

# **ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY GUIDE**

Social networking has become a huge part of the way people and businesses communicate on the Web. Social networking is now the No. 1 activity on the internet, surpassing even search. Facebook, which just reached the 500 million user mark, is growing across all demographic from teens to grandmothers in their 60s.

For organizations, their employees and volunteers, though, social networking is a double-edged sword. The ability to connect with potential partners and put out your key messages has never been greater, but the potential danger to your brand is ever present.

Holding your employees and volunteers to a social media policy gives your organization insurance against online embarrassment, raises awareness of the liability organizations face for the activities of their employees online and keeps private information out of the public conversation.

## **RECOMMENDED SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY RULES**

(Incorporate these into your volunteer and staff orientations and paperwork)

- When someone online engages you with a question about the organization, be sure that you only answer questions within your area. Direct any questions outside of your area of expertise to the proper staff member.
- Any communication between employees or volunteers that would be considered inappropriate in the workplace (i.e., sexual harassment, intimidation) is also prohibited between employees or volunteers online.
- Questions about specific animals should only be shared on unofficial accounts or websites after first receiving permission from the organization.
- Updates on official organization accounts are only to be made by designated users within the organization.
- Any social networking contact between adult and youth volunteers must be appropriate. (\*Some organizations may want to change this to make it prohibited.)
- Any photos posted from organization activities must have the permission of everyone in the photo. If permission is given, those people can be tagged on the photo if it is posted on Facebook, Flickr, etc.
- Do not share copyrighted material through any of the organization's official channels, including music, photos, logos, etc.
- If any social networking use mentions a specific employee or volunteer, make sure you have that person's permission to write about where they were and what they were doing.
- Do not mention any confidential information about the organization, including but not limited to: financial information, pending partnerships or sponsorships, lawsuits or employment.

- Any questions about the organization from the media you receive on your social networks should be directed to the appropriate individual.
- Do not mention any injuries or health issues of any volunteers or staff on your social network. This would be considered a violation of federal privacy law.
- Do not share any “behind the scenes” photos of the organization or its facilities without first receiving permission from the organization. Photos without the proper context can sometimes leave the wrong impression.
- Do not directly solicit donations to the organization through your personal social networking sites without permission or acknowledgement of the organization.
- Criticism about partnership companies, sponsors or benefactors of the organization is not allowed by employees on their personal social networking sites since it could cause that relationship to be strained or end.
- During a crisis situation, updates will only be given out through the organizations official channels.

## **SAMPLE Animal Welfare Organization Social Media Policy**

This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by employees of YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION and its related companies ("Animal Welfare Organization"). For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wikis, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the internet.

YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION employees are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION employees are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as a YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION employee (other than as an incidental mention of place of employment in a personal blog on topics unrelated to Animal Welfare Organization).

Notwithstanding the previous section, this policy applies to all uses of social media, including personal, by YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION employees who are President/Executive Director; Director of Operations, as their position with YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION would be well known within the community.

Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary.

All uses of social media must follow the same ethical standards that YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION employees must otherwise follow.

### **Setting up Social Media**

Social media identities, logon ID's and user names may not use ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION's name without prior approval from the President/Executive Director.

### **Don't Tell Secrets**

It's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about our software, details of current projects, future product ship dates, financial information, research, and trade secrets. We must respect the wishes of our corporate customers regarding the confidentiality of current projects. We must also be mindful of the competitiveness of our industry.

### **Protect your own privacy**

Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.

### **Be Honest**

Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you work or volunteer for ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION. Nothing gains you notice in social media more than honesty - or dishonesty. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.

## **Respect copyright laws**

It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others, including YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION own copyrights and brands. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.

## **Respect your audience, Animal Welfare Organization, and your coworkers**

The public in general, and ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION's employees and customers, reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't say anything contradictory or in conflict with the YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION website. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, 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. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of Animal Welfare Organization.

## **Protect YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION customers, business partners and suppliers**

Customers, partners or suppliers should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Never identify a customer, partner or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a customer engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for a customer (e.g., Customer 123) so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the customer or make it easy for someone to identify the customer. Your blog is not the place to "conduct business" with a customer.

## **Controversial Issues**

If you see misrepresentations made about YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION in the media, you may point that out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.

## **Be the first to respond to your own mistakes**

If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly - better to remove it immediately to lessen the possibility of a legal action.

## **Think About Consequences**

For example, consider what might happen if a YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION employee is in a meeting with a customer or prospect, and someone on the customer's side pulls out a print-out of your blog and says "This person at YOUR ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION says that product sucks."

Saying "Product X needs to have an easier learning curve for the first-time user" is fine; saying "Product X sucks" is risky, unsubtle and amateurish.

Once again, it's all about judgment: using your blog to trash or embarrass ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION, our customers, or your co-workers, is dangerous and ill-advised.

## **Disclaimers**

Many social media users include a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for, but that they're not speaking officially. This is good practice and is encouraged, but don't count on it to avoid trouble - it may not have much legal effect.

The President/Executive Director can provide you with applicable disclaimer language and assist with determining where and how to use that.

## **Don't forget your day job.**

Make sure that blogging does not interfere with your job or commitments to customers.

## **Enforcement**

Policy violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for cause.