

Sample Policy Disclaimer

This sample policy is an EXAMPLE only. This policy has not been legally reviewed and does not necessarily reflect the employment laws in any or all of the fifty states. The Council urges you to review and revise the sample to reflect your own organization's policies, practices and culture, and above all, have any new policy reviewed by legal counsel before distribution and implementation.

Social Networking Policy

Example from RightNow.com

Rules for Engagement

Emerging platforms for online collaboration are fundamentally changing the way we work, offering new ways to engage with customers, colleagues and the world at large. It's a new model for interaction and can help you to build stronger, more successful business relationships. And it's a way for you to take part in global conversations related to the work we are doing and the things we care about.

We fully respect the legal rights of our employees. In general, what you do on your own time is your affair. However, activities in or outside of work that affect your job performance, the performance of others or our business interests are a proper focus for company policy. If you participate in social media, please follow these guiding principles:

- Stick to your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on what's going at our company and in the world.
- Post meaningful, respectful comments—in other words, no SPAM and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive.
- Always pause and think before posting. That said, 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.
- Know and follow our Code of Ethics and Privacy Policy and other related policies.

Your Responsibility

What you write is ultimately your responsibility and requires sound judgment. Participation in the social web on behalf of our company is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. Anything you post is accessible to anyone with a web browser. It's okay to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to publish confidential or proprietary information. Please also follow the terms and conditions for any third-party sites.

We have established accounts on several social websites. These sites include, but are not limited to, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Slideshare.net and Flickr. The management of these accounts,

and the creation of new corporate accounts across the social web, is a corporate responsibility. While you are encouraged to create your own individual accounts, please do not create company-branded accounts which could be interpreted as representing the company.

Failure to abide by these guidelines and our Code of Ethics could put your participation and employment at risk.

Be Transparent, But Don't Tell Secrets

As a publicly traded company, there are all sorts of laws about what we can and can't say business-wise. Talking about revenue, future product release dates, pricing decisions, roadmaps, unannounced financial results, our share price or similar matters is apt to get you, the company, or both, into serious legal trouble. Stay away from financial topics and predictions of future performance.

Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate our privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines for external commercial speech. All statements must be true and not misleading, and all claims must be substantiated and approved. Please never comment on any of the following:

- Anything related to legal matters
- Financials
- Litigation
- Anything about competitors and their capabilities
- Product development

Also be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and the company's confidential information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

Protect Our Clients, Business Partners and Suppliers

Clients, partners or suppliers should not be cited or referenced without their approval. Externally, never identify a client, partner or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a client engagement.

Respect Your Audience and Your Coworkers

Remember that we are a global organization whose employees and clients reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics and religion.

Further, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds, social networks or other tools hosted outside of our protected Intranet environment should not be used for internal communications among fellow employees. It is fine for our employees to disagree, but please don't use your external blog or other online social media to air your differences.

Write What You Know

Write in the first person and make sure you write and post about your areas of expertise, especially as related to our company and our technology. If you are writing about a topic that we are involved with but you are not the subject matter expert, you should make this clear to your readers. Please respect brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, trade secrets (including our processes and methodologies), confidentiality and financial disclosure laws.

You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work. And it is good general blogging practice to link to others' work or mention an individual's contribution in a re-tweet.

Be Transparent

If you are blogging about your work, please use your real name and identify that you work for us, clearly stating your role with the company. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out.

We trust and expect that employees will exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom you are engaging. Our employees should not use social media for covert marketing or public relations. If and when members of our Marketing, Sales, Support or other external-facing functions are engaged in advocacy for the company through social media, they should identify themselves as our employees.

For individuals who are not participating in social media as part of an official function of their job, make it clear that what you say does not necessarily represent the company's views and opinions. At a minimum, you should include the following standard disclaimer: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the company's positions, strategies or opinions." As disclaimers may be impractical at times within a post (i.e. 140-character limitation on Twitter), include the fact that you work for our company in your online profiles.

Be Interesting, and Be Honest

As a business and as a corporate citizen, we are making important contributions to the world, to the future of technology, and to public dialogue on a broad range of issues. Our business activities are increasingly focused on high-value innovation. Let's share with the world the exciting things we're learning and doing—and open up the channels to learn from others.

Expose your personality; almost all of the successful online voices write about themselves, about families or movies or books or games; or they post pictures. People like to know what kind of a person is writing what they're reading. Once again, balance is called for; a social media site is a public place and you should avoid embarrassing the company and community members.

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in online social networks. By virtue of identifying yourself as an employee within a social network, you are now connected to your colleagues, managers and customers. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work.

Are You Adding Value?

There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will value. Social communication from should help our customers, 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 us better—then it's adding value.

Be a Leader

There can be a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. Try to frame what you write to invite differing points of view without inflaming others. Some topics—like politics or religion—slide more easily into sensitive territory.

If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post—just make it clear that you have done so.

Don't Forget Your Day Job

You should make sure that your online activities do not interfere with your job or work commitments.