Social Media Policy

USM Marketing Department
September 2010

Introduction

Social media uses web-based technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogues. The most popular forms of social media: Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are fast becoming a main way to stay connected with friends and family, stay up-to-date on current events, and reach out to target audiences.

The initial wave of online communication—email, listservs, static websites—has given way to Web 2.0—the interactive web. At the forefront of that change sit social networking venues, places were individuals gather to publicly disseminate information.

The evolution of technology offers us a wealth of outlets with which we can communicate with our varied audiences: current students, parents, alums, prospective students, and the greater at-large community. Social media has an ever-growing role in that discourse. But despite the newness of the venue, these communiqués remain subject to the same rules and standards as all other existing forms of written, aural, and visual communication.

This Social Media Policy was designed to provide some sense of the standards of behavior the university expects of employees when using social media or networking sites through their **work-provided computers**, in **work-related activities**, or when **identifying yourself as an employee of the University of Saint Mary**.

This document covers several kinds of online venues, including content-sharing sites such as Flikr or YouTube; personal and business blogging sites, powered by online tools such as WordPress; and social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, or My Space.

The University is in no way trying to dissuade employees from taking advantage of the opportunities presented by social networking and content-sharing sites.

Good Rules of Thumb for Online

Understand that Email and the Internet are Not Private

As a rule, it's best to remember that email messages and internet use may be saved and reviewed by third parties, retrieved after "deletion" and, under some circumstances, be deemed to constitute official, authorized communications of the University of Saint Mary. The university may monitor employees' usage of all email messages and internet access in order to evaluate employee productivity and monitor the quality of employee services in its continuing effort to provide a discrimination-free workplace and compliance with applicable federal and state laws.

Notwithstanding the above, limited incidental personal use of email and the internet is permissible so long as personal email and internet use does not interfere with job performance or violate any university policy. However, please remember that personal email messages and internet use, like university-related messages, may be accessed, monitored, deleted, or disclosed by university representatives and third parties. Therefore, you should assume that a personal message or internet use may be disclosed to, or read by, persons other than the original intended recipient.

Understand the Rules
Remember that you can be held personally responsible and legally liable for anything you write or present online. Obey the law. Avoid attacking companies, competitors, or other individuals and retain a respectful tone. Keep in mind that the use of copyrighted materials; harassing, unsubstantiated, or derogatory statements; or intentional misrepresentations can result in disciplinary action.

Think twice before you post. Privacy does not exist online. If you wouldn't say it to a group of potential students, parents, donors, or university supporters, consider whether you should post in online. Think about the repercussions if a post becomes widely known, and how that post might reflect on you and the university. And remember that search engines can turn up such posts years later

University Policies
All university policies apply to all forms of public discourse, including social media such as Facebook or LinkedIn. Employees are liable for anything they post to a social media site.

USM has designated individuals who are authorized as official spokespeople. When communicating via social media, speak in the first person, and make it clear that any views you express are your own.

Unless you are a designated spokesperson, you should not, in any forum, comment about pending litigation or crisis related matters involving the university, its partners, or its competitors.

Be Mindful of Privacy Rights
Never disclose confidential or proprietary information. Be mindful and compliant with all FERPA privacy regulations. For USM staff or faculty impacted by HIPAA regulations, including the nursing department, be mindful and compliant with all HIPAA privacy dictates.

Be Respectful
Do not get involved in adversarial conversations online. Except for specific Social Media Campaigns, it is university policy not to respond to comments posted on online message boards. For example: a designated page administrator may reply to a poster on a USM Facebook page in a respectful manner. Getting into a flame war on a Yahoo forum group over USM is not permitted.

University Data
You may not upload University of Saint Mary databases or other content information without university permission.

Recommendations
USM prohibits current employees from posting recommendations on Social Networking Site for current or previous employees in respect to their current or previous job responsibilities.

Use of Social Media for Official University Purposes

In executing your job duties, you may be asked to—or find it beneficial to—participate in an official university social media effort (a Facebook page or group, a Twitter feed, a YouTube or Fickr account, etc.).

If you are using social media in an official capacity for the University of Saint Mary, you should consult with the marketing department for a detailed guide and advice on best taking advantage of social media.

However, there are some quick rules to keep in mind:

Always be civil
Don’t argue. Don’t get drawn into debates. Be respectful in all ways. If you wouldn’t say it in person to the media, to a group of prospective students, or to university donors and supporters, it’s best to refrain from saying it online.

Stick to What You Know

Avoid discussing university-related topics of which you do not have first-hand knowledge and understanding. Don't make assumptions. If you need to answer such a question posed by a "fan" or "friend" of the university, consult with a university expert before answering. **There is no definitive way to completely erase wrong information once it's been posted online.**

Respect Privacy Rights
Be aware of all privacy rights, and do not divulge information that runs afoul of privacy guidelines.

Use of university images
In the social media realm, informal pictures can be just as beneficial as official, professionally-taken photos. Feel free to post informal shots, but, as noted above, please be mindful of student privacy rights. For official university shots consult marketing. Marketing should also be the primary resource for university logos or other similar material.

Respect Copyrights
Understand how copyrights work in the digital theatre. Be cautious with the use of photos, images, video, etc. Marketing can provide guidance.

If you have any questions, please contact the director of public relations at (913) 758-6165.

Personal Use of Social Media for Non-Official University Purposes

This section covers your use of social media when identifying yourself as an employee of the University of Saint Mary, though not necessarily through official university channels. Personal Facebook pages where you discuss the university or personal blogs where you opine about the job are two examples.

Here, the guidelines are similar to those for employees who employ social media as a part of their job.

Identify Yourself
Most industries frown on false or concealed representation. If you're speaking positively about the university, make sure you identify yourself and your position with USM.

Take Responsibility for Your Opinions

If you're talking about the university, our partners, competitors, or issues related to USM business, be sure to note that your opinions are your own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the university or our policies.

Do Not Use University Logos or Photos
Avoid using university logos or service marks on personal blogs or pages. You should also avoid using photographs taken by the university or taken professionally for the university. USM has limited use rights on professionally-taken photos. Those rights do not extend to private individuals acting on their own behalf.

Stick to What You Know
Avoid discussion university-related topics of which you do not have first-hand knowledge and understanding. Don't make assumptions.

Respect Privacy Rights
Depending on your position, you may have access to or knowledge of private and protected information. You may be held liable for personally disclosing any such information.

Be Respectful
Don't argue. Don't get drawn into debates. Be respectful in all ways. As stated earlier, if you wouldn't say it in person to the media, to a group of prospective students, or to university donors and supporters, it's best to refrain from saying it online.

Respect Copyrights
Understand how copyrights work in the digital theatre. Be cautious with the use of photos, images, video, etc. Marketing can provide guidance.

If you have any questions, please contact the director of public relations at (913) 758-6165.

Managing a University Social Media Campaign/Social Media Best Practices

USM encourages all offices, particularly academic departments and athletic programs, to consider the benefits of--and ways to implement--a social networking strategy.

As Facebook is currently the unquestioned king of the social media realm, this Social Media policy and handbook will largely focus on that particular venue. Any guidelines laid out in regards to Facebook should be considered to apply to other information-sharing venues.

Determine What You Need
Facebook prohibits the use of Personal Profiles—the common personal Facebook profiles many of us have—for promotional purposes. You should not create a personal USM page for any purpose. Facebook both can, and likely will, delete the page, and reserves the right to take further legal action against those who violate their terms of service.

Before creating a university-based social media presence, you should consult with the marketing department about the proper procedures to develop such a presence. Marketing can provide you with necessary disclaimer language, and a professionally-generated logo for your page. Marketing can also help you take advantage of customizable tabs and other more-advanced options found on Facebook.

For businesses and other institutions, Facebook offers two options: Groups or Fan Pages.

Facebook Groups
Consider a group if you believe your audience will be limited in size (fewer than 100), scope (focused on a single class or academic department, or a single semester or year of alumni), or if you are looking for more open and free-wheeling conversation (USM's student life group involves a wide-range of discourse).

Groups allow the admin to send messages directly to Facebook inboxes, whereas messages from Fan Pages are delivered to Facebook fans' Updates screen. Messages from Groups are thus more difficult to ignore.

Groups cannot be cross-promoted on Fan Pages nor can they be converted into Fan Pages.

Groups allow "bulk invites" to an admin's friends list.

If the admin or an officer of a Group posts to a discussion on the Group's wall, the post originates from the user. On Fan Pages, they originate from the page itself.

Groups offer some control over who may participate.

Fan Pages
Fan Pages are for more general interest subjects. Currently, USM maintains several pages, including the university's main page, the alumni page, the Overland Park page, and the Nursing Department page.

Once you've reached a certain number of fans, you can set a specific URL for your fan page.

You can track visitors and activity on your page.

You can cross-promote your page.

Postings to a Fan Page show up in your fans' news feeds.

Posting to a Fan Page is listed as originating from the page itself.

Admins, however, are prohibited from contacting individual fans.

Other Venues
Despite Facebook's ubiquity, a wealth of other venues exist, including Twitter (for those looking to frequently update followers), YouTube for video, Flickr for photography, etc. Consult with marketing if you need help determining which venue is best.

A USM Checklist for Implementing a Social Media Campaign

1. Seek the approval of your department head.

2. Determine what your goals are for a social media campaign.

3. Consult with marketing regarding venues, logos, possibilities, etc.

4. Pick your venue.

5. Build your site.

6. Announce your site.

Social Media Best Practices
You have your Facebook Fan Page or Twitter feed. Now what?

—Take an Active Role
The whole crux of social media is frequent, timely updates, and interaction. If you can't check in on your page a few minutes each day or post a couple of times a week, you may want to reconsider. Perhaps an email newsletter or other, less dynamic venue is for you.

—Respond to Fans
Are your posters asking questions? You need to respond in a timely manner. Ignoring users or fans is a formula for failure in the social media realm.

—Always Be Respectful
Don't argue. Don't get drawn into debates. Be respectful in all ways. On a side note, don't delete users' posts, unless their commentary is wildly inappropriate for the university. "Censoring" users is another formula for failure.

—Be Open and Honest
Make sure in any use of social media, you identify yourself and your role at the university.

—Never Forget
As mentioned earlier, things you post online can live forever, and spread rapidly. You are liable for what you post.

—Stick to Topics You Know
If you don't know about the football team when a user asks you a question about it, say you don't know. Better yet, follow that up with a post with information you got from the head football coach. Don't make guesses or assumptions about the university.

—Respect Copyrights
Understand how copyrights work in the digital theatre. Use university logos and other service marks where appropriate. Be cautious with the use of photos. Marketing can provide guidance.

If part of your job involves the use of social media, you acknowledge and agree that any content you post, sites you create, or networks you develop is work for hire under applicable copyright laws and are the property of the university. To the extent that any content you post is not deemed to be work for hire, you hereby assign to the university all right, title, and interest in and to such content including any copyrights and data rights therein.