this social media tool are personal opinions, and do not necessarily represent the positions, strategies or opinions of the State of South Dakota.

When posting to social media tools, an individual should respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, disclosure of processes and methodologies, confidentiality, and financial disclosure laws. The individual is responsible for the content, and can seek feedback from a legal representative of the State before posting any content.

7.13.1.5 Perception

While utilizing social media tools, differentiating amongst public, private, personal and professional opinions is difficult. When an individual is identified as an employee of the State, the person creates perceptions about expertise towards the State regarding legislative stakeholders, customers, business partners, the general public, colleagues, and managers. All content associated with an individual must be consistent with areas of responsibility for the State, and adhere to the values and standards of the State.

7.13.1.6 Conversational

An individual should communicate to readers in a professional manor while avoiding overly composed language. An individual should broaden the conversation by commenting about other entities that are discussing the same topic allowing for the content to be shared or syndicated.

When using social media, employees should share with the participants the items being learned by the State, and executed by the State to open up social media channels allowing the State to learn from other people and entities.

7.13.1.7 Value

As the social media environment contains an abundance of written content, an individual should contribute content that is of value for people to read. Social communication from the State should help citizens, partners, and other employees by provoking thoughts and building a sense of community for everyone. Value is added by helping people with job duties, improving knowledge, building a business, solving problems or providing a better understanding of the State.

7.13.1.8 Leadership

A fine line exists between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. Employees should not denigrate others or the State when using social media tools, and should not respond to every criticism or insult. Differing points of views should be accepted without agitating people as inflammatory discussions can become uncontrollable. Some topics such as politics are sensitive in nature which creates the need for an individual to be careful and considerate when utilizing social media tools.

7.13.1.9 Responsibility

Employees are responsible for content, and participation in social computing on behalf of the State is an opportunity; individuals are not entitled to utilize social media tools.

If an employee is hesitant on whether content is appropriate for social media tools, the person should review the content before sharing the information. The individual is responsible for the content, and can seek feedback from a legal representative of the State before posting any content.

7.13.1.10 Mistakes

An individual must be upfront, and quick with correcting mistakes when utilizing social media tools. If a person makes a mistake, the employee must try to modify what has been provided, and clearly admit the error.

7.13.1.11 Moderating Comments

In social media software tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr, users may encounter comments that create concerns, and may need to be reviewed, responsibly, for the appropriate moderation. If user content is positive or negative in context to the conversation, then the information should be allowed to remain regardless of whether the data is favorable or unfavorable to the State; if the content is obnoxious, offensive, denigrating or completely out of context, then the content should be rejected, and removed from the social media software tools.

7.13.1.12 Considerations

Before implementing an agency social media campaign; consider the following key items and what they mean to your particular agency.

- § Define social media as it relates to your agency and its purpose.
- § Think about your agency's philosophy on social media.
- § Determine who will be responsible for the project management of social media.
- § Determine how you will monitor and measure the use of social media in your agency.
- § Develop a potential disciplinary action to be taken if there is foul play with other staff members using social media inappropriately.
- § Determine its impact on the agency or staff person's productivity and other duties.
- § Determine the reputational risk to personnel, the agency and the State.
- § Know your brand and how to capture your audience.
- § Bring attention to your agency; keep the information entertaining, news worthy, simple and focused.
- § Listen to what your audiences are saying about your agency and determine ways to improve customer service and enhance the needs of the customer.
- § Keep security in mind at all times.

7.13.1.13 Attribution

Portions of policy 7.13.1 Guidelines have been adapted, with permission, from Intel's Social Media Guidelines.

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