Rules of the Road for a Successful Social Media Presence

For more information, see the UW-Madison Social Media Guidelines: http://universityrelations.wisc.edu/policies/social-media.php

Be respectful. Anything you post in your role as a UW-Madison employee reflects on the institution. Be professional and respectful at all times on your social media site. Do not engage in arguments or extensive debates with naysayers on your site.

Be transparent. Make it clear that you are blogging/tweeting/Facebooking, etc. as a personable extension of UW-Madison. One of the great benefits of social media is that the individuals maintaining social media sites personalize large and complex institutions such as UW-Madison. Use a personable yet professional “voice.”

Listen. Being a consumer of social media is essential to your ability to be a successful producer of social media content. “Listen” to online conversations on your preferred tools – be they blogs, Twitter, Facebook or anything else – to maintain a clear and current understanding of what is relevant and of interest to the community.

Be active. Social media presences require diligent care and feeding. If you do not have the time or resources to check in on these sites at least a few minutes each day, and to post fresh content several times a week, reconsider jumping in to social media at this time. Your site is only as interesting as your last post – if that post is several months old, visitors will consider it mothballed.

Be timely. One of the great benefits of social media is the ability to share information almost instantly with a global audience. This timeliness is also one of the expectations of that audience. Be prepared to move quickly in response to new developments, announcements, or emergencies with relevant information on your site. A short amount of accurate information delivered at the time of need can sometimes be more valuable than a full report delivered well after the issue has passed. Remember, everything you do online can and will live forever. Think before you post, remembering that anything you share within social media, even within a closed network, is not private. It can and will be shared, stored and spread globally. Don’t post anything online you wouldn’t feel comfortable seeing on the front page of the newspaper, or on the CNN Web site.

Comment. As a consumer as well as a producer of social media, offer comments on interesting posts and share the good work of others using your sites. Social media is not (only) about sharing your news and success, it’s about sharing information that is of interest to your readers and viewers.

Adapted from Vanderbilt University’s Best Practices for a Successful Social Media Presence

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