



SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

THIS GUIDE is designed for SF State employees who are responsible for managing University-affiliated social media accounts.

Social media can be a powerful tool for communicating with audiences that have an interest in or connection to your department or office and for building engagement with those audiences. Following some basic guidelines can help social media users maintain a successful online presence and avoid potentially serious pitfalls.

If you have questions about using social media or any of the guidelines below, please contact University Communications at (415) 338-1665 or pubcom@sfsu.edu.

IMPORTANT STANDARDS

- University Communications does not monitor all social media accounts affiliated with the University, but will address issues that violate established SF State guidelines.
- As a manager of a University-affiliated account, you represent SF State as well as your department and should maintain the same professional standards as in your offline work environment.
- Use of SF State's logos and visual identity on social media channels must comply with the University's identity guidelines found at logo.sfsu.edu.
- Do not share confidential information on a social media channel. Violation of FERPA and HIPPA laws could result in legal action against you or the University.
- Be respectful of copyright. Give credit to the original source when sharing someone else's content. Do not repurpose content without permission from the original source.
- Social media channels are public, and once content is created, it exists forever (even if deleted from the original account). Use proper judgment before posting.

GETTING STARTED

Before launching a social media initiative, it's important to ask: Will social media help us achieve our department or organizational goals? Social media is most effective when used as part of an overall communication strategy rather than as a strategy in and of itself. Think about social media as being a vehicle, not a destination.



When deciding whether to begin using social media, ask yourself:

- How can social media help us achieve our overall goals?
- Which social media platforms most fit our needs?
- Who is our audience? How are they using social media?
- Do we have the time and resources to devote to developing content and maintaining our accounts?

It may be that the goals you hope to achieve through social media do not require the creation of a new account. University Communications is happy to work with you to determine the best way to reach your goals.

If you decide to create an account, link it to your department's sfsu.edu email address, not your personal email address, and create a complex password that will be difficult to hack. To further protect against unauthorized use of your account, some social media platforms allow for "two-step verification," an added layer of security.

BEST PRACTICES

Once your account is up and running, following these guidelines can help ensure your social media plans are successful:

Be recognizable

Make sure your audience can find you. Create a username and profile that clearly identify your office or department and your affiliation with SF State. Use "SF State" or "SFSU" in your username, and use the hashtag #SFSU when appropriate to join the campus conversation. Use other hashtags as appropriate to increase your visibility.

Be useful

Craft creative and concise messages that provide value to your audience. Social media users often view self-promotion negatively. Be genuine. Share information from your office or department — as well as other sources — that your followers may find interesting or helpful. Listen to your audience to learn what types of content they want and enjoy, and adjust your strategies appropriately.

Be honest

Admit your mistakes and correct inaccurate or misleading information. Be transparent about who you are, and do not misrepresent your office or department or the University.

Be active

Social media accounts that don't post frequently enough often lose their community. Maintain a consistent social media presence. Try to post once a week at minimum, but don't "spam" your users' feeds with redundant information. To ensure you have enough content, take time to step back and map out your overall social media strategy and create posts. Understand and be realistic about the amount of time necessary to manage a social media account.

Be respectful

Be polite and professional when communicating with followers. Do not delete critical posts unless they are offensive or inappropriate. Respond to questions or criticism when appropriate but be careful not to “feed the trolls” — users whose only goal is to prompt a response from a department or organization.

Be accurate

Don't let the desire to be first get in the way of accuracy. Make sure your facts are correct before posting to social media. Check your posts for spelling and grammar. Do not post information pertaining to another department, organization or individual before checking with the appropriate parties.

Be engaging

Social media works best when it is a conversation between users. Be an active member of your online community. Engage with your followers. Respond to questions. Consider initiatives or posts that encourage participation. Like, share or comment on their posts as appropriate. A digital “high-five” can create a stronger connection between you and your followers. Keep up-to-date on the informal etiquette and language of various social media platforms.

SOCIAL MEDIA DURING AN EMERGENCY

During an emergency or crisis, the public will look to any and all social media accounts affiliated with the University for information. Therefore, it is critical in these situations that accounts representing University departments or organizations refrain from posting inaccurate information. During an emergency, the best course of action is to direct followers to the official SF State accounts managed by University Communications and coordinated with the Emergency Operations Center (Twitter.com/SFSU and Facebook.com/sanfranciscostate). If you must post, limit posts to verified information pertaining only to your office or department.