SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

@WWU

WESTERN
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WELCOME

Welcome to social media at Western Washington University!

As you've probably heard, the only things new about social media are the fancy tools. Beyond the tech, social networking is the same thing we've been doing for more than a century here at Western: engaging with our communities. And that's something you're undoubtedly good at, or you wouldn't be here.

Whether you're in charge of the social media presence for a Western entity or you're using social media to enhance the classroom experience, you'll find these guidelines helpful in navigating today's rapidly shifting world.

GUIDELINES ON POSTING FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Clearly state (and then act on) your purpose: Be clear and transparent about what you're trying to do. Is your goal to disseminate information? To interact with parents, students or prospective Vikings? To seek feedback or advice? State your purpose from the outset, and live that purpose daily. Don't change goals or tactics in the middle of the game; you'll throw off and potentially alienate those who've been interacting with you.

Be respectful and professional: Remember, you're representing Western. Put thought into what you say and do on behalf of the university. Keep your personal views separate, and don't post political comments or statements on social issues. Don't disclose private information about the university or its students; FERPA rules protecting students' personally identifiable information in educational records apply. Follow copyright and fair use laws to the letter. Don't publish content containing slurs, personal insults or attacks, profanity or obscenity, and don't engage in any conduct on a social media site that would not be acceptable in Western workplaces or classrooms. Know that whenever you identify yourself as a member of the Western community, you may be seen as representing Western, whether you like it or not. Never conceal your identity for the purpose of promoting Western through social media. Be transparent about who you are and whom you represent. Do not use the Western name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate. Avoid conflicts of interest and maintain a distinction between your personal identity and the identity you represent on behalf of the university.

Know the rules: In addition to understanding the broad spectrum of your responsibilities as a state employee, read up on Western policies and the terms of service for the social media tools you're using. Also, be sure to adhere to the Western's brand standards and naming conventions -you can find additional brand resources at www.wwu.edu/brand. You are personally responsible for the content you post on university-managed social media properties, from blogs and social networks to forums and other social media platforms. When you're at work, your time and your computer are university resources. Don't use those resources for non-university work beyond what is allowed by *de minimus* standards.

Manage content and monitor comments: Postings by the community on university-run social media accounts (e.g. Facebook wall postings, YouTube video comments) do not imply endorsement of that content by Western. If a business posts an irrelevant advertisement or solicitation on your Facebook wall, for example, feel free to delete it. If you have any doubt about what is appropriate to say or leave online, ask your supervisor or contact the Office of Communications and Marketing.

DEVELOPING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Before beginning any social media initiative on behalf of Western, develop a social media strategy that will guide your efforts. Such a strategy will involve an assessment of your communication goals and objectives and of the needs and interests of your audience. It also will identify resources for creating content and maintaining the given social media channel. It is essential to do this before you begin, as creating a social media presence is promising your community that you'll maintain your presence and provide quality, consistent content.

It's also important to determine what social media technologies will best help you meet your needs. In doing so, don't forget about internal tools such as Western Today, myWestern, and various college e-newsletters; these are great resources for communicating with the Western community. Using these tools helps support Western's investment in technology.

In developing your strategy, consider the following:

- Whom are you trying to reach?
- What would you like them to do?
- What kind of social interactions will help you accomplish your goals?
- How will you know when you've succeeded?
- How often will you post content, and who will do it? (Social media don't stop when you're away from the office. Put a plan in place for others to take over.)
- Where will your content come from?

ENGAGING WITH OTHERS

Be a human. That means you'll need to interact, engage, be honest, be funny, be spontaneous, be real. People don't want to interact with an institution or a brand or a product. They want to interact with a human. That doesn't mean you can't have an institutional account, it just means that your institutional account must act human. Remember that part of being a human is being humane. Be kind and courteous in all your interactions, being careful not to let your love of a good joke or witty comeback override your sensitivity to others.

Be in tune with your brand. Get a really good feel for the entity you're representing. Familiarize yourself with Western's Brand Guide, which outlines our organizational identity. What are your group's policies, and how do your administrators represent your entity to the community? Have a chat with folks in your area about how they want to be represented. The more you understand your brand, the more you'll be able to represent your entity in a human and engaging way online without making mistakes that paint your entity in a bad light.

Be quick to listen. Keep your ears and eyes open. What do the people you want to reach care about? How do they feel about you? How do they engage with others? The better you understand your audience, the more likely you are to post content that they appreciate and will want to share, comment on or re-post. And when you listen to others, they will want to listen to you.

Be engaging. Interact with others. Ask questions, thank people, comment on their posts, retweet their good content. In social media, your participation makes you valuable, and it also helps to build solid relationships.

Be accurate. Before you post, gather all the facts. Take time to verify information. Link to your sources whenever possible and give credit to your sources for information you're sharing. Mention sources in tweets or Facebook posts. In so doing, you'll build community and gain the trust of the online community. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly.

Be calm. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, don't post until you calm down. Take time to think about what you're saying and how it might be perceived. Never post in anger or self-defense.

Be humble. When posting online, you cede control of your brand to those who are digesting and responding to your content. That's OK. When people respond negatively to something you've done, that's OK, too. You can't control everything, and you shouldn't even try.

Be aware of your impact. Social media often span traditional boundaries between professional and personal relationships. If you've ever identified yourself as part of the Western community online, readers will associate you with the university, even if you are posting from your personal account. Be thoughtful of the things you say, the photos you post and the content to which you link.

Be learning. Check out other Western accounts on socialwwu.edu who are successfully engaging with their communities and ask them for tips on how to operate. Pay attention to similar entities outside Western or to anyone whose engagement you admire and use those actions as inspiration in your own work.

DAY-TO-DAY BEST PRACTICES

MANAGING NEGATIVE CONTENT

If a community member posts critical comments, do not delete or suppress such postings if they are valid points to consider. Let the comments stand. Correct misinformation, but don't engage in heated arguments. Often, the community will correct itself and step in to correct inaccuracies or defend Western or your specific entity. If this happens and is sufficient to resolve the issue, there may be no need for an additional official response.

Feel free to delete irrelevant or vulgar posts. If you feel a post is threatening in nature or otherwise meriting greater concern, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing for advice.

Steer clear of posting about controversial topics.

PRESENCE AND MAINTENANCE

Few things will help you build credibility with your community than being present and responsive. Of course, the opposite also is true. When people engage with you, they expect a response. Accounts that obviously are not being maintained reflect poorly on Western.

Monitor replies and comments daily. Check at least once a day, and respond promptly.

How often should you post? It really depends on the medium. An editorial calendar can help you schedule the creation and publication of content. Resist the urge to post all your good content at once; spread it out over time. Use your best judgment and tailor your actions to the reactions of your community, but here are a few general guidelines on frequency:

- Twitter: Post as often as you feel the need. You can't really post too much on Twitter, as long as your content adds value to your community. But if you want to post just once a day? That's

perfectly fine.

- Facebook: An average of one post per day is reasonable.
- Instagram: Vary your posts depending on content. Post once per week if that's all you have time for, but two or three times per day is fine, too.
- YouTube: You'll probably be posting here less often, as creation of quality video takes time. Post whenever you have good content, whether that's once per day or once per month.
- Tumblr: It really depends on the purpose or your blog. On the main Western Tumblr page, which is used to re-broadcast others' views of Western, we queue posts and automatically release them six times per day.
- Pinterest: As with Tumblr, it depends on the purpose of your page. Pin and re-pin as time and the quality of available content permit.

Consider spreading posting responsibilities among several people in your department if you feel that will help you keep your account up-to-date. Facebook allows for multiple administrators on a page. Each administrator, however, must have a personal Facebook account.

GAUGING SUCCESS

Measurement and analytics are key to assessing your success in social media. Determine relevant statistics and track them over time. Match analytics information against content and engagement to determine what caused certain results. Use this information to better understand your audience and to inform content decisions.

When sharing links via social media, use a service such as bit.ly to create shortened, trackable URLs.

Study the data provided by the respective analytics functions in Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Flickr and any other medium that provides such data.

NAMING AND BRANDING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Create an account in the name of a recognized Western entity only if you are authorized to represent that entity. Discuss with your supervisor when you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval, or if you have questions about the appropriateness of certain content for posting.

NAMES

When naming your social media presence, be clear in identifying your unit as a part of Western Washington University. All names should begin with "Western," ideally, "Western Washington University" or "WWU," as in "Western Libraries" or "WWU Admissions." It would be incorrect to title your account, for example, "Accounts Payable at WWU," "Accounts Payable - Western Washington University" or simply "Accounts Payable."

Keep in mind that most social media services limit name length. Choose a name that best identifies your unit while still adhering to these guidelines.

Examples of correct usage for Facebook pages:

- Western Foundation
- WWU Athletics

- Western Washington University – Department of History

Examples of correct usage for Twitter accounts:
- WWUAdvising
- WWUAlumni
- WWU_AS

Clearly identify your unit, avoiding names that might be confused as representing all of Western or a unit other than your own.

Social media sites at the university should be marked as official in some way (for example, in a Twitter bio or in the Facebook "about" section).

IMAGES

The image associated with your page or account may be the official logo of your unit or an image closely associated with your unit, such as the building in which your unit is located. However, you may not solely use the Western logo unless your account represents the entire university, not a subset thereof. Contact University Communications and Marketing to have a sub-branded Western logo made for your specific unit.

These name and image conventions apply to all social media services, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr and Google+.

VIDEO

It is important to assure that video posted to social media be accessible to all users. Make sure that you are either using captioned content or adding captions to your video clips regardless of length. If your video does not have sound or dialogue, make sure that the post you use to share it contains enough of a description to understand what is shared in the clip. To caption content you may use Western's 3PlayMedia service or consult Facebook's accessibility page for access to a free captioning program.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICES

Each of the main social media platforms has terms and conditions to which all users must adhere. If you would like to represent your area of Western Washington University using social media, please follow the best practices outlined by these organizations. The most popular are Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Flickr and YouTube, but users also must abide by the terms of use of other social media services they're using.

Before signing up for any account:

- Clear such activity with your supervisor.
- Contact Purchasing to ensure that the platform's terms and conditions have been vetted by the university.
- Contact University Communications to discuss your plans for the account.

APPLICABLE WESTERN POLICIES

It's awesome that you're getting involved in the world of social media. Before you get in too deep, make sure you've read and are adhering to the following Western Washington University policies:

- Responsible Computing
- Using University Resources
- Code of Faculty Ethics
- Equal Opportunity Office policies

This list is not necessarily comprehensive; members of the Western community also are responsible to abide by the terms of other applicable policies not listed here.

WHO WE ARE AS A UNIVERSITY

CHARACTER

- Engaging - An immersive and dynamic approach in everything we do.
- Inviting - Inclusive and supportive
- Distinctive - An academic environment that inspires innovative learning and commitment to a purposed life.
- Adventurous - Thriving on new challenges, fearless pursuit of dreams.
- Collaborative - Interactive learning, up close and personal, with faculty and staff.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

For ambitious, open-minded learners, Western is the premier undergraduate-centered university that fosters a dynamic collaborative environment at an intimate scale, where students fully engage, reveling in the freedom to develop their intellectual potential and achieve their personal goals.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- Academic excellence
- Passion for boundless learning and exploration
- Personal engagement in one's education
- Collaboration between students and faculty
- Welcoming and supportive community
- A place to develop leaders and global citizens
- Spectacular location and natural environment

This document is based in part on social media guidelines from Tufts University, DePaul University and the University of Oregon.