



DOES YOUR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION HAVE A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY?

We live in the era of social media networking. If your nonprofit organization has not yet jumped on the bandwagon and started to take advantage of the many opportunities presented by social media, then it is time to wake up and look at what all the “tweeting” is about.

As your organization develops its online presence through social media networking and other strategies, one of the first things to consider is implementing a social media policy. Such a policy will provide useful guidance for staff and volunteers and help the organization maintain at least an element of authority and control over online activities that relate directly or indirectly to the organization.

A “Social Media Policy” for a nonprofit organization does not have to be a complicated or lengthy document but, at a minimum, it should address the following issues:

1. To Whom Does the Policy Apply?
 - Define the relevant audience to be governed by the new policy: staff, volunteers, event participants, etc.
2. What Sort of Activities Fall Under the Scope of this Policy?
 - Describe the rationale for the policy to provide context.
 - Define relevant terms (e.g., blogs, wikis, social media) and provide illustrative examples (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube).
3. What are the Key “Do’s” and “Don’ts” Under this Policy?
 - Provide specific rules and guidelines to let the affected parties know what is expected or required of them (e.g., prohibitions against posting confidential or proprietary information, misuse of an organization’s logo, trademark, or other intellectual property, or attributing personal opinions as those of the organization).
 - Require appropriate disclaimers depending upon the context of the communication.

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4. How does this Policy Integrate with other Policies of the Organization?

- Clarify that other organizational policies regulating conduct also apply to social media postings (e.g., conflicts of interest, harassment, protection of confidential information, etc.).
- If the policy applies to an individual's activities on behalf of an affiliated organization (e.g., a subsidiary or "sister" organization), include a cross reference to those other entities.

5. How will the Policy be Enforced?

- Explain that violations of the policy can result in disciplinary action and describe the range of available penalties (e.g., reprimand, suspension, fine, termination or employee or release from serving as a volunteer).
- Explain how to report a suspected violation of the policy.

Relatively speaking, developing the policy is the easy part. Monitoring and enforcing the policy will be a bigger challenge, particularly for smaller nonprofits. Good luck!