



Government of **Western Australia**  
Office of the **Government**  
**Chief Information Officer**

# Digital Services Policy Framework

## Social Media Guidelines

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## Introduction

Social media is creating unprecedented opportunities for governments to communicate with their stakeholders. Social media can help remove barriers to engaging people, communities and public sector agencies and creates the potential to:

- Gather community opinion on key issues and policies.
- Join existing social media conversations, in particular discussions on topics relevant to the agency.
- Keep abreast of the latest developments in fields of interest.
- Form relationships beyond organisational boundaries, both internal and external to government.
- Disseminate information to clients in combination with existing channels.
- Receive feedback on services and ideas on how to improve.
- Collaborate with other agencies, as the focus of social media should be to address a topic or problem rather than the structure of a single agency.

There are no new rules for social media, but social media strategies must work within the existing rules.

WA Government agencies must consider relevant legislation, policies, codes, and standards. These guidelines are intended to direct agencies to the documents which may affect social media projects.

In particular, these guidelines are focussed on strategies available to agencies to use social media, rather than the supervision and management of employees using social media. The conduct of individual employees using social media is subject to the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics. Individual CEOs are therefore accountable for the effective management of social media and must have in place appropriate governance mechanisms, which are usually detailed in the agency's Code of Conduct.

## About these guidelines

These guidelines have been written for Western Australian Government agencies and are designed to assist in making sound decisions when developing social media strategies. The guidelines were developed in conjunction with an agency reference group representing more than twenty WA Government agencies. Members of the Agency Reference Group are listed in Appendix 2.

The scope of these guidelines has been limited to accommodate the dynamic nature of the social media landscape.

First, the guidelines are not intended to provide specific advice on individual applications. Any mention of particular products is illustrative, and the suitability of each is likely to change quickly. Instead, the guidelines provide agencies with the information required to make a decision when the time arises (see section 1.4 on how to choose a social media tool).

Secondly, these guidelines are not intended to create obligations for agencies. Social media is a new way to communicate with stakeholders, so should be managed as part of existing policies. The difficulty arises because social media is a form of communications as well as an IT project - and can also affect other areas such as staff conduct and recordkeeping obligations. These guidelines are intended to help agencies recognise the benefits and risks of incorporating these new technologies into existing processes.

## What is social media?

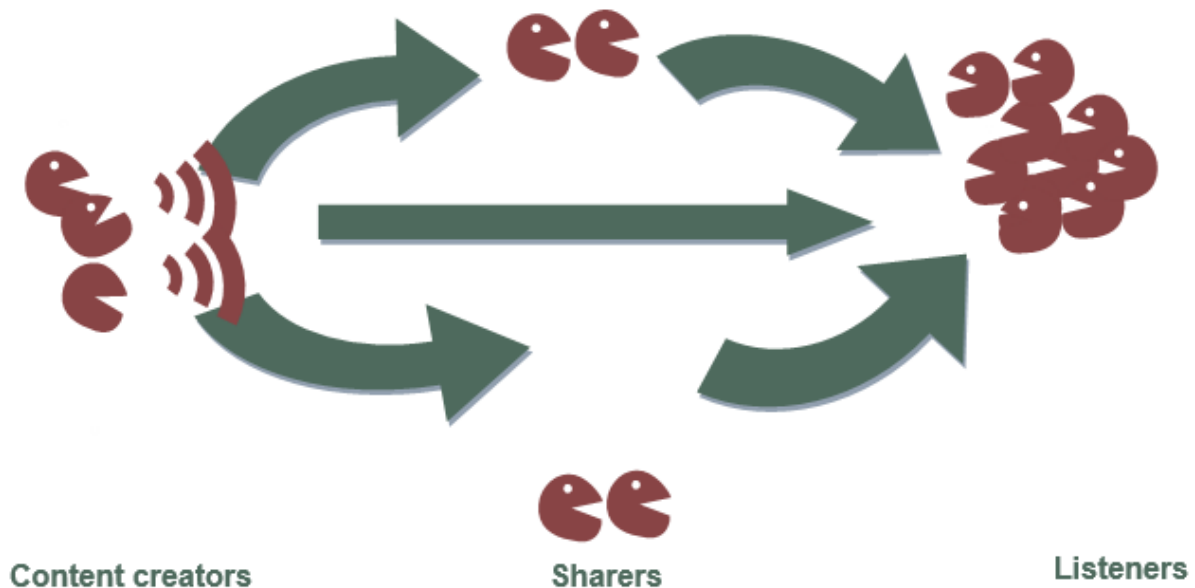
At its simplest, social media is interacting with others while creating content. Content can be discussions, videos, opinions, photos, and much more.

Social media is information being passed in all directions. Government can join the fray, either harnessing the flow of information or adding their own voice.

To understand social media, the different ways people engage must be examined:

- Some people create content – informing, changing opinions and leading trends.
- Some people just listen - whether occasionally or all the time.
- Some people dig through information and share it with others - adding their own flavour.

It looks like this:



By analogy to 'traditional' forms of media, the roles can be described as Content Creator-> news station, advertiser. Blogger-> chat show. Listeners -> audience.

The real power of social media comes from the fact that anyone can play any role. Anyone can syndicate content and views to the entire world for free. Now it is common to see news channels accept live feedback from viewers and respond in real-time, for news channels or to interview bloggers.

However, this still makes the flow of communications seem linear. The same person can play different roles. They can:

- Listen to news and press releases.
- Discuss that information with others.
- Share information, media and thoughts with a network.
- Engage with friends and readers, sparking conversation or asking for help.



This means users can interact with everyone. Fast. and Free. Anyone has the power to initiate the flow of information. An event can be filmed on a mobile phone, and syndicated to news channels worldwide within hours and discussed across the television and internet.

Listeners are excited because they have access to creators as never before, but it isn't a one-sided transaction. Now creators have instant access to feedback from their viewers, and access to the stream of public opinion.

It's not hard to see the implications this has for government. For example, users can easily discuss key issues with policy makers, researchers, NGOs, and citizens from Western Australia, Australia or around the world.

## The WA Government social media process

This document discusses the process for implementing a well-planned social media process. The process has 4 steps:

- Determine the business need
- Assess the risks
- Make a plan
- Implementation

### 1. Determine the business need

Before implementing social media, it is important to consider whether social media will assist in meeting an agency's business needs.



The key to social media business planning is determining what success will look like. Agencies need to know what they hope to achieve and why social media will help. If social media projects don't have a clear aim they are not likely to achieve any outcome or have a return on the resources invested.

Using social media should not be a foregone conclusion of this process. First decide what needs to be achieved, and then decide whether technology can play a part in helping to do this.

## 1.1 Define the goals

Before expending time, effort and resources, decide why social media should be used to meet business goals.

Here are a few examples of different social media goals, all within the context of an emergency situation.

These are intended to show the different directions social media can take:

- Engaging with the Community - finding causes of emergency situations.
- Disseminating Information – providing real-time emergency information.
- Raising awareness of services – and increasing uptake of agency services to prevent emergency situations.
- Networking with peers – working locally and globally to find solutions.
- Developing Policy - using this global network to research and implement best practice, consulting with public, private, and government experts.
- Collaborating to achieve any of the above aims. Can the agency add to discussions that are industry related but not specific to the agency?
- Can the agency improve customer service through social media?
- Joining existing conversations.

## 1.2 Refine the goals

Once the direction has been defined, start asking questions to narrow the scope of the project.

Like the tools in any toolbox, social media tools only become relevant when they're applied to the right tasks. There are some questions to ask when refining a business plan, these are described below.

Will the project be ongoing or short term?

Decide whether the project calls for a short term project with limited engagement, or whether the aim is an ongoing relationship with stakeholders. For example, a project can ask for policy advice on a single issue or attempt to build a network of experts for ongoing engagement.

If a short term project is chosen, consider how to interact with other ongoing social media forms both before, during, and after the project. Initially to build awareness of a short term project, and then afterwards to harness the users for later activities - there is a lost opportunity if people are engaging and then the relationship is simply ended.

Will the social media project be internal or external?

A social media project doesn't necessarily involve the public, because social media can have a variety of audiences to engage:

- Internal agency members.
- Other government departments in Western Australia or elsewhere.
- Western Australian citizens.
- Other non-government bodies such as think-tanks, NGOs, or universities.

An internal social media project can help break down agency silos, or gather cross-agency expertise on a particular issue. If aiming to increase collaboration, there is probably no need to make the project publicly accessible as it introduces additional risks. However, it should be considered whether there is the option to consult externally at a later date. This can affect the tool chosen.

Is social media already being used?

Before embarking upon a social media project, it is best to find whether there are existing social media projects in the agency. If there are, it's important to have a consistent message, and to cross-promote activities where appropriate. It may also be the case that another agency is active on the same topic. It may be appropriate to collaborate by providing additional content to an established social media project. The difficulty of establishing a user base should not be underestimated, and any opportunity to contribute to an established voice should be valued.

Will the project involve other agencies?

One of the most effective ways to help a social media project succeed is to engage on an issue rather than as an agency. The more targeted the project, the more interested users will be. For example, the WA Police has collaborated with a wide range of other bodies to run the WA Leavers social media campaign each year. This engages the target audience much more successfully than a general WA Police Facebook page.

Will the project include the whole agency, or just those with the right skills?

The ambit of the project can be broad or narrow. For example, a forum could discuss general 'public perceptions of the health system' (such as [Patient Opinion](#)) or it can be restricted to the youth opinion of health services, or even to the opinion of medical students. The more targeted the engagement is, the higher quality it is likely to be. However, the engagement will also be less diverse and require more research. The approach will depend on the goal of the project.

While this distinction may seem self-evident, the demographic to be engaged will have a significant impact on the direction of the social media project. Also, the low cost and wide reach of social media make a precisely targeted and consultative process feasible which is not easily achievable by traditional means. Consider the target group carefully when refining a business plan.

What will the social media project do?

It is also necessary to ask more pointed questions concerning what message to convey. One way of conceptualising social media content is to consider that dialogue, function, and content are all necessary for a successful social media project<sup>1</sup>.

- A successful dialogue deals with a topic that some segment of the audience is actively interested in.
- An audience needs is for content or information; and
- The third need is functionality - the need to actually do something such as gain access to a service, cooperate with other members of the target audience, or ask advice from experts and other users.

These three concepts – Dialogue, Function, and Content - are a convenient rule of thumb to consider when planning a project. If all three elements are incorporated, success is much more likely. Even social media projects which would traditionally be one-way such as emergency information can now inject dialogue, giving citizens the ability to report to authorities and create a real-time ‘neighbourhood watch’ dynamic.

Once the goal has been refined, the next step is assessing the existing landscape.

### 1.3 Listen and understand

It is important to find the people already talking about the relevant issues. These are the people to engage with, and the success of a social media project depends on the quality of engagement.

Existing discussions can be monitored to determine what is already happening and where. It is also important to listen to the current conversation to assess the tone – some forms of social media are far more casual than others. For more information, see the Monitoring FAQ on the PSC Website.

While monitoring activity, it is important to note ‘where’ the discussion is occurring. Are people mainly interacting on blogs? Social networks? This is a good guide to the types of system they are accustomed to using, and can also indicate key systems with which to integrate. For example, if the audience is active on Twitter, but the project is using a blog due to the style of conversation, blog posts can be publicised on Twitter to increase traffic.

Don’t try and force content into the existing conversation. Engage with the existing community and leverage these services to increase the audience. Integration with existing social media by using a universal login, such as with the [Disqus](#) platform which allows people to log in to a blog with their social networking accounts, rather than creating a different account with each blog they visit.

Don’t assume anything about the target audience. The usage statistics are changing constantly - and the current fastest growing users of social media are the 13-17-year-old demographic, and the 55+ female demographic. For more information, see the Social Media Monitoring FAQ.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Identifying audience needs’ <http://www.rmmlondon.com/research/identifying-audience-needs-online/>

## 1.4 Choose a type of tool

After considering the goals, and exploring the current social media landscape, the next step is to begin selecting appropriate social media tools.

This section will first provide an overview of the categories of social media tools and what roles they best play. After each tool are suggestions of goals to which tool can contribute. To ensure the currency of the information, more specific details of individual tools will be included in a separate FAQ.

### **Social Networking**

Social networking consists of a representation of each user and their social links to other users. These social links take different forms – being a ‘fan’, ‘friend’, ‘colleague’, ‘adding to a professional network’.

Social network services provide a means for users to interact over the internet, with e-mail-like messages and instant messaging. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks. Facebook is the most popular example of Social networking.

Social networking is particularly effective for topics that consumers use on a regular or semi-regular basis because they occupy a solid presence in people's lives. Social networks can be used to build stronger relationships with stakeholders, but only on issues with which users engage. The value of social networking is not how many connections or ‘friends’ are accumulated, but the quality of these connections and how they help the project goals. It is important not to regard social networking as an end in itself.

As with microblogging (see below), social networks can be public or for internal corporate use. Corporate networks have the added advantages of complete moderation control and increased security, and are another tool for cross-divisional collaboration and knowledge management.

The ubiquitous nature of social networking sites means they are increasingly the platform into which new technologies are absorbed. For example, the geolocation services of Foursquare, the instant messaging of Microsoft Messenger, and Microblogging being drawn to some extent into the Facebook platform. The large existing user base makes it difficult for the stand-alone services to compete. Similarly, the enormous user base should be considered as a large factor when deciding which social media tool to use.

Useful for: Disseminating information, brand improvement, engaging with the community, marketing services

### **Blogging**

Blogs are a way to provide targeted information. Of the social media technologies, they are the most similar to a standard website as the emphasis is on sharing rather than engagement. The site owner provides the bulk of the content, and determines the direction of the conversation. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other, and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites. The success of a blog relies heavily on the quality and consistency of the content, and there are many resources to assist in developing a successful writing style. The increased effort results in a focussed user base which facilitates expert interaction that is unlikely with other forms of social media.

The content of a blog is usually lengthier and in-depth than that of other social media types, which makes it particularly useful for policy discussion or collaboration. However, this in-depth discussion is obviously more resource and time intensive than a 'micro' post, and the development of a strong and active user base is a task not to be undertaken lightly. A blog does not have the existing user base to draw upon, and it is suggested that other, more 'viral' forms of social media are drawn upon to increase the traffic to a blog.

The posts on a blog are much more stable and archivable than social media or microblogging posts, which makes them more useful to store information over a long time-period. While the posts are by default displayed in a reverse-chronological order, there is usually a taxonomy implemented which makes it much easier to find and categorise content, distancing blogs from the stream-of-consciousness fashion of other social media. Most blogging systems assign each post a unique URL so it can be linked directly, rather than other social networking types which provide problems for identifying a particular message.

Useful for: In-depth engagement, brand improvement, developing policy, disseminating information, engaging with expert communities, networking, collaboration

## **Microblogging**

A microblog is a stream of short updates from users, varying from daily observations to links to interesting information. The key to the success of microblogging systems is the ability to pass on information, with users re-posting information they come across. This makes information spread at incredible speed. The key uses for government are different for internal and external communication.

### ***External***

Microblogging can be a very successful way to update citizens on changes. A two-way communication over microblogging services can be resource intensive due to the potentially large amount of activity, with the instantaneous stream-of-consciousness nature of microblogging being difficult to harness.

Microblogging has recently been used successfully in emergency information to quickly update a large number of people on changes to situations, and to receive updates on local conditions from those in affected areas. This harnesses the speed and ease of creating and forwarding content. In an emergency context, it is dangerous to rely on one form of communication as high server demand may interfere with the service. Microblogging should be added to a range of other communication services.

### ***Internal***

Microblogging can be established in a closed environment such as one agency or one issue. The fixed scope means the volume of content is manageable, and can be an extremely cost-effective way of breaking down organisational silos and opening lines of communication within government. It can provide an unparalleled system for keeping an organisation up-to-date on work being conducted.

Microblogging can be very useful for building professional networks across and within government for sharing expertise. Because this is not transactional, there is no need to constantly be connected.

Useful for: Emergency information, complaints management, Customer Service, professional networking, internal communications.

### **Crowd-sourcing**

Crowd-sourcing is as much a new business model as a type of social media. It involves using the 'crowd' as a source of expertise or skill, and asking for solutions to a problem. This is used in ways which range from developing iPhone applications to soliciting suggestions of laws to be repealed. It is the opening of a specific question to a wide group which makes the activity 'crowd-sourcing'. It is an innovative way of putting a small project out for 'tender' and can be extremely cost effective. As it is usually a short-term intensive consultative process, it will often need a much larger 'traditional' communications budget than other forms of social media to increase involvement.

Useful for: Developing policy, engaging with the community

### **Wikis**

A Wiki is a platform for knowledge databases which can grow into a repository for expertise if contributors are actively participating. The wiki platform is an open-source initiative from the Wikipedia project. The key to successful wikis is ensuring ongoing contribution, as many fail due to dwindling updates. Wikis are likely to develop from a sense of community over a long time-frame. They can be an effective method of knowledge management.

Useful for: Disseminating information, knowledge management

### **Media-sharing**

Media-sharing social media are host and share a wide range of media – music, video and pictures. They can be used with other social media services, either as hosting for embedded media, or as a social media destination in themselves. For example, the branded YouTube channels, or the discussion boards of Flickr.

The ease with which rich content can be hosted and distributed means agencies can make information available in a much more cost-effective manner than before, and the integration with other social networking sites means content can be shared easily and views tracked.

Government can also use social media to provide in-depth responses to common questions, and it is a convenient way to provide information which conforms to emerging expectations of how information should be delivered.

Useful for: Disseminating information, Engaging with the community

A project isn't restricted to using one tool. In fact, a major part of designing a social media strategy is determining how the tools will interact. It is important not to spread resources too thin. It is better to do one type of social media well, and have quality content, than to attempt to provide content on many different services.

## 2. Assess the risks

Once the social media aims have been clarified, the next step is to look at the potential risks.

Compared to other communications methodologies, social media can have a higher level of risk in some areas, and lower risks in other areas. Be aware of the unique risk profile associated with social media, and manage that risk accordingly.

In particular, the public nature of social media increases the visibility of any inappropriate staff conduct. Social media does not present any unique challenges to staff conduct, but agencies should ensure their Code of Conduct covers social media and staff are aware of this. That which would be inappropriate conduct on television, in a newspaper, or in an open letter is equally inappropriate for social media activity in the 'private' life of staff which is publicly visible. Staff must be aware that most social media activity is publicly accessible. See section 3.1 for more information.

A risk analysis can highlight ways the social media goals need to be redefined, or can even result in realising an agency is not prepared to accept the risks and use social media as a communications tool. It should also prompt the creation of contingencies. The decision of how to react to a social media blunder should not be made when the first issue arises.

To assist with agency risk assessment, the following FAQs listed in Appendix 1 addresses different aspects of social media risks:

- Monitoring comments concerning an agency - Discussion of how to keep abreast of what is being said about key interests, and what is being said about an agency's social media presence.
- Moderation - The different ways in which user-created content can be handled.
- Loss of Control over content - Explanation of the various risks arising from posting content on social media such as copyright issues and impersonators.
- Security Risks - The security risks presented by social media.
- Impersonations - The Risks Social Media presents through individuals posing as an agency or government employee, whether or not they have a social media presence.
- Recruitment Processes - Risks posed by the use of social media during recruitment processes by HR staff and selection panel and the potential for harnessing social media sites to assist in attracting a wider applicant field.

These risks should be assessed within the standard risk management procedures. Agencies may find that some of these listed risks are not applicable and will also identify other risks specific to their requirements. The focus is on those risks which are likely to take on different weight compared to other communication methods.

## 3. Make a plan

Once goals and risks have been assessed, this information can inform the social media plan. This section contains a list of key considerations for implementing social media:

- Staff skills and responsibilities
- Allocating resources
- Planning how to respond to feedback
- Incorporating recordkeeping and archiving systems
- Accessibility

This list is not intended to be comprehensive – please contact us if you think there are other key considerations, so we can include them in later versions.

### 3.1 Staff skills

One of the key considerations around social media is the responsibilities of staff. There are two main concerns:

- Should staff have access to social media?
- Which skills and obligations apply?

Social media activity must abide by existing policies which affect staff behaviour. This includes:

- Code of Ethics
- Code of Conduct
- ICT Security Policies
- ICT Usage Policies
- Staff access to social media

There are three broad reasons staff may use social media - for personal, professional, or business interests. These categories can overlap, but provide a good starting point for determining the necessary access to social media.

#### **Personal interests**

This category is for use unrelated to work duties. There is little reason for allowing access to social media for purely personal interests. However, some responsibilities still apply to personal use. It is important that agency staff are aware that information or views posted online cannot be isolated from their working life.

#### **Professional interests**

Professional interests involve employees using social media for the purpose of furthering their specific job responsibilities or professional duties. This can include research, discussion, sharing, networking, or any of the various other social media activities.



Professional use of social media should be opened on a business needs basis. Social media sites can be used for many reasons, and most can have a work purpose. Personal use of the access granted for professional purposes will fall under the agency IT Acceptable Use Policy.

### **Business interests**

This category refers to employee use for the express purpose of communicating agency interests, programs and policies.

The ability to communicate on behalf of the agency should be strictly controlled. Only those with appropriate communications and social media knowledge should be accessing official social media accounts. Messages must be consistent with other communications, and may require sign-off before content is published - publicly accessible social media should be subject to the same processes as other publications.

### **Relevant skills and obligations**

It is vital for agencies to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities. This can be done by creating a social media policy or updating existing policies to ensure social media is included.

The level of responsibility increases as the level of involvement increases.

## **3.2 Responsibilities of all staff, including personal use**

It is important that staff know the impact their actions can have on their agency, even if they are acting in their personal capacity. In particular:

- Staff should be aware of their obligations under the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics and agency code of conduct, which may apply to social media as much as any other official communication or use of government assets. This includes:
  - Acting with integrity in the performance of official duties and be scrupulous in the use of official information, equipment and facilities; and
  - Exercising proper courtesy, consideration and sensitivity in their dealings with members of the public and employees.
- Staff should be aware of their agency ICT policy, for issues such as appropriate use of IT resources.
- Avoid acting in a way which could be seen as making statements on behalf of an agency.
- Personal information released on social media may have implications for IT security for the agency. See the Security FAQ in Appendix 1 below.

### **Staff using social media for professional interests**

For professional uses, the same requirements exist as for personal interests, but with the added skills and responsibilities of how to:

- Reflect a corporate persona.
- Work within level of authorisation with respect to releasing information. This includes including protocols for asking managerial permission if staff are unsure a matter is sensitive or already in the public domain, or if they are unsure their activity could be interpreted as an

official statement. For example, The Commonwealth Department of Finance and Deregulation has published their social media protocol.<sup>2</sup>

- Incorporate social media work with recordkeeping processes.

### **Staff using social media for business interests**

Those representing the agency must:

- Know how to use the technology involved, including how to:
  - Manage settings.
  - Measure social media performance.
  - Control moderation processes.
  - Ensure recordkeeping obligations are met.
- Operate within the communications environment including how to:
  - Reflect a corporate persona.
  - Adopt an appropriate 'voice' for the audience.
  - Respond to the public and media. Staff should be aware of Administrative Instructions [728 Media Public Communications](#).
  - Interact with other business areas to develop content.
- Be able to demonstrate that they comply with all applicable legal requirements including compliance with the principles of administration, human resource management and conduct in sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994, record keeping responsibilities under the State Records Act 2000 (see para. 3.5 below), information access requirements under the Freedom of Information Act 1992, and with applicable privacy laws and standards.

### **3.3 Allocating resources**

While social media software can be relatively inexpensive, the staff that create the content and monitor interactions are the most important aspect of social media. Appropriate resourcing is an essential consideration.

There are a few important considerations when allocating resources to a social media project.

Consider all staff involved.

#### **Initial costs**

This could potentially involve several different teams within an agency, including communications, management, policy and IT. There will be a resourcing requirement to:

- Create and manage the social media plan.
- Update the communications plan.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Social Media 101: A beginner's guide for Finance employees' (2010)

<https://www.finance.gov.au/files/2010/04/social-media-101.pdf>

- Create internal policies and other supporting documentation.
- Establish and update IT infrastructure.

### **Ongoing costs**

The ongoing staffing costs are also substantial, including those who:

- Write and review content prior to it being published. There are likely to be a number of staff involved, as with any publication.
- Respond to feedback from users.
- Research upcoming content.
- Monitor the project's social media presence and KPIs.
- Provide IT support.

Once resourcing requirements are determined, agencies are recommended to formally incorporate social media duties and responsibilities into relevant staff roles.

A key consideration is that social media is active 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If the social media project is public facing, is it important that there is a plan for monitoring interactions outside business hours. It may be necessary to incorporate this into JDFs.

### **3.4 Allocate resources for training**

What is the existing level of social media expertise in the agency? There may be very little, or there may be more than is required. Either way, the level of expertise available will determine resourcing levels. Any social media project requires a significantly wider range of skills that simply using the services in a personal context.

### **3.5 Consider varying demands over time**

Resourcing should take into account the time required to build an audience. In most cases, it will take time before a new social media project gathers users. Therefore, it is important to plan for a slow uptake of these services and to stick with social media. If at first it does not appear very successful, continue to focus on quality content while monitoring KPIs. It is vital that appropriate resources are allocated at this stage because the audience will not grow if there is no interaction or if the site appears static. Once critical mass is achieved, appropriate resourcing is essential to ensure that the agency makes the most of the information, feedback and interaction being generated.

The social media project could be successful, require a large amount of resources, do as well as expected, or it could not engage people and have a low level of activity. These issues are hard to predict, so there should not be a heavy commitment either way. Contingencies should be incorporated into the risk analysis and business plan.

Part of this planning is deciding when to end a social media project. This should consider:

- Migrating any necessary content to other channels.
- Ensuring users are advised of the closure of the channel or application
- Closing social media accounts.

- Ensuring any records management policies have been complied with.

### 3.6 Type of project

Some projects require active participation by the agency, such as social networking or blogging. Other projects facilitate the contributions of others, such as crowd sourcing or developing a wiki. This should be taken into account when resourcing social media, as it determines the level of engagement. An ideal response time should also be set, as a high level of engagement may require resourcing outside of normal business hours.

### 3.7 Accessibility

All government websites, including social media, are required to meet current accessibility requirements and comply with the WCAG 2.0 standard according to the [Website Accessibility Standards](#). A social media presence should be assessed for accessibility compliance in the same way as any other agency website.

### 3.8 Engaging with user content

Having a feedback response plan in place prior to implementing social media ensures that consistency of message and tone and timeliness of responses can be aligned with broader communications strategies.

There are a number of aspects to responding:

- Moderation.
- Dealing with negative feedback.
- Inappropriate comments by staff.
- Monitoring outside sources.

#### **Moderation**

Moderation is described in the Moderation FAQ in Appendix 1 below.

In short, it is necessary to understand the range of moderation allowed by a chosen social media tool, and decide on the appropriate action. Alternatively, if the tool allows full control of moderation, decide whether it is appropriate to institute strong moderation (posts need prior approval), or weaker moderation (negative posts are retrospectively removed).

#### **Dealing with negative feedback**

Agencies should respond to customer comments in social media channels in a similar manner to which they would respond to comments in person, by phone, email, fax or other channels. Choosing to allow comments from the public in any form necessitates a plan on how to deal with these comments. If an agency does not have capacity to deal with comments, this function should be disabled. Allowing comments to accrue unintended is not a good approach.

Rather than responding ad hoc or with silence, a plan should be formulated before the need arises. In this way the messages and tone of the responses can be aligned with broader communications strategies.

The first step is to identify the type of negative feedback:

- Legitimate problems
- Constructive criticism
- ‘Trolling’<sup>3</sup> or ‘spam’<sup>4</sup>

### **Decide how to react**

After determining which type of feedback has been received, the next step is to determine the type of response necessary.

The primary rule when responding to all criticism, even the negative type, is to stay positive. Negativity could allow an agency to be drawn into a fight with a citizen or user, and will only reflect poorly on the agency. This may seem self-evident, but there have been many failures in the private sector. This is most often due to the importance of social media being underestimated, and it being monitored by someone inappropriately trained and unaware of the damage inappropriate responses can cause.<sup>5</sup>

### **Decide how to handle**

The handling of complains or feedback must be treated the same as through any other medium. It should be incorporated into existing complaints mechanisms.

### **Negative comments made by staff**

As discussed previously, many of the risks negative comments pose are actually due to the fault of agencies handling responses poorly. Appropriate training is necessary to align social media with normal complaints procedures, and the authority for staff to assume official persona should be strictly controlled. That said, the potential for negative comments should be a consideration during the risk assessment process.

References to the Code of Conduct may be necessary to ensure staff know of the consequences for inappropriate comments made on government social media sites.

Other risks cause by staff behaviour are discussed in section 3.1 Staff skills and responsibilities.

### **Monitoring outside sources**

Social media conversations cannot be constrained to convenient areas. Even without a Facebook presence, for example, there could be comments concerning an agency or services. While it is not recommended to spread resources thinly and respond to comments from all sources, it is recommended that an agency monitor the sentiments (see the Monitoring FAQ in Appendix 1). It possible that the agency will only respond to comments which occur on social media sources initiated by the agency – for example, to only respond to comments on official

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<sup>3</sup> A troll is someone who posts inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as an online discussion forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking other users into a desired emotional response: see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troll\\_\(Internet\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troll_(Internet))

<sup>4</sup> ‘Spammers’ repeatedly fill a guestbook with links to their own site and no relevant comment, to increase search engine rankings. If an actual comment is given it is often just "cool page", "nice website", or keywords of the spammed link. See [Wikipedia Spam in blogs](#) -and [Spambot](#)

<sup>5</sup> <http://lexiconsocialmedia.wordpress.com/2010/03/20/nestles-social-media-fail/>

pages, rather than related fan pages. Alternatively this could also be extended this to targeted Communities of Practice or blogs, to engage those passionate about a subject. Monitoring outside sources is an ideal method to find people who are eager to engage on a topic.

### 3.9 Recordkeeping and archiving

WA Government Recordkeeping and Archiving requirements apply to social media as any other form of electronic record.

[The State Records Act \(the Act\)](#) requires that all WA Government entities implement appropriate record keeping and archiving methodologies for all types of communication. For the purposes of the Act, social media is considered a communications methodology.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution to implement across all WA Government. Each agency has differing circumstances around its social media recordkeeping obligations, and this needs to be reviewed in the context of social media.

Here is a list of some key points to consider as part of the Recordkeeping Plan review.

- Is the existing recordkeeping system capable of supporting social media records?
- Who is responsible for social media recordkeeping?
- Do existing policies cover social media records?
- Is the retention process and period defined for social media records?
- Is the data stored within the agency? Data stored on external sites cannot be defined as a record, therefore records must be stored within the agency infrastructure
- Are staffed appropriately trained for social media recordkeeping?

The ability to integrate with recordkeeping responsibilities should be considered when choosing a social media tool. Key features are an ability to export data in a format which can be stored on recordkeeping system, or email alerts which can be stored as records of activity. Storing records on an external social media site is not sufficient.

It is also important to remember that both outgoing and incoming content can be a record. Whether social media content needs to be recorded can also be affected by whether it is simply replicating content released through other communications streams.

## 4. Implementation

This section of the guidelines briefly describes the next steps to take once the Business Plan has been drafted. These steps are all internal mechanisms, and as such can be managed by the agency using agency existing templates and processes.

### 4.1 Internal processes

#### **Create a sign off document**

Each agency will have a specific process for meeting this step, perhaps a business plan, or another type of document.

#### **Gain executive sign-off**

The responsible officers need to provide the completed sign off document to the relevant executive for their review and sign-off.

The signed off document will provide the agency with a formal record of the process undertaken to get to the stage where the implementation of social media can occur. It will also be useful for negotiations within the agency when funding, resourcing or other social media management issues arise.

### 4.2 Ongoing processes

As with any project implementation, it is recommended that a process review cycle is initiated. This ensures that the solution stays relevant, continues to meet its business needs whilst minimising risks and allows changes and/or updates to be implemented regularly. This is particularly important for social media, as users will quickly leave a site if it is not maintaining the level of service and interactivity they expect.

By implementing a review model, agencies will maximise the potential of social media and reap the benefits.



## Appendix 1 – Frequently Asked Questions

### FAQ 1 – Moderation

Moderation is the process of removing inappropriate content from your social media site.

It is important to note that moderation is not a form of censorship and constructive criticism should not be blocked or removed. It is very important for users to feel confident that their constructive feedback is going to be displayed and incorporated into the discussion.

Moderation is not censorship. If you are using social media to engage with citizens, you should listen to those citizens – whether what they have to say is good, or bad. Apart from anything else, consumers do not respond well to censorship, and you could be creating an even bigger problem.

#### **Why is moderation necessary?**

The ease and speed of social media is one of its strengths, but it also means you can lose control of the content on your site. The user-generated content can sometimes be inappropriate.

Such content can detract from the purpose of the discussion, and may contravene Government regulations and legislation. Agencies need to moderate social media channels they control. Many brands wrongly believe that the content that will appear on their pages within a third party social network (particularly the big four of Bebo, Facebook, MySpace and YouTube) will be "safe", as the networks have a legal responsibility to check content for illegal or abusive content. Not so. Social networks do not accept legal liability for everything on their sites – it simply would not be practical for them to do so. But the nature of social networks means that they are inherently open to public content (and therefore public abuse) – not just trusted "fans" of a brand.

Brands should be aware of this, and take responsibility for their own content on social networks, rather than rely on the networks to do their work for them. This risk can be mitigated by moderation.

It would be great if every reader comment on your blog post and every contribution to your Facebook fan page was a high-five but some of what goes on is going to be ugly—in the foul language sense or maybe in the threat-to-your-brand sense. So, you're going to have to review every one of the comments and posts to make a series of decisions:

#### **Negative associations for the brand**

The main concern is the negative associations that a brand might suffer as a result of inappropriate content being posted on its page. Many users will assume that brands check the content that goes onto their pages and so, if (for example) racist comments were to appear on a YouTube channel, users might assume the brand endorses those comments.

#### **Protecting users**

It is good practice to protect users from exposure to illegal or inappropriate content, bullying by other group members - and importantly, from themselves – from sharing personally identifiable information that could be used to target vulnerable groups such as children.



This is particularly important where brands are likely to attract younger audiences, but those that attract adults should be aware that they will be open to younger audiences by default, within a social network. These are not closed communities.

### **What content should be removed?**

Balanced online dialogue. Whether content is pre-moderated or community moderated, follow these three principles: The Good, the Bad, but not the Ugly. If the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then we approve the content, regardless of whether it's favourable or unfavourable to Intel. But if the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, then we reject the content.

Inappropriate content includes:

- Defamatory, abusive, harassing, or hateful statements.
- Users with names that include abusive or obscene words. Options to tackle this are: block the user outright; or contact them and ask them to change their username. If they refuse, or they change it back, block them (sometimes it may be necessary to involve the social network in this action, although it should always be possible).
- Disclosure of confidential information.
- Conduct encouraging unlawful activity, or which otherwise violates the law.
- Bullying, abuse.
- Obscene images, footage, logos or avatars - these must never make it onto your website.

When one of Starbucks site users included a swastika in their profile picture, it was debated whether the brand should act against the user or allow them freedom of speech. If an avatar is inappropriate and being used on your page, it may be appropriate to delete that content or ban the user. Use your judgement based on the maliciousness of the content, and the form of the social media - on some sites the content may linger, on others it will be pushed off your page within minutes.

You may also want to consider limiting avatar choice – branded sites aimed at children may decide to provide a list of avatars that children can choose from, or a way that they can build their own cartoon image with provided components. This removes the risk of users uploading anything offensive or inappropriate.

### **Copyright violation**

This is a key area of controversy, as there is still uncertainty concerning whether a user who uploads a picture or video containing material still under copyright makes the publisher (i.e. the organisation having control over the website) liable. Having moderators check content prior to publication would greatly reduce the chance of copyrighted material getting published.

While reasonable precautions should be observed, it is possible to be overzealous by being too dictatorial about what is and is not permitted. The [Nestle Facebook](#) logo debacle<sup>6</sup> is one

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<sup>6</sup> [http://news.cnet.com/8301-13577\\_3-20000805-36.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-13577_3-20000805-36.html)

[example of a brand getting it wrong](#)<sup>7</sup>. Contrast that with the recent [Greenpeace competition](#)<sup>8</sup> to design a new BP logo which has received coverage with little, if any, response from BP - which clearly has other priorities at the moment.

An important consideration is whether you are the owner/host of the social media service, or it is a third party who is responsible for monitoring the copyright obligations of users.

### **Threats to IT security**

There are particular risks arising from links to external websites included in off-topic posts.

If a user posts something that is obviously off-topic, it should be considered to be spam (particularly if it includes a link – this could take the user to a website that is infected with malware or contains offensive images, for example). Spam will disengage users and make your site less relevant and interesting to them. The solution? Don't publish the post, or delete it. If necessary, block the user.

TinyURLS - Shortened URLs may be used to entice users to click on links they would otherwise avoid. The 'real' URL is not immediately viewable.

### **Privacy and safety issues**

Youth<sup>9</sup> are particularly vulnerable (and often naïve) when communicating online. Children will often try to upload pictures that contain identifying details (such as a house, or road name, or school gates), without understanding the risks that could pose. A branded site that is used by children should be particularly careful that no personally identifiable information is published, as part of the brand's duty of care to the user.

Brands need to be particularly vigilant about offensive material being loaded onto their sites when targeting children. Child created content (CCC) is becoming big business. For example, 1,000 films created by children were submitted to the CBBC's Me and My Movie website in 2009.

Of course, there's some great filtering technology out there that can be used effectively as a sophisticated triage to flag up the images most likely to be inappropriate. Pixel-matching software picks up images or video which matches with blacklists of content previously blocked by moderators, or probably pornographic content. This significantly increases the speed and accuracy of moderation.

Is there a case for escalating things to the authorities?

How does moderation work?

At the most basic, it involves viewing all content and assessing whether it needs to be removed.

There are 4 main methods of moderation:

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<sup>7</sup><https://thesocialelement.agency/social-media-services/social-media-crisis-management/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://pixellogo.com/blogs/pixellogo-blog/greenpeace-announces-a-new-bp-logo-design-and-asks-us-to-tell-bp-where-to-stick-it>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.emoderation.com/news/How-to-Moderate-Teens-and-Tweens.pdf>

- Community moderation - For established, healthy communities, group moderation by regular users can work well. This will sometimes be allowed to take the place of pre-moderation—it must be applied for and approved.
- Reactive moderation - This is the most “hands off” strategy one can take toward moderation while still attempting to police the community. Users are allowed to get on and post, while other users can report any posts that they consider to be in breach of the rules. These reports are then looked at by a moderator who takes action accordingly. While this will often lead to the happiest users, the site runs the risk of having undesirable content remaining live purely because no one reports it.
- Post-moderation - This is the most commonly used form of moderation. Content goes live on the site immediately, and a moderator reads the content a short time later. This generally leads to good quality discussions as people can easily chat back and forth with each other, and anything problematic is dealt with in a prompt manner. For the busiest communities though, there is a risk that potentially problematic content can be live on the site for longer than you might like.
- Pre-moderation - This is the strictest form of moderation, meaning that every bit of content submitted by a user must be looked at by a moderator and passed before it can go live on the site. As such, it’s essentially the safest for your community as nothing you’re unhappy with should ever appear on your site. However, as there is inevitably a delay between the user posting and a moderator checking it over, it causes discussions to be more disjointed, which almost invariably will drive many users away. Because of this, pre-moderation is really only suitable for the most at-risk communities.

Once a moderation type is decided, appropriate rules and guidelines should be documented to formalise the decision and advise users of how they can make a comment (i.e., via a registration process, through a strict moderation process, etc), what the expected behaviours are for the site and the moderators options regarding misuse.

Have clear guidelines – provide obvious signposts to community or competition guidelines and encourage users to follow them by enforcing them. If a user contravenes these guidelines, then the brand is within its rights to warn the user, and remove the offensive image (or block the user completely, depending on the seriousness of the breach.

What should a moderation plan contain?

It may be necessary to have different approaches in the different forms of social media you engage in.

- Feedback timeliness – advise on response times regarding comments made (e.g. within one hour, within 24 hours etc).
- When the site is monitored (e.g. 9am to 5pm on working days only, 24/7/365 etc).

Agencies should assign the role of Moderator to relevant staff within the agency. It is the responsibility and duty of the Moderator to manage, monitor and remove (where required) content by implementing the rules/guidelines that have been established by the agency.

What moderation do different sites allow?

This section provides specific information on different social media products - so is likely to go out of date fast.

## **YouTube**

### ***What's possible***

Pre- and post- moderation of content are both possible, and are very easy to setup. Most user-generated content can be sent to a designated inbox before it goes live on the site, so can be pre-moderated. All comments can be set to be pre-moderated. This includes all comments on videos, channels and anywhere else. Comments can even be turned off or set to allow "only friends" comment. However, you may only moderate comments on UGC that the brand itself has uploaded – see section c. below.

### ***Content***

You can pre- or post- moderate: friend requests, video responses, comments (on brand generated content) and profile posts. There is no way to post moderate friend invitations on YouTube. They are all pre-moderated. The rest can be set either way.

### ***Not possible***

What you can't pre- or post- moderate: avatars of friends. But you can reject friends with offensive images for avatars or offensive names and the issue with avatars on YouTube only comes into play on channel comments, where there is a thumbnail image by the post. Otherwise no avatars appear on the comments. To be noted though, is that, the moderation of comments on video responses belongs to whoever has uploaded the video response on their page. There will be a link to the video response from the brand page, and the only way to disassociate the brand from any undesirable content in this way is to delete the video response.

### ***Issues***

Users can change avatar images quickly and without flagging it up, so it would be almost impossible to track. Moderation of comments on response videos (see above) – although there would seem to be a black list filter available which would block 'objectionable words' from being uploaded.

## **MySpace**

### ***What's possible***

Pre and post moderation are more difficult to do, but are still possible. MySpace is very responsive to moderation. Comments, messages and friend requests come to a central inbox for pre moderation (this is a significant difference from Facebook's process); or it can be post moderated.

### ***Content***

You can pre- or post- moderate: fan requests, comments, videos, images, blogs (and their comments) and private messages.

### ***Not possible***

What you can't pre- or post- moderate: fan updates (live feed) that roll on the front page. However, you can remove these from the profile page altogether by blocking the fan concerned.

## **Twitter**

### ***What's possible***

Can block followers, which stops their mentions appearing on your wall. Can delete your tweets. Can make your tweets private.

### ***Content***

Can be moderated: tweets mentioning your account. You can also report users for Spamming.

### ***Not possible***

Individual tweets mentioning you. You must either block the user, removing all of their mentions of you.

### ***Issues***

Tweets may remain searchable for a short period of time after deletion.

## **Facebook**

### ***What's possible***

Facebook now allows Page admins to set up a keyword moderation block list and enable a profanity block list that filters wall posts and comments by users into the Page wall's spam tab. Admins can configure the list from the Manage Permissions tab of the Page admin interface.

Facebook does not offer pre- moderation, so the only option is to post-moderate and delete comments that violate site rules, or to block persistent offenders.

### ***Content***

You can moderate: wall, photos, discussions, notes and comments.

### ***Not possible***

What you can't post-moderate: Reviews can't be deleted: only reported through to Facebook. It appears hard to remove 'Graffiti' also.

### ***Issues***

Facebook is very difficult to moderate. It has not been set up to make it easy for brands to moderate content; as a result, there are various companies developing moderation tools as well as apps specifically for Facebook.

## **Community pages**

Recently introduced by Facebook in order to give 'fans' a place to talk about non-brand topics, because they aggregate all mentions of the topic (or brand) onto the page, the Community Pages pose a severe reputational threat about which a brand can do nothing as they have no editorial control over the page.

### **[Facebook Pages Terms](#)**

"9. You may not establish terms beyond those set forth in this Statement to govern the posting of content by users on a Page you administer, except you may disclose they types of content you will remove from your Page and grounds for which you may ban a user from accessing the Page."

## **What type of moderation is right for me?**

The first step is to know the rules of the game. The tool you choose is likely to affect your moderation policy.

Each choice has pros and cons. For example, strict moderation will result in no inappropriate content being posted but will require more resources to moderate postings and may not allow users to conduct 'real time' discussions on a topic. Conversely, no moderation runs the risks of inappropriate content being posted and the discussion running off scope. However, it requires no allocation of resources once established. Generally, a balanced approach would be appropriate, i.e., limited or registered moderation.

## **FAQ 2 – Approval processes**

### **What are some of the options for an approval process?**

There are a range of different approaches - from full pre-approval of all content, to a free-for-all with no controls.

#### **Pre-approval of all content**

All content requires pre-approval, preferably from the Corporate Communications area, or a manager with appropriate training. This method has a downfall due to its inflexibility, but on the other hand it ensures communications are consistent with other communications channels. Pre-approval also means that nothing is sent hastily - content can rarely be deleted in the social media environment. This is great for convincing risk-adverse members of your organisation that social media is appropriate. Additionally, having a second opinion can be hugely beneficial when first starting to use social media. As a final point, it also means you will have adequate content for the upcoming period and can strategically time your content releases.

#### **Post-approval of content**

A more flexible approach is to provide corporate communications with a summary of the previous week/month's communications (depending on volume) to assess the tone and content of the communications? This means you can create content more organically, without the risk of diverging from the tone other communications over time.

#### **Hybrid categories**

This hybrid process is for some content to be pre-approved, but other types to be released ad hoc by people with the appropriate training. Some options include:

- Content types - 'pre-meditated' content such as articles, photos, video being approved, but with responses, 'likes' and other more social content being either post-approved or created by approved individuals.
- Topics - defining boundaries within which content does not require approval. Such as - similar content to that being published through other channels, customer service, handling enquiries, or whatever else is deemed suitable.

#### **Peer-approval**

As it sounds, a second opinion before content is published. This is effective at weeding out typos, words and tone which could be misconstrued, or otherwise inappropriate or confidential

content. This can also be incorporated into a 'guest contributor' publication model. Those less experienced in the ways of social media can create content which is then edited by regular contributors before publication.

### **Trusted trained authors**

As your social media model matures, it is likely that there will be people who are experienced and skilled enough to create content without any approval process.

And across all the non-pre-approved models, the process should be - if you aren't sure whether content is appropriate - ask your manager/communications team.

How should I choose between approval processes?

There are a number of relevant considerations - you should think about all of these factors when choosing a workflow for your social media content.

### **Flexibility vs. consistency**

Balance the need for freedom and flexibility of engagement with the need to maintain a cohesive communications strategy. Refer to the aims of the project as discussed in the business planning – it's likely the level of flexibility needed is dependent on the aim and technology chosen.

The need for flexibility is often overstated. Many large organisations and successful social media outlets schedule their content in advance. This allows consistent tone and distribution times. Flexibility and response times are only the key for customer service and engagement, or live conversations. The majority of content such as videos, photos, competitions, media releases are all types of content which are not created spontaneously.

Customer service-type interactions should be covered by existing customer service policies, and it is recommended to take these types of interactions off social media after the initial contact. There is likely to be confidential information which should not be discussed in a public forum. If it is a closed community or discussion, training and authorising is a better approach.

### **The audience**

Who you are talking to can have a huge difference on the approval processes. If the social media activity is only for members of your agency, there is less onerous approval required. Similarly, for content aimed at other government employees. The more sensitive the content, the more extensive the approval process should be.

It is important to consider the potential audience as well as the actual audience. Many forms of social media are visible to anyone who cares to look, so it must be assumed that anyone will read them. It is only if you restrict access to a certain type of user that you can assume an audience type. For example, a Yammer network verifies the email addresses of users.

### **Level of training**

As staff become more used the world of social media, it may be appropriate to choose a less stringent approval process. This can be done for individuals or business areas who prove their judgement and writing ability over time, or more generally.

Is there anything else I should consider?

## **Records management**

It might be a good idea to synchronise your Record Management processes with your approval processes. For example - if you export your content weekly for adding to records, you may want to use this same export process if you have a post-approval process.

## **Inappropriate content**

The content approval processes should be more stringent the more controversial the content and likely responses. The times you are dealing with sensitive issues are those you are most likely to say something to inflame the situation. Regardless of the approval process, if you aren't sure you are saying the right thing, get a second opinion from the Communications Department, a manager, or other appropriate colleague.

Take sensitive conversations off public social media and into traditional means where appropriate.

## **Communications and style guides**

Does the communications plan or style guide need to be amended to accommodate a more informal style or the use of abbreviations?

## **Confidential information**

As with inappropriate content, subjects which are likely to involve official information may be more appropriate to include approvals. This may fit with a hybrid approval process, with certain topics being decided as needing increased approval. Some questions to consider are:

- Does this information need to be released?
- Am I using official information appropriately?
- These issues will already be covered in your internal policies.

## **FAQ 3 – Content-related risks**

### **Is it safer just to avoid social media?**

The use of social media is increasing and the benefits and opportunities presented by social media are hard to ignore. Therefore, actually not using social media to communicate, collaborate, interact and gain feedback from users (both internal and external) can be considered a risk to agencies, in particular when users are increasingly looking to interact via social media.

Agencies need to determine if the risk of not providing social media to its users (both internal and external) outweighs the risks of providing it.

### **Will I lose ownership of content I post?**

In some cases, social media applications state in their Terms and Conditions that they reserve limited rights of use over the content in their application, preserving their right to use this content for the purpose of operating and advertising their service.

In effect this means being able to use an agencies content if they choose to in a way they choose, without consulting with the content owner.



If an agency does not want its content being freely used then one option is to reserve content rights under a [creative commons licence](#)<sup>10</sup>. This is only applicable to social media sites that allow users to reserve the rights for their content.

Another way to determine if content is being used without authorisation is via monitoring tools. These tools can monitor the agencies social media presence and alert the agency to wrongful use of its content.

It is vital that agencies examine the Terms and Conditions and determine the content ownership rights of the social media application and either agree with them or implement alternative options before placing government data on that application.

On the other hand, you may breach copyright yourself. Check the status of any pictures you use. Some are licenced for limited purposes; so be check any content you are unsure of. Also, any design or professional photos you have taken for your agency may be limited to certain types of use. For example - they may have been taken for your annual report and only licensed for print use and not online distribution.

Can I control how my content is used?

The nature of social media allows users to disseminate content quickly and easily to other social media applications and therefore it is likely that content placed on one application will be provided via other applications in due course.

This flow of information is described as the 'viral' nature of social media. It is not possible to control this from occurring and in fact this is one of the main benefits of the medium. Accordingly, agencies need to understand and accept that once content is placed into a social media application, there will be no way to control how or when the content is disseminated.

This viral property has several consequences:

- Content appearing in unexpected places - Discussion can occur on sites other than the original site. Agencies may not be able to track all these discussions so may miss out on useful feedback. You can mitigate this risk by monitoring your online presence and mentions of your activities.
- Ensuring current information - Updates or changes to the original information may not be disseminated to other sites. It becomes more difficult for government to guarantee the currency of information. This can be mitigated by including links to the original official source, and encouraging users to check for the latest version.

### **How can I stop confidential data being released?**

As with other methods of communications, a risk of social media is that staff could disseminate in-confidence or other types of inappropriate data. Due to the nature of social media, where information can be shared to so many people in such a short time, the ability to minimise distribution of this data is minimal at best. Accordingly, this risk is more significant for social media than other communications methodologies.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

A mitigation technique for this risk is to ensure that staff are aware that the same rules apply to social media as for other communications methodologies as described in existing agency documents, such as the Code of Conduct and Communications Plan.

### **Why aren't people listening to us?**

The purpose of social media is to involve users, and therefore a risk faced by social media is when there is a lack of participation from users. This will result in a failed social media implementation, which will reflect badly on the agency.

This may occur when social media is implemented 'because it's there' and therefore doesn't actually provide anything useful to users or have a valid business need, or it may be because there is a lack of new content being provided via social media.

Ensuring that there is a valid business need, that appropriate levels of resources are allocated to social media and new quality content is regularly provided will mitigate this risk. This will result in users being driven to keep participating and will in turn help build the awareness and amount of participating users.

Note that it does take time to build a significant following and therefore, agencies must be realistic about expected benefits and time lines. Initially it may seem that the agency is wasting time, effort and resources, however as the instance gains users, then the benefits will flow.

### **Can someone impersonate us? What should we do?**

Government representatives or agencies may be impersonated by others, such as comedians or social commentators. This often happens within the social media realm. The response to such impersonations should proceed with appropriate caution.

It may be possible to contact the service provider and request material be taken down, but a heavy-handed approach may restrict legitimate political discussion or criticism and often draw undue attention to harmless behaviour. However, agencies should pay particular consideration to the intent of the impersonation. The impersonation could be intended to mislead and misinform the public and should be treated seriously. This risk is particularly likely if an agency is being impersonated rather than a public figure. If the account is intended as an impersonation rather than an obvious satire or fan page, action should be taken.

Note that this risk is one that occurs whether or not an agency is actively engaging in social media. It is recommended that monitoring of social media should be undertaken, even if an agency has no desire to implement social media itself.

Impersonation policies of several major social media tools

The major social media providers are generally happy to work with the official owners of a name, and to work with users to provide an outcome.

- [Twitter policy](#)
- [Facebook policy](#)
- [LinkedIn policy](#)
- [MySpace policy](#)
- [YouTube policy](#)

## FAQ 4 – Key Performance Indicators

### **What should I be trying to measure?**

Just because social marketing statistics are easy to measure, it doesn't mean it's easy to assess the value of your efforts. Of course you can track the number of Facebook fans, but [how much are those Facebook fans really worth?](#)<sup>11</sup>

Is your blog advancing your strategic aims? Unfortunately, there is no single KPI which can measure the impact of social media. Like any KPI, focussing on one KPI can lead to behaviour that doesn't benefit your objectives.

The first key to developing good metrics is to know your objectives.

This is where it pays off if you did a good job of defining your business need as discussed in Stage 1 of the Social Media Guidelines. The rest of this FAQ goes into more detail of how to find KPIs that are most appropriate for you, and relevant to meeting your goals.

### **What makes a good indicator?**

The general concept - quality not quantity

Not all measurements are equal. You have to ensure you are measuring quality, not just not quantity. As a basic example, don't count spam comments and always verify automatic measurements of human sentiment.

### **Influencers - not all users are created equal**

Another key concept is assessing 'volume' vs. 'stickiness'. In other words - whether people are taking notice. It's important to have an effective call to action rather than one that is seen by many and ignored. For example, you can compare the number of people who view your content to the number of people who view your content but also share it with their followers. This indicates whether you are creating content people find interesting.

This concept of 'sharing with followers' is related to the concept of 'influencers'. Certain people on social media are more influential than others, with a wide network and a valued opinion. Some organisations using social media make it their explicit aim to target specific influencers - whether it be newspapers, industry publications, or influential bloggers. This goes back to the general concept of quality of quantity.

### **Tie to outcomes**

Again, before you get carried away with contacting influencers or enticing people to share your content, make sure you tie it to real world outcomes. Linking everything back to your strategic agency aims will mean you can justify any resources expenditure, and meaningfully track your efforts over time. If your KPIs cannot be used to positively influence desirable outcomes, then they are not useful KPIs.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bnet.com/blog/digital-marketing/how-much-are-facebook-fans-really-worth/127>

## Base KPIs on what you can measure

When deciding on KPIs, a primary consideration should be what can be measured by existing infrastructure. Often the built in tracking mechanisms can be used in innovative ways or cross-tabbed to provide meaningful KPIs. For example, as mentioned earlier, the ratio of shares to views is more meaningful than a pure count of views. It isn't always necessary to buy third-party monitoring systems. These can be expensive, and raise the expectations of success, as you have to justify this expenditure before you even start.

## What are examples of good indicators?

There are different types of KPIs to use. To add some structure to this section, we have divided them into three stages. They build on the basic concepts discussed in the previous questions:

- Activity metrics
- Engagement metrics
- Business metrics

### **Stage 1: Activity metrics**

This is the most basic type level of indicator. By definition, an activity metric is one that really only tells you that “something is happening.” Classic examples are: number of page views, site visitors, Facebook fans, or members joining your online brand community. Not that you should ignore these numbers or fail to gather them (they can be helpful in tracking trends, and benchmarking). But you should never be satisfied with activity metrics alone. Don't get stuck on stage 1.

### **Example KPIs**

- Register and response rates
  - CTR/ Post click activity.
  - Traffic – total and unique visitors
    - To social media
    - To your webpage from social media. Do you get more activity on your website when you blog or tweet?
  - To specific campaign pages
  - Profile updates and activity
  - Time spent on key pages
  - Inbound links to your social media or webpage
  - Mentions of your social media or webpage on blogs etc.

### **Stage 2: Engagement metrics**

“Engagement” is one of the most over-used, and under-defined terms in marketing. So let me propose a definition here: an engagement metric is anything that measures the level of your customer's involvement, attention, and commitment. Examples could include: average time spent by members in your online community, percent of Facebook fans who “like” or comment on your wall posts, or the number of ideas actually submitted to your innovation sourcing site. Engagement metrics are much more meaningful than activity metrics. And in some cases, they may be the best measure that you can get. (It's hard to ever know how many cars were sold

because 20,000 people “liked” your pre-launch product photos on Facebook). At the same time, it is hard to justify a major marketing investment on engagement metrics alone. So wherever possible, you want to reach beyond stage 2 to the next stage.

### ***Example KPIs - User actions***

- Going Viral
  - Reposts
  - Likes
  - Forward to friends
  - Subscriptions – RSS, email, twitter
    - Fans
    - Bookmarks
    - Follows
    - Registered Users
    - Downloads
    - Install app/widget etc
    - Document/ Media downloads
    - Mentions on other sites

### ***Example KPIs – Agency KPIs***

- Engagement
  - Response time
  - Issues resolved and resolution rate
  - Comments
    - Feedback
    - Posts
    - Ratings
    - Uploads
    - Creating content
      - Blog posts etc written
      - Videos created
      - Awareness of external social media.

### ***Stage 3: Business metrics***

Business metrics measure the impact of digital marketing on critical business outcomes: your KPIs (key performance indicators), or ROI (return on investment). Business metrics could include direct sales through a digital channel, lead generation, or cost savings to existing business processes. If you are running an online forum to generate innovative business ideas from customers—how many of their ideas did you bring to market? What was the business value achieved, perhaps in terms of new sales, better customer retention, or increased market share? These may be financial measures, or established KPIs used across your business, such

as a Net Promoter Score. Business metrics allow you to optimize your digital efforts, compare their results with traditional marketing activities, and decide how to best allocate budgets.

### ***Examples of external measures of success***

- Customer satisfaction.
- Attendance at events: this is a concrete way of tracking how effective your call to action is.
- Suggestions but into action: a consultative process isn't about making everyone feel collaborative and valued, it's about making real changes to your operations.
- Brand perception: "It's why Visa sponsors the Olympics and why Coca-Cola sponsors the Special Olympics," she said. "It's why you're on Twitter." It's about maintaining or enhancing your brand's reputation, perception and visibility. So you measure KPIs that inform factors like customer satisfaction score or likeliness to buy.
- Service growth: It's about leads and lead qualification as well as sales, so hone your marketing program to identify the people who will ultimately generate sales. So measure downloads, registrations, new subscribers and a host of other KPIs that will shine a light onto revenue growth patterns. (Francis didn't talk about how to convert leads into customers, and it starts with using the right social media tools not only to identify them but to engage them in a high-value way.)
- Support savings: Analysis of social media can provide a really cheap and interesting way to get market research done at a fraction of the cost of other methods.

How should I use the figures?

Monitor how the results change over time to unearth opportunities or issues. Concentrate on the rate of change of your KPIs, and the frequency of events.

KPIs can be used to measure which kinds of content are the most successful, and support continuous improvement. This allows you to tweak your content and tone over time. Good tracking can make sure media content serves a need your customer might have.

Again, it is important to do a manual check to validate any results. For example, if a particular type of post is hugely popular, make sure it is popular with the demographic you are targeting. If it is part of a locally-targeted public campaign, but overseas visitors are providing most of the hits it is not likely to be aiding your business objectives. However, if you are seeking engagement from experts in a particular field it doesn't matter where they are from.

Having a large user base can increase your search visibility and credibility, but don't get carried away increasing your audience. A large audience with no particular attachment to your topic or aims is not particularly useful.

Another key feature to tie results to business imperatives is to measure KPIs before, during, and after a campaign. This aligns the social media with broader initiatives, and can measure the momentum and change the campaign generated.

## **FAQ 5 – Security**

Many of the security threats posed by social media are the same as through any other website. However, users may be less attentive when using social media – sharing information or clicking

on links they wouldn't normally. The following questions address some of the common concerns about social media security

### **What are specific examples of security threats posed by social media?**

Social media technologies such as Wikis, Blogs, and social networks are vulnerable to the following methods/techniques of cyber-attacks: Spear phishing, Social Engineering, and Web Application Attacks. These definitions are based on information from the [USA's Chief Information Officer](#).<sup>12</sup>

#### **Spear phishing**

Spear Phishing is an attack targeting a specific user or group of users, and attempts to deceive the user into performing an action that launches an attack, such as opening a document or clicking a link. Spear phishers rely on knowing some personal piece of information about their target, such as an event, interest, travel plans, or current issues. Sometimes this information is gathered by hacking into the targeted network, but often it is easier to look up the target on a social media network. For example, spear phishing a high-value individual, also known as "Whaling," can use a customized infected document with specific information containing a unique malicious payload, making it more difficult for anti-virus companies to detect its unique signature. Quoting a Federal CIO Council Working Group "If you wanted to attack the CDC during the swine flu outbreak, what better way than to send something that looks like it's an internal document?"

These targeted attacks seem to be replacing previous attack techniques. Spear phishers utilize social media as an alternative way to send phishing messages, as the social media platform bypasses traditional email security controls. Social media websites can be used as a mechanism to trick users into opening a document or clicking on a link. Sometimes these attacks will use URL shorteners to obscure the actual website name.

#### **Social engineering**

The second concern regarding social media use is Social Engineering, which relies on exploiting the human element of trust. The first step in any Social Engineering attack is to collect information about the attacker's target. Social networking websites can reveal a large amount of personal information, including resumes, home addresses, phone numbers, employment information, work locations, family members, education, photos, and private information. Social media websites may share more personal information than users expect or need to keep in touch.

For example, a study by the University of Virginia cites that out of the top 150 Facebook applications, all of which are externally hosted, 90.7% of applications needed nothing more than publicly available information from members. However, all of these applications were given full access to personal information not necessary for operation, but supplied by the user granting the applications total access to their account.

When a federal employee joins a social media website, they may identify themselves as an employee of their department. This may happen intentionally in their profile, or unintentionally

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<sup>12</sup> [https://s3.amazonaws.com/sitesusa/wp-content/uploads/sites/1151/downloads/2012/09/Guidelines\\_for\\_Secure\\_Use\\_Social\\_Media\\_v01-0.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/sitesusa/wp-content/uploads/sites/1151/downloads/2012/09/Guidelines_for_Secure_Use_Social_Media_v01-0.pdf)

as they register with their government email address. Their self-identification creates a departmental Internet footprint, which is valuable security information. As more employees self-identify on social media websites, the footprint on social networking will grow, allowing the targeting of specific individuals. For example, an attacker may learn personal information about an individual and build a trust relationship by expressing interest in similar topics. Once the victim trusts the attacker, the attacker can collect more information about the user, or use their relationship to expand their influence. The attacker can expand their trust relationship to other users and friends, further gathering information and penetrating the trust of departmental personnel.

Additionally, high-profile employees create an even larger footprint, as they have greater name recognition, collect more friends, and often want to engage with the public. A high-profile employee with greater name recognition is a prime target for a social engineer to exploit the trust relationships established within that social network. In an attack similar to the “Whaling” spear phishing threat cited earlier, social engineering attacks may target high-profile individuals by relying on established trust relationships, such as close friends and colleagues. Through a compromised social media account, the attacker may pose as a friend to elicit information, action, or support.

### **Web application attacks**

Web Applications are dynamic web pages that use scripting to provide additional functionality to the user. Using Web Applications, users may create interactive web applications. However, with additional functionalities come additional opportunities to exploit the web application. Social media websites are advanced web applications, as their use requires a high level of interaction and capabilities. This opens up social media websites to a wide range of vulnerabilities exploitable by attackers. The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) has published guidance to improve the level of web application security, but it is not easy to determine if a social media website is following OWASP principles and building more secure web applications.

Advances in web application technologies allow attackers to use new techniques against social media websites not previously possible in email. For example, emerging techniques include using custom Facebook Applications to target users. Facebook applications are written by third party developers and often have minimal security controls. To illustrate this security issue, consider that a user may grant a malicious web application access to their Facebook account, which may compromise their account or download unauthorized software to their computer.

While a hijacked personal social media account may be annoying and personally costly or embarrassing, a hijacked account of a government user may have more serious implications. Unofficial posts, tweets or messages may be seen by the public as official messages, or may be used to spread malware by encouraging users to click links or download unwanted applications.

### **How should we incorporate social media into IT security policies?**

Policies should not be based on specific technology, as technology changes rapidly. Rather, policies should be created to focus on user behaviour, both personal and professional, and to address information confidentiality, integrity, and availability when accessing data or distributing government information. Your normal risk assessment obligations apply to social media usage.

Agencies should consider a multi-faceted approach to social media threats, including risks to the individual, risks to the department or agency, and risks to the infrastructure.



The safe use of social media is fundamentally a behavioural issue, not a technology issue. Consequently, security issues should be included in any social media training as a preventative IT security measure.

### **What IT security topics should be included in staff training?**

The issues staff should consider include:

- Considering whether photos or videos of government staff and facilities should be uploaded.
- Advise employees to be mindful of blurring their personal and professional life. Don't establish relationships with working groups or affiliations that may reveal sensitive information about their job responsibilities.
- Training staff on how they should identify themselves on social media websites, depending on their official role. Staff should not give any more information about their position than absolutely necessary. It can be used for social engineering.
- The risks of information disclosure when using social media, and make them aware of various attack mechanisms.
- Educating users about social networking privacy controls to help them take control of their own privacy, both in their personal profile and any profile they use for work-related activities.

### **FAQ 6 – Recruitment process**

How should I use social media to advertise vacancies?

Using social media as part of your recruitment advertising isn't as easy as it may seem.

One of the common mistakes is creating a social media presence solely for the purpose of advertising vacancies. This kind of social media activity often fails for a few reasons:

- It is rarely targeted enough to be useful - who wants information on every job your agency releases. Facebook is littered with dead pages with broad titles such as 'public sector jobs' from different jurisdictions or even agency / companywide pages.
- It is too transactional - those who find it useful will no longer need it after they have applied for a job.

These are the same problems that will affect any social media project. Social media is like any other communications tool. For example, if you put a bulletin board in your foyer with job vacancies, some people may view it but it is not very effective. You would be reaching the same people as through other channels, and they probably already have jobs. However, if you put an advertisement on a bulletin board in a university you will be reaching a new market.

This may be more difficult, but you have to go to where your audience is.

### **What methods can I use to improve the reach of my recruitment processes?**

Here are a few key ideas on how to hone your social media recruitment strategy:

## **Advertise**

Use social media based advertisements rather than a social media page. You can define your demographics, and the social media providers will display the advertisements for your target demographic.

## **Align with a broader campaign**

Align your social media campaign with a traditional campaign. Again, this is more difficult but without interesting content your social media efforts are likely to fail. For an excellently executed example, see the [New Zealand Police employment drive](#).<sup>13</sup> What makes this so effective is that they created viral 'real life' content that was spread by other people - they created graffiti advertisements in a [cutting edge style](#).<sup>14</sup> This harnessed social media, but by creating content that people would want to talk about.

Use your existing presence. Alternatively, there are many jobs which aren't suitable for a targeted campaign. If you have put the time and effort into creating a social media audience, there are going to be people who understand you and your organisation. They are obviously interested, so (very) occasionally let people know where to find more information about your vacancies. Be careful, you don't want to alienate those who are not looking for a job.

## **Find your audience**

As alluded to with the example of a bulletin board at a university, social media is effective if you find your potential applicants and advertise where they will be looking. For example, discussion groups or networks of people with relevant interests. Again, you can't just dive bomb into a community, leave some advertisements, and leave without engagement. This is not likely to be viewed positively. Imagine someone who entered your lobby without permission, plastered it with posters and left again. You can engage with a community and then use your networking to advertise jobs.

In practice, this could involve asking an influential community member to 'retweet' information about your adverts. Or asking an influential blogger (who you have helped in the past) to post about your organisation.

So, in brief, it is as difficult to advertise jobs on social media as it is to conduct an effective campaign in any other form of media. If you think laterally, you can avoid being one of the pile of dead social media job accounts.

## **Can I use social media to advertise positions?**

The requirements for advertising positions are contained within the Commissioner's Instruction: Filling a Public Sector Vacancy (Part 3). Social media is one option that agencies can use in conjunction with advertising on the WA Government's Job Board Jobs WA, to attract a competitive field. This can include purchasing advertisements on Social Media sites, or publicising vacancies on existing networks.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.newcops.co.nz/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://osocio.org/message/become-a-cop-banksy-style/>

If using social media, the closing is to coincide with the closing date on Jobs WA. To ensure applicants have access to relevant job information a link should be provided to Jobs WA or the vacancy on the agencies website.

For further assistance with the Commissioner's Instructions: Employment Standard or Filling a Public Sector Vacancy or their application, contact the Public Sector Commission on 6552 8888.

## Appendix 2 – Contributing agencies

- Department for Communities
- Department of Commerce (including Consumer Protection)
- Department of Education
- Department of Environment and Conservation
- Department of Health
- Department of Mines and Petroleum
- Department of Planning
- Department of Treasury and Finance
- Department of Water
- Department of Fisheries
- Fire and Emergency Services Authority
- Forest Products Commission
- Main Roads WA
- Public Transport Authority
- Public Sector Commission
- State Library of WA
- State Records Office
- Swan River Trust
- The Department of Culture and the Arts
- WA Museum
- WA Police
- WA Land Information System
- WorkCover

## Further information

Staff leading and managing social media projects and functions are advised to build on the information provided in these guidelines by monitoring and participating in online communities of practice and reviewing relevant websites and publications to ensure they are up to date on the latest developments and trends in this space.

## Contact Information

Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

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