

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

BUILDING THE ECONOMY
ONE **BUSINESS** AT A TIME

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Within the Institute for Economic Development, several centers and programs are making use of social media as a free, powerful communication tool, and we strongly encourage each center to incorporate social media into its regular communications and promotional routines, such as sending e-newsletters.

These social media guidelines are for your center and program. Overall, they supplant the need to develop any individual center guidelines, though each center will develop its own menu of social media and devise its own schedule for managing these communications tools and measuring outcomes. Please contact Lynn Gosnell, communications and marketing coordinator, with any questions, and to help communicate your efforts to our internal audiences.

OVERVIEW

This document was developed to provide a set of policy and guidelines in the use of social media for the UTSA Institute for Economic Development. It was culled from resources on the Internet, corporate policies, universities, nonprofits, and other sources. They are examples of best practices from various institutions and are intended to help you understand the implications of participating in social media.

Scope

This policy on social media applies to all UTSA Institute for Economic Development staff as well as to third parties performing services on the center's behalf.

Purpose

We recognize that social media tools such as blogs, online forums, content-sharing websites and other networking sites established for online interaction and connection will be increasingly used to:

- Promote the UTSA Institute for Economic Development to colleagues, clients, the media and other Institute stakeholders; and/or
- Share personal opinions and participate in online dialogue as individuals.

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards and expectations regarding any UTSA Institute for Economic Development-related use of social media. To engage responsibly, all staff will follow the guidelines provided in this document.

Policy Statement

The UTSA Institute for Economic Development will be proactive in engaging responsibly with the online community at large. The UTSA Institute for Economic Development will discuss services, events, facilitate communication and collaboration, educate, and entertain (as it pertains to small business and economic development, i.e.: listing community luncheons, pictures, success stories, business articles, etc.) those who follow the center's social media websites.

Through social media marketing, the UTSA Institute will engage in communication with potential clients and workshop attendees, current clients, sources of referrals, corporate affiliates and all other stakeholders. If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as an employee, ask Lynn Gosnell, x2958 or George Marez, x2737.

Definition of Social Media

For purposes of this policy, social media is any website or medium (including video) which allows for communication. Though there are vast amounts of social media mediums, the Institute's programs and centers will focus primarily on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube. We will monitor interests of target markets and engage in new social media platforms as deemed appropriate and necessary with planning.

Objective

The Institute for Economic Development's engagement in social media is to acquire new clients and workshop attendees, build and/or maintain relationships, and provide valuable, relevant information for the small business and economic development community. It is also the goal of the Institute to foster networking, provide an online platform for small business owner issues, drive traffic to our website, gain instant insight/feedback and continue to be a resource for the small business community.

ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Promotional efforts for our social media will be accomplished through cross marketing. We will provide icons on eblasts, our website, printed material (tri-fold brochures, annual reports, post cards, workshop brochures, etc.), electronic signatures, workshop presentations and materials, etc.

Our responsibility and commitment

UTSA Institute for Economic Development social media websites belong to the organization. Views and opinions do not represent that of the Institute for Economic Development, University of Texas at San Antonio or South-West Texas Border Network and are merely shared to engage in communication with the small business and economic development community. Views and opinions are not designed as a substitute for legal advice, nor is it a comprehensive statement of the law.

Each center or program's staff will monitor their social media outlets daily, posting answers to questions, or information, as it relates to small business and economic development. Please monitor traffic to your website through each social media platform, number of mentions, followers, and fans will be monitored weekly.

Assigned staff members will be responsible for posting to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, as your center or program wishes. You Tube will be used when appropriate and video content is available. We continue to work with David Deering on managing and uploading our videos.

GENERAL RULES

Sharing Institute news, events and resources through social media is an excellent, low-cost way to promote our program while engaging the small business community.

One way of sharing Institute news is to post or tweet about it. When sharing information that is not a matter of public record, please follow the guidelines listed below.

Maintain Confidentiality

All policies regarding client confidentiality still hold true for our use with social media. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the Institute, its staff or its clients. Use good ethical judgment and follow university policies and federal requirements that are effective once a client signs a Client Intake Form 641.

Respect University Time and Property

It is appropriate to post at work if your comments are directly related to accomplishing work goals or it adds to the environment of our online social media experience for our clients. You should participate in personal social media conversations on your own time.

Assume Personal Responsibility

Staff is personally responsible for the content they publish on any form of user-generated content. Be mindful that what you publish will be public and long lasting. You are responsible for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others.

The line between professional and personal business is thin. Ultimately, you are personally responsible for the content of your postings. Help maintain our reputation by adding credibility to your postings (when appropriate) with citations and/or links to supporting information.

Correct Mistakes

If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you are posting to a blog, you may choose to modify an earlier post. Ensure you make it clear that you have done so.

Respect Others

Remember that when you make work-related postings, your comments can be interpreted as an official statement from the Institute. Despite the informality of many social media tools, all communications on UTSA Web properties become official government communications. To minimize risk to yourself and UTSA, it is a good practice to state that you are only offering your opinion on the issue at hand, and that you are not speaking in the capacity of your program.

Be a Resource

Use your center's social media platform to advance our mission in a substantive way. Make sure each communication contributes meaningfully to the goals of our clients, stakeholders and/or colleagues. While we want to open up new communication channels, we don't want to do so at the expense of our reputation for professional service.

- o Examples of good uses of the social media platform include: event announcements/reminders (training sessions, seminars, business breakfasts, and networking events), achievements (success stories, critical program milestones), small business news items (local, regional, national), and SBA and other federal program announcements. Please try to link back to your website whenever possible.

- o Poor uses of the social media platform include: blast messages of a non-professional nature ("It finally stopped raining today, yeah!" or "Go, Spurs, Go!"), personal information about a staff member ("John Smith is in the hospital for a procedure, please keep him in your prayers"), or stand-alone inspirational quotes, jokes or sayings that are not part of, or link to, an official university or program announcement ("It's a Great Day to Start a Small Business" vs. "It's a Great Day to Start a Small Business – Sign Up Now for our Getting Started Seminar").

Respect Your Audience

Understand the global reach of the internet, and learn to avoid references and colloquialisms that may be offensive to (or be misinterpreted by) the diverse audience on the web. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Institute's programs and centers community. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive —such as politics and religion.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES WHEN POSTING ON BEHALF OF THE INSTITUTE'S PROGRAMS AND CENTERS

While social media tools are changing the way we work and how we connect with the public, the Institute's programs and centers policies and practices for sharing information remain the same. In addition to the general guidelines discussed above, when you are creating or posting to a social media site on behalf of the Institute's programs and centers you will need to:

Be Accurate

Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible.

That's how you build community.

Be Transparent

If you participate in the Institute's programs and centers' social media site(s), clearly state your role and goals. Keep in mind that if you are posting with a university username, other users do not know you personally. They view what you post as coming from UTSA and the SBDC. Be careful and respectful. What you say directly reflects on UTSA and the SBDC.

Be Timely

They will regularly monitor postings and content. Postings and updates should be done no less than 2 times a week.

Be Responsible

What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing on behalf of the Institute's programs and centers is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. If you want to participate on behalf of the Institute's programs and centers, be sure to abide by these standard practice guidelines.

Be Respectful

Users are free to discuss topics and disagree with one another, but please be respectful of others' opinions. You are more likely to achieve your goals if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Be a Resource

If you join a social network like a Facebook group or comment on someone's blog, make sure you are contributing valuable insights. Post information about topics like the Institute's programs and centers events or a book you've read regarding small business only when you are sure it will be of interest to readers. In some forums, self-promoting behavior is viewed negatively and can lead to you being banned from websites or groups.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES WHEN POSTING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

While the guidelines below apply only to those instances where there is the potential for confusion about your role as a small business expert versus personal opinion, they are good to keep in mind for all social media interactions. When posting to a social media site you should:

BE AUTHENTIC

Never pretend to be someone else. Tracking tools enable supposedly anonymous posts to be traced back to their authors. In personal posts, you may identify yourself as a the Institute's programs and centers staff member. Please be clear that you are sharing your personal views and are not speaking as a formal representative of the Institute's programs and centers. If you identify yourself as a member of the Institute's programs and centers, ensure your profile and related content are consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues.

DON'T USE THE INSTITUTE'S LOGOS OR MAKE ENDORSEMENTS

Do not use the Institute's programs and centers on your personal online sites. Do not use UTSA SBDC's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

DOES IT PASS INSPECTION?

If the content of your message would not be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another medium, it will not be acceptable for a social networking site. Ask yourself, would I want

to see this published in the newspaper or posted on a billboard tomorrow or 10 years from now?

RESPECT YOUR AUDIENCE

Understand the global reach of the internet, and learn to avoid references and colloquialisms that may be offensive to (or be misinterpreted by) the diverse audience on the web. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Institute's programs and centers community. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered sensitive —such as politics and religion.

