

DAUPHIN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOL

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Whether an employee chooses to engage in blogging, online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. These media are changing the way we work and engage with each other, clients and partners. It is important that our employees follow these guidelines so that these media are used in a positive way.

SOCIAL COMPUTING GUIDELINES: SUMMARY

1. When engaging in any online activity, including but not limited to blogging and online social networking, know and follow Pennsylvania's Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators.
2. Never disclose confidential client information.
3. Employees are personally responsible for any content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for a long time—protect your privacy.
4. Identify yourself - name and, when relevant, role at School - when you discuss School or School-related matters. And write in the first person. You must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the School.
5. If you publish content to any website outside of School and it has something to do with work you do or subjects associated with School, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the School's positions, strategies or opinions." or "This blog is not intended to provide legal advice on specific matters, but rather to provide thoughtful insight into recent and timely legal developments or issues.
6. Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
7. Don't provide School's or another's confidential or other proprietary information. Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to School.
8. When you do make a reference, where possible link back to the source.
9. Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in School's workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion.
10. Find out who else is blogging or publishing on the topic, and cite them.
11. Be aware of your association with School in online social networks. If you identify yourself as an employee of the School, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and clients.

12. Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
13. Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. School's brand is best represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on School's brand.

SOCIAL COMPUTING GUIDELINES: DETAILED DISCUSSION

The Pennsylvania's Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators provide the foundation for School's policies and guidelines for blogs and social computing. The same principles and guidelines that apply to employees' activities in general, apply to your activities online. This includes forms of online publishing and discussion, including blogs, wikis, file-sharing, user-generated video and audio, and social networks.

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 School's business interests are a proper focus for School policy.

School supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas. School regards blogs and other forms of online discourse as primarily a form of communication and relationship among individuals. When School wishes to communicate publicly as a School - whether to the marketplace or to the general public - it has well established means to do so. Only those officially designated by School have the authorization to speak on behalf of the firm.

However, School believes in dialogue among School employees and with our partners, clients, members of the communities in which we participate and the general public. We believe that employees can both derive and provide important benefits from exchanges of perspective.

As a School, School trusts - and expects - our employees to exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging. Employees should not use these media for covert marketing or public relations.

Know the Pennsylvania's Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators. If you have any confusion about whether you ought to publish something online, chances are the Code of Conduct included in the Staff Manual will resolve it. If, after checking the Code of Conduct, you are still unclear as to the propriety of a post, it is best to refrain and seek the advice of administration.

Be who you are. Some bloggers work anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. School discourages that in blogs, wikis or other forms of online participation that relate to School, our business or issues with which the firm is engaged. We believe in transparency and honesty. If you are blogging about your work for School, we encourage you to use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you work for the School. Nothing gains you more notice in the online social media environment than honesty - or dishonesty. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to 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 judicious in disclosing personal details.

Be thoughtful about how you present yourself in online social networks. 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 even School clients. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at School.

Speak in the first person. Use your own voice; bring your own personality to the forefront; say what is on your mind.

Use a disclaimer. Whether you publish to a blog or some other form of social media, make it clear that what you say there is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of School. At a minimum in your own blog, you should include the following standard disclaimer: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent School's positions, strategies or opinions."

Respect copyright and fair use laws. For School's protection as well as your own, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others. 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.

Protecting confidential and proprietary information. Social computing blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications. Be thoughtful about what you publish - particularly on external platforms. You must make sure you do not disclose or use School confidential or proprietary information or that of any other person or School in any online social computing platform. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture in a social network or publishing in a blog a conversation that was meant to be private.

Respect your audience and your coworkers. 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. For example, if your blog is hosted on a School-owned property, avoid these topics and focus on subjects that are business-related. If your blog is self-hosted, 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 School. It is fine for School employees to disagree, but please don't use your external blog or other online social media to air your differences.

Add value. School's brand is best represented by its people and everything you publish reflects upon it. Blogs and social networks that are hosted on School-owned domains should be used in a way that adds value to School's business. If it helps you, your coworkers, our clients or our partners to do their jobs and solve problems; if it helps to improve knowledge or skills; if it contributes directly or indirectly to the improvement of School's business and relationships; or if it builds a sense of community, then it is adding value. Though not directly business-related, background information you choose to share about yourself, such as information about your family or personal interests, may be useful in helping establish a relationship between you and your readers, but it is entirely your choice whether to share this information.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. In a blog, if you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

Use your best judgment. Remember that there are always consequences to what you publish. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review the suggestions above and think about why that is. If you're still unsure, and it is related to School business, feel free to discuss it with your supervisor. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you post to your blog or publish in any form of online social media. The School reserves the right to require any inappropriate posting to be removed upon notice.

Don't forget your day job. You should make sure that your online activities do not interfere with your work commitments.