

Social Media Guidelines-DePaul University

This is a working draft being developed by the Social Media Working Group. If you have suggestions, please contact [Kris Gallagher](#) in Marketing Communications. If you prefer, download the document.

Blogs, social networks and Web sites such as Wikipedia, Facebook, Flickr, Second Life and YouTube are exciting new channels for you to share knowledge, express your creativity and connect with others who share your interests. DePaul University supports your participation in these online communities.

Shows positivity and why use SM.

Because social media channels are fairly new to many employees, we've assembled "best practice" guidelines from respected online and industry sources to help you use these forums effectively, protect your personal and professional reputation, and follow university policies.

- ❑ General recommendations
- ❑ If you post for DePaul
- ❑ If you have a personal site

General recommendations

The keys to success in social media are being honest about who you are, being thoughtful before you post, and respecting the purpose of the community where you are posting.

Be transparent. Be honest about your identity. If you are authorized by your supervisor to represent DePaul in social media, say so. If you choose to post about DePaul on your personal time, please identify yourself as a DePaul faculty or staff member. Never hide your identity for the purpose of promoting DePaul through social media.

I wonder if we should have a section like this.

A good resource about transparency in online communities is the Blog Council's "Disclosure Best Practices Toolkit" at <http://blogcouncil.org/disclosure/>.

Be accurate. Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible; after all, that's how you build community.

If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in the online community.

Be respectful. You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Be a valued member. If you join a social network like a Facebook group or comment on someone's blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Don't post information

about topics like DePaul events or a book you've authored unless you are sure it will be of interest to readers. Self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from Web sites or groups.

Think before you post. There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about DePaul, its students, its alumni or your fellow employees. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and federal requirements, such as FERPA.

Once again, protecting students.

If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference.

Respect university time and property. As stated in the [Acceptable Use Policy/Network Security](#), university computers and your work time are to be used for university-related business. It's appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals, such as seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. You should maintain your personal sites on your own time using non-DePaul computers.

If you post on behalf of DePaul

Be transparent. If you participate in or maintain a social media site on behalf of the university, clearly state your role and goals. Discuss with your supervisor when you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

Be connected. If you have been authorized by your supervisor to create an official DePaul social media site or a video for posting in locations such as YouTube, please contact the Director of Internet Communications for an approved logo and other images and to ensure coordination with other DePaul sites and content.

Be respectful. As a DePaul employee, you understand the university's commitment to Vincentian respect for the dignity of others and to the civil and thoughtful discussion of opposing ideas. Some online communities can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't. Your reputation, and DePaul's, are best served when you remain above the fray.

Be thoughtful. If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as a DePaul employee, ask your supervisor before you post.

Personal site guidelines

Be authentic. Be honest about your identity. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a DePaul faculty or staff member. However, please be clear that you are sharing your views as a member of the higher education community, not as a formal representative of DePaul. This parallels media relations practices at DePaul.

A common practice among individuals who write about the industry in which they work is to include a disclaimer on their site, usually on their “About Me” page. If you discuss higher education on your own social media site, we suggest you include a sentence similar to this:

“The views expressed on this [blog, Web site] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of DePaul University.”

This is particularly important if you are a department head or administrator.

Don’t be a mole. Never pretend to be someone else and post about DePaul. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors. There have been several high-profile and embarrassing cases of company executives anonymously posting about their own organizations.

Take the high ground.

If you identify your affiliation with DePaul in your comments, readers will associate you with the university, even with the disclaimer that your views are your own. Remember that you’re most likely to build a high-quality following if you discuss ideas and situations civilly.

Be aware of liability.

You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts). Employers are increasingly conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

Don’t use the DePaul logo or make endorsements. Do not use the DePaul logo, athletic logo or any other DePaul marks or images on your personal online sites.

Do not use DePaul’s name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

This is important to stress.

Protect your identity. While you want to be honest about yourself, don’t provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Don’t list your home address or telephone number or your work telephone or e-mail address. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with their social media site.

Follow a code of ethics. There are numerous codes of ethics for bloggers and other active participants in social media, all of which will help you participate responsibly in

online communities. If you have your own social media site, you may wish to post your own code of ethics.

For examples, see:

http://forrester.typepad.com/charleneli/2004/11/blogging_policy.html

<http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>

<http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2007/04/draft-bloggers-code-of-conduct.html>

Monitor comments. Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments—it builds credibility and community. However, you can set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.

Link back. You are welcome to link from your social media site to depaul.edu.