TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SAN ANTONIO

Best Practices and Tips for Social Media Behavior

It is the mission and purpose of the Office of University Marketing & Communications of Texas A&M University-San Antonio (A&M-SA) to provide assistance for university divisions and departments when they create and participate in social media with an A&M-SA affiliation, especially those forms of communication meant for public consumption and/or visibility. Social media is a form of media and communication with social components and public communication channels, extremely visible to subscribers and non-subscribers alike. "Social media" shall be defined as any online media that provides users with interaction, discussion, and comments. This includes social networks, blogging and microblogging etc.

This information is intended to guide social media admins in their use of social media for personal and University-affiliated use, including personal blogs, avatars, and production of video/multimedia for online distribution. Be aware that social media behavior is subject to the A&M-SA Code of Conduct and will be guided by the suggestions and principles below.

1. Be truthful and consistent.

Building a reputation of trust within social media and virtual environments represents a commitment to be truthful and accountable. In virtual spaces, admins may be violating such trust by dramatically altering their digital persona's behavior or abandoning their digital persona to another operator who changes its behavior under the same name.

   a. The original creator or launcher of a digital persona or voice has a higher level of responsibility for its behavior.
   b. Changes in ownership of a digital persona should be made public.

2. Comments and discussion.

Wherever possible, administrators should set applications to hold comments and discussion submissions until reviewed. This includes multimedia postings, such as photos, video, etc.

a. Deny or remove submissions that contain inappropriate words or information that is not relevant to the subject matter or University overall. Profanity, advertising, personal solicitations, etc. are not allowed.

b. If submissions are simply negative in nature, allow the posting and respond appropriately to address the negative concern. This may require redirection to University Communications.

c. Refer to "Guidelines for Responding to a Post" below.

3. Do engage.

A&M-San Antonio social media members are encouraged to explore social media responsibly to further the development of new spaces of relationship-building, learning, collaboration, and conversation.

4. Use good judgment.

Users will need to exercise good judgment when questionable activities or situations arise, including whether to opt out or to proceed. Be mindful that actions, photos, and messages will be visible for a long time.

5. Protect A&M-SA's reputation and your own.

Assume that activities on social media and virtual spaces are permanent and publicly observed. If administrators conduct business or answer questions for A&M-SA on social media or a virtual space, they are or may appear to be speaking for or on behalf of the University. Check with University Marketing & Communications if there is a question on how to proceed.

7. Protect the privacy of others.

Unless expressed consent is received, it is inappropriate to disclose or use members of A&M-SA's confidential or proprietary information or any personal information of any other person or company, including real names, within social media or a virtual space.

8. Protect A&M-SA's and others' intellectual property.

While interacting on social media, avoid infringement of intellectual property rights. Always provide attribution of such rights. This includes photography, graphics, quotations, and all written material. Please check copyright information before using material that is not yours. Attribution may be required. Reach out to University Marketing & Communications if the content is questionable.

9. Be guided by A&M-SA values.

As a general rule, a student's private life is his or her own. Admins must, however, be sensitive to avoid activities in social media and virtual environments that reflect negatively on A&M-SA. Admins must follow and be guided by A&M-SA's values and philosophy.

    a. For more information on adhering to A&M-SA values, refer to the Office of Student Engagement & Success or the Student Code of Conduct in the University's Student Handbook.

10. Violations of Student Code of Conduct.

Inappropriate content that is in violation of the Student Code of Conduct will be referred to judicial action with the Office of Student Engagement & Success. Individuals and/or organizations may be held responsible and will be asked to remove the content or shut down their social media account(s).

Suggestions for Responding to a Post

Use these steps to determine how to react:

1. First, is the web post positive and/or balanced?
2. If positive, factual, and well-cited, whether you agree or disagree, you may choose not to respond or respond and share success. Follow "Response Considerations" below.
3. If negative, evaluate to determine if the post is a "troll" (from a site: dedicated to bashing/degrading others) or a "rager" (a rant, rage, joke or satire). If the post is a "troll" or a "rager," avoid responding, continue to monitor, and consider removing the post. Refer to the University's social media coordinator if needed.
4. If negative with erroneous facts, respond with factual information. Retain professional demeanor and refer to University Communications if needed.
5. If the posting is a response to a negative experience, reply to rectify the situation and pursue a reasonable response. (include details about moving to a private venue)

Next, write your response with a few things in mind:

1. Is your reply relevant and timely? Limit posts to current circumstances.

Handy Tips for Successful Interaction:

1. When setting up pages and groups, fill out all information sections, keeping searchable terms in mind. Be clear and accurate in your description to make it easier for users to find your page or profile. Keep accessibility open to everyone.

2. Take time to create good responses. Consider the impression you will leave behind.

3. Assume a tone that reflects the values and heritage of A&M-SA.

4. Have variety – don't always promote yourself. Share links to community events, other student groups or anything interesting that relates to A&M-SA and your organization.

5. Be helpful to people to encourage interaction and repeat visits. Think in terms of "Don't forget to register for classes!" or "Get a flu shot here…"