

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY – HUDSONVILLE, MICHIGAN

Social media is also called “social networking,” but this policy will use the term “social media” only. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the City’s expectations regarding the use of social media by its employees in an appropriate manner.

While the City respects your privacy and your right to free speech, you also have responsibilities when you voluntarily put information into the public domain. The intent of this Policy is not to restrict the flow of useful and appropriate information, but to minimize the risk to the City and its associates. If you engage in conduct while using social media, as defined below, that is false, violates the City’s policies, is inflammatory, or constitutes violations of the privacy of others, you could be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination, even if the conduct occurs off the City’s premises or on your personal, non-work time.

Definition

Social media refers to activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the sharing of words, pictures, videos, and audio, such as:

- Multimedia and social networking sites like Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, flickr, and YouTube;
- Social networking sites with an emphasis on professional exchange of information and development of business, such as LinkedIn;
- Blogs, microblogs, wikis, message boards, social bookmarking Web sites, and other community-based sites or collaboration tools;
- Social commerce postings, like product or experience reviews; and
- Any other site where information (text, images, video, sound, or other files) can be uploaded or posted.

Guidelines

As employees of the City, we are accountable for how we speak about our products, services, and operations, whether in person, on the phone, in print, or online. Before you post information online that relates in any way to the City, please review and become familiar with the following guidelines.

- Think before you “send.” Always remember to think about what you plan to say, and how you plan to say it, before composing information and sending it out. Once it’s out there, it is difficult, if not impossible, to take it back. Do not communicate information when you are excited or angry. You may not like what you sent when your mood has passed.
- Keep confidential information confidential. Any statement, whether made online or offline or through images, videos, or sound files, related to or referencing the City’s products, services, operations, customer, vendors, or other employees, regardless of the media or form used, must strictly comply with the City’s practices, policies, and procedures. Keep any Internet-based conversation about the City focused on publicly known information. If you are not sure whether something is appropriate to post, double-check what you have composed and get a second opinion from your supervisor before sending.

- Be accurate, truthful, and considerate in your posts. Be constructive, provide appropriate context, and think about the impact of your comments on our customers, vendors, other employees, and managers. Words matter, especially when employees discuss business-related topics. Anyone, including customers, vendors, competitors, your supervisor, members of management and other employees of the City can find and see postings put out in the public domain. Be thoughtful about what you share and how you share it—just as you would at home.
- Be respectful. Respect for others is mandatory. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, or obscenity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace.
- No privacy exists. The Internet is fully searchable, which means that anyone with an Internet connection, including our customers, vendors, competitors, and the City, can find even the most obscure information. Be careful about posting personal information online, whether it is information about you, other employees, or customers. Personal information can include photos, addresses and telephone numbers, information about where and when you work, or anything else that could compromise your safety or that of your team members or our customers.
- Possible legal ramifications. Remember that individuals can be held legally accountable for comments deemed to be defamatory, slanderous, libelous, obscene, or proprietary, whether they pertain to the City, another organization, or an individual person.
- Identify yourself. You must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the City. Speech that appears to represent the City, even remotely, takes on the appearance of an official position statement and is not permitted in any circumstance. Use a personal e-mail address as your primary means of identification. You may use your City e-mail to convey information on the Internet only with the advance approval of your supervisor. The City's intellectual property, logos, trademarks, and copyrights may not be used in any manner.
- Communicating during working hours. While the City does not prohibit minimal communication with friends and family during working hours, the City expects you to use good judgment and not allow your social media activity to interfere with your work commitments.
- Press inquiries. Social media postings occasionally generate media coverage. If you are ever asked to make a comment outside of the business, contact your immediate supervisor before making a statement.

Prohibited Subjects

In order to maintain the City's reputation and legal standing, the following subjects may not be discussed by associates in any form of social media:

- City confidential or proprietary information
- Confidential or proprietary information of clients, co-workers, partners, vendors and suppliers
- City intellectual property such as drawings, designs, software, ideas and innovation
- Egregious disparagement of City's or customer's products, services, executive leadership, employments, strategy and business prospects
- Explicit sexual references
- Reference to illegal drugs
- Obscenity or profanity
- Disparagement of any race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or national origin