UT Knoxville Social Media Best Practices

Introduction

Social media has changed the way we communicate—both as an institution and as individuals. With tools such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and Flickr, anyone with an Internet connection now has the ability to create a dynamic Web presence, update it from wherever they are whenever they want, and share their content instantly with friends and followers around the world.

Social media has given UT Knoxville and our various departments the opportunity to interact with on-campus audiences (students, faculty, and staff) as well as off-campus audiences (parents, alumni, fans, and friends) about what is important to them. We can better understand and respond to them, and in doing so, share the sense of community present on campus with a much broader array of people.

UT Knoxville supports the use of social media by departments and units in the course of their work to connect with students, fellow faculty and staff, alumni, fans, colleagues, and more. However, social media should only serve to supplement and not replace the official channels of communicating with your audiences. This document is designed to provide guidance, advice, and tips on how to do so effectively, safely, and within university guidelines.
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Social media – what is it, and why should I care?

Social media refers to online tools and services that allow any Internet user to create and publish content—from stories and short updates to pictures, video and more. The heart of social media, and what makes it "social," is the two-way communication, interaction, and sharing of information that takes place between users of the sites. Social media is not about talking at people, it's about talking with people.

Social media also allows for the easy sharing and re-purposing of existing content, expanding the reach of your work, and enabling others to share it with their friends and networks. Popular social media services include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, YouTube, and Flickr.

Social media is an increasingly central part of people's lives, with the sites above registering in millions or sometimes tens of millions of users. The dynamic created by social media allows people to get information from trusted sources in ways that previously were impossible. For a university, that means new opportunities to share and new challenges in ensuring that the messages we communicate are not only heard, but acted on, as well.
Rules of the Road: Policies and Procedures to Consider

Social media usage at UT Knoxville is governed by the same policies that govern all other electronic communications and computer use. Read the policies below before engaging in any social media campaign as part of your official duties at UT Knoxville or if you use social media for personal purposes while at work.

The most important policy to consider is the university's Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources policy (IT0110). It can be found online at https://my.tennessee.edu/portal/page?_pageid=34,140536&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_policy=IT0110.

Another important policy to consider is the university's policy regarding disclosure of information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA. The Act covers, among other things, the ways in which the university and its staff members can disclose information about our students, past and present. You can learn more and find out whom to contact with questions at http://ferpa.utk.edu.

Before creating content, you may also want to familiarize yourself with the university's Editorial and Style Guidelines, which can be found here: http://www.tennessee.edu/identity/. These guidelines are especially helpful in dealing with how you identify your organization, department or unit. Here you will also find information on the use of university logos and other forms of visual identification.

In addition, all social media sites have policies about how they will or will not use your content, what is and is not allowed, etc. Be sure to familiarize yourself with these policies before you launch your site.

If you have any questions about social media best practices, or need guidance when problems or issues of concern arise, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing at 865-974-2225 or by e-mail at webteam@utk.edu. We are available to assist you with social media concerns, large or small.
Getting Started

1. **Secure the approval of your department head or manager.**
   If you wish to create a social media page or profile for your university department, it is important to talk with your supervisor for their approval and to ensure that a page does not already exist for your department.

2. **Set goals in advance.**
   Before jumping in to social media for your department, program or office, spend time determining what you want to accomplish. **Participating in social media for the sake of doing it is not effective and ultimately is counterproductive.** Understanding your goals will help you choose the appropriate tool or tools, create relevant content, and understand what is the best way to reach your target audience. You should also determine ways to measure your success in achieving these goals.

3. **Choose a leader.**
   Determine who will be the primary person responsible for updating and monitoring your site. Ensure they have the time to check in on the site at least once a day. This does not need to take up a significant amount of time, but successful social media sites are updated frequently, enable easy engagement with viewers, and adjust in response to timely events and problems.

   In addition, it's important to assign and train a backup for this person. Many departments find that it is effective to have a team of people able to manage a site.

4. **Be strategic.**
   The more work you do on the front end, the more likely you are to create a successful social media presence. Define what you hope to accomplish, with whom you wish to engage, and what content you wish to share first, and then begin exploring social media tools.

   If you need help thinking through a strategy for social media, see the worksheet found in Appendix A. If you need help or aren't sure if an idea is the right one, don't hesitate to contact the Office of Communications and Marketing for help.

5. **Watch, listen, learn.**
   All social media platforms have their own standards, styles and expectations. By becoming a consumer of social media well before you become a producer, you will learn how these communities work, what content is of most interest, what other organizations are talking about, etc. Spending a good amount of time on this step will help you better plan what unique contribution your voice can have.
6. **Choose your tool, and start small.**
After listening, you may find the short, 140-character bursts of Twitter are a good fit for your goals. Or you may have photos, videos, and a well-developed community that would be best shared via a Facebook fan page. Do not try to do it all at once—choose a tool that best meets your goals and focus on building a strong presence. Once you have one tool in place, it's easier to expand your offerings as needed.

7. **Choose a good name.**
Create a profile name that clearly and concisely identifies your program and its affiliation with UT Knoxville. Avoid identifying yourself simply as "UT," "UT Knoxville," or "The University of Tennessee," as that implies you are speaking for the entire institution.

8. **Build a foundation.**
Build out your blog, Twitter stream, Flickr profile, Facebook page, or whatever you choose and spend time populating it for several weeks, sharing it with a small group who can provide comments. Have the site up and running well before you plan to publicly announce it so you can become comfortable with maintaining it and so that the site has plenty of content for the initial users of the particular resource.

9. **Launch.**
You're ready to communicate! Use traditional means, such as e-mail lists and notices on your website, to notify your potential audiences that you have a social media presence. Also, notify others with social media presences and similar interests that your site is live. One of the best ways to do this is by linking to these sites from yours and mentioning them in your posts. Include easy-to-find links to your social media presence on your website.

10. **Adapt and Adjust.**
Once your site is up and running, you will find some content is popular, some is ignored, and some is just plain cumbersome. All social media tools come with easy-to-use tracking tools, so you can see which posts are viewed and shared most, which generate comments, etc. Be prepared to re-align your strategy in response to who is viewing your site and in what ways they are doing so.
How UT Knoxville is Using Social Media

UT Knoxville has jumped feet-first into the world of social media, taking advantage of the new opportunities available to reach out to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and others. Not only do we share the latest news and important updates from campus, but also we listen closely to feedback, engage in conversation, and work to expand the walls of campus further outward.

The primary tools the university is currently using are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and in addition to the university's main Office of Communications and Marketing, departments and units campus wide are also taking part in social media efforts.

UT Knoxville's "homes" in social media are:

http://facebook.com/UTKnoxville
http://twitter.com/UTKnoxville
http://youtube.com/UniversityTennessee

In addition, Tennessee Today, UT Knoxville's source for news, features, and up-to-date info is built to interact with social media platforms:

http://www.utk.edu/tntoday

The main UT Knoxville outlets in social media are clearly marked as the official voice of the university. While they don't take the place of traditional forms of notification to important university constituencies, they are part of the array of outlets through which we communicate.

Social media sites for UT Knoxville units
(This list is not exhaustive)

Facebook:
The University of Tennessee Police Department
CASNR @ The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
UTK College of Arts & Sciences
UT College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences
UT College of Law
UT Knoxville Nurse Anesthesia Program
UTK Political Science Department
UT Knoxville School of Psychology
UTCVM-University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine
UT Knoxville Career Services
UT Make Orange Green
National Forensic Academy
National Institute for Computational Sciences (NICS)
Tell Us About It!

As you know, UT Knoxville has an incredibly wide audience of students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, sports fans, and more keeping in touch with the university via social media.

Let us know what you are doing so we can help expand your reach by sharing it with these individuals, and also to make sure we are aware of the news and developments you are sharing with your audiences. We can all learn from each other, but it's easy to slip into a vacuum when working on your own.

For university staff, e-mail your link to the Office of Communications and Marketing at webteam@utk.edu when you launch your site (or if you're already up and running).
Best Practices for a Successful Social Media Presence

Be respectful and honest.
Anything you post in your role as a UT Knoxville faculty or staff member reflects directly on the institution. Be professional and respectful at all times on your social media site. Do not engage in arguments or debates with naysayers on your site, but feel free to correct inaccurate information where needed.

Be transparent and authentic.
Make it clear that you are blogging / tweeting / Facebooking, etc. in your role as a faculty or staff member at UT Knoxville. One of the great benefits of social media is that the individuals maintaining social media sites personalize large and complex institutions such as UT Knoxville. We have the ability to give people a real glimpse of life here.

Use your own voice, and encourage others in your department to do the same. Nothing hurts the authenticity of site so much as “ghostwritten” posts for high-level administrators.

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. If people tell you they don't like a particular feature, learn from that. Online culture is built on openness and (sometimes blunt) criticism.

Start active and stay 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 and quickly lose interest.

Be first.
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 and announcements with relevant information on your site. You may even consider releasing new information first on your social media site to help users understand its value as a place to learn about your office or department.

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.

Indeed, many local and regional media outlets rely as much on social media outlets as they do traditional forms of press outreach for stories.

Comment and share beyond campus. 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. That may mean interesting research from colleagues at another university, an insightful news story or a fascinating link. When you share externally, it makes your social media outlet a more valuable resource for all of your users.

Accept and monitor comments as part of your two-way conversation. A social media site without comments isn't very social. Be prepared to accept and respond to comments. To protect your site, moderate all comments before posting.

Understand that not all comments will be positive, and respond to negative comments professionally and by providing any additional information that may help resolve the issue in keeping with the guidelines above.

Post a disclaimer on your site stating you reserve the right to remove inappropriate comments—you can see a sample of UT Knoxville's commenting policy for our Facebook page in Appendix F. Remove those comments containing vulgar language, those that attack any one group or individual, and those that are obviously spam.

Separate the personal from professional. Balancing your professional and personal social media presences can be tricky, particularly if you are an avid user in both arenas. Content that is appropriate and of interest to your personal friends is most likely not appropriate or of interest to your department's "friends." Keep these two presences as separate as possible by keeping content about your non-work life on your personal page.
Appendix A: Social Media Strategy Worksheet

1. **Team:** Identify the person or persons who will have primary responsibility for populating, maintaining, and monitoring your site. Ensure they have the time and enthusiasm to devote to this project. List the team members.

2. **Primary Goals:** Are you trying to communicate a campaign, generally promote your department, communicate with alumni, or something more? Define your goal for your social media presence.

3. **Measuring Success:** Determine how you will measure the success, or lack of success, of your site. Increased traffic to your website? Better communication with prospective students? A new network of colleagues? List how you plan to measure the site's success, and the tools you'll use to track that success.

4. **Audiences:** Identifying your audiences will help you tailor your content and also choose the right tool. List your primary audiences.

5. **Current Conversation:** This is when the listening begins. Survey the social media landscape for the "thought leaders" in your field. What are people already saying? What are people saying about you? Who is saying it? List the topics, people, and sites that are leading the conversations that are relevant to you.

6. **Content:** Identify the content you have to share. Is it primarily news updates, research developments, or networking information? Photographs? Video? List the content you will be sharing via social media.

7. **Name and Design:** Identify a simple and descriptive name for your profile that clearly identifies your affiliation with UT Knoxville.

8. **Evaluation:** Set a timeline for when you will conduct an evaluation of your site's success, using the goals and measures identified above. At that time, be prepared to realign your site's content. Ongoing evaluation should also be part of your strategy. Define your timeline.
Appendix B: How to set up a Facebook fan page for a department or program

A Facebook fan page can be a great way to promote the activities of your department or program, showcase accomplishments and events, engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community, and create a forum for conversation and discussion.

**Facebook Fan Page vs. Facebook Group**
It's usually better to create a fan page rather than a group for your department or program. The chart, below, compares the features offered by fan pages and by groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Fan Page</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows distinct URLs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexed by search engines like Google</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin can access visitor statistics</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion features and forums</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be cross-promoted on other fan pages</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to create events and invitations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter or blog feeds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible to unregistered people</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fans can leave comments and &quot;likes&quot;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can send out bulk emails to your members' in boxes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information posted on your wall will appear on your fans' walls</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The administrator's personal information isn't listed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to create a Facebook Fan Page:**

1. To set up a Facebook fan page for your department or program, first secure the approval of your department chair or supervisor. Unlike your personal Facebook page, on this page you will be speaking for the university.

2. To create a fan page, you'll need to have a Facebook account. You can set up this account with your personal UT Knoxville e-mail account (fan pages keep your personal account information private) or you can set up the account with a general departmental e-mail account. Go to http://www.facebook.com and fill out the form on the homepage to set up a new account.

3. Once you've set up your Facebook account, go to http://www.facebook.com and log in with your user name and password.

4. Then go to http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php

5. You may want to use the category "Local > Education" or you may prefer to use "Brand, Product or Organization > Nonprofit."
6. For "Name of Page," choose something that will clearly identify your organization.

7. Then click on the "Create Page" button.

8. Now you're ready to start adding items to your fan page. Here are some ideas to help you build your Fan Page:
   - Avoid sending too many updates to your fans.
   - Mention when your website is updated, whether it's new photos, an upcoming event, etc.
   - Post links to drive traffic to your department or organization's Web site.
   - Add other relevant Facebook pages to your "favorite" pages.
   - Monitor comments on your Facebook wall daily and respond to those that warrant it. Encourage two-way communication. Delete those comments that include personal attacks, vulgarity or racial/other slurs. However, do not delete comments simply because they are critical—rather, respond on the wall or directly to the individual with additional information.
   - Ask staff and co-workers to "Share" or "Post" to your Facebook page. Ensure their comments also follow the guidelines above for professional university communications.
Appendix C: How to Set Up a flickr Account for a Department or Program

A flickr account can be a great way to promote the activities of your department or program, showcase accomplishments and events, engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community, and create a forum for conversation and discussion. This document provides information on how to get started as well as guidelines on do's and don'ts for official UT Knoxville flickr accounts.

A paid flickr account is $24.95 a year and provides unlimited storage, sets, galleries, collections, uploading, etc; access to your original high-res photos; statistics on your photos; and HD playback for any high definition videos that you post.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Photo Upload Limit</th>
<th>FREE Flickr</th>
<th>PRO Flickr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Individual Photo Size</td>
<td>10 MB</td>
<td>2 MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Video Upload Limit</td>
<td>2 videos</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Video File Size</td>
<td>150 MB</td>
<td>500 MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photostream visible</td>
<td>200 most recent</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Pool posts per photo</td>
<td>10 group pools</td>
<td>60 group pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original High-Res Photo Availability</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD Video</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before you create a new flickr account:
• Confirm that there isn't already a flickr account in use by your department.
• Secure the approval of your department chair or program manager. Keep in mind that the page will become an official communication piece of the university, and as such should follow all guidelines regarding professionalism, confidentiality, and decorum applied to any such communication. Unlike your personal flickr account, with this account you will be speaking for the university.

Creating a flickr account:
1. To start the process … go to http://www.flickr.com and click on the button that stays CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT. Flickr requires a Yahoo! ID. It is advised to setup the alternate email for your Yahoo! ID using a departmental e-mail address. If personnel changes, the department or program will always have access to the account.

2. Once you've set up your flickr account, go to http://www.flickr.com and log in with your user name and password.

3. For the screen name of your account, choose something that will clearly identify your organization. This is what will display at the top of the page when visitors go to your flickr page.
4. Now you're ready to start adding photos to your flickr account. Here are some ideas to help you get started:
   • Avoid uploading TOO many photos. Try not to upload photos that are extremely similar. For any given event or album only upload the BEST photos.
   • Tag and organize your photos. Create sets and collections. If you tag and organize photos as you upload them, it makes maintenance of your photo database much easier.
   • Include a link to your flickr page on your website, or better yet, include a badge that displays your most recently posted photos. You can build your badge at http://www.flickr.com/badge.gne. Anytime you post a new photo, it will automatically show up on your website.
   • Link your flickr account to your Facebook and Twitter accounts if you have them, or post a new message or tweet anytime you've posted a new album.
   • Monitor comments on your flickr page daily and respond to those that warrant it.
Appendix D: How to Create a Twitter Feed for your Department or Program

With its 140-character updates, Twitter is a great way to get timely information out to your audiences. More importantly, with 75 million users, it is an excellent way to engage with and hear from those with similar interests.

Creating a Twitter account:

1. Go to [http://www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and click on "Sign up now."

2. For "Name," give the name of your department or program. Next, choose your username—this will become part of your Twitter address and also will be how you are identified when tweeting and responding to tweets. Choose a username that clearly identifies both the university and your department or program. For e-mail, it may be easiest to use a group mailbox that several members of your department or program can check if possible, rather than your personal e-mail address.

3. Next, click "Settings" and fill out that information. Under the one-line bio, include brief descriptive text about your department or program, and a link to your website.

4. Choose an image that clearly represents your department or office and one that will be clear at a very small size. Most users of Twitter will only see this image in a very small setting.

5. Before you start tweeting, build the list of those you will be following. Seek out other UT Knoxville accounts, other accounts for people and programs in your field, and others who are tweeting about keywords that are relevant to your interests. Read, re-tweet and respond to these tweets to begin building your online network.

6. Start tweeting! Remember, Twitter is a conversation, not a megaphone. Use yours not only to share interesting news and information about your program, but also to share news from other sources, to respond to and ask questions and to get to know your audiences better.

7. Consider using a third-party application to communicate through Twitter. There are many free online applications that make updating and monitoring your Twitter presence much easier. Check out TweetDeck, Tweetie and HootSuite for starters. Many of these programs also offer mobile versions for use on Blackberry or iPhone, among others.

8. There are some standards actions / conventions in Twitter with which you should become familiar.
   - Reply – Reply to someone else's tweet. Your reply will also show up on your Twitter feed.
• Retweet – One of the best ways to engage with the community on Twitter. Retweeting means you are sharing someone else’s tweet on your Twitter. A retweet is formatted by adding RT in front of the @ sign and the other person’s user name, followed by the original content of their tweet. Most Twitter applications offer an easy retweeting feature.
• URL shortener – URL shorteners are free online services that take a long URL and reduce it to just a few characters—and are highly important when you’re limited to just 140 characters. The most common is http://bit.ly, which also allows you to track how many people have clicked on your shortened link.
• Hashtags – Hashtags are keywords added to a post prefaced by the # symbol. Readers can click on or search for hashtag terms to read tweets just about that topic.
So You Want to Leave a Comment on the UT Facebook Page? Here Are a Few Things to Keep in Mind.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is dedicated to forging lasting bonds with its many constituencies, particularly in the area of social networks. As the academy is the appropriate arena for discussion, debate, and the healthy exchange of ideas, comments are not moderated prior to being posted to our Facebook page. We welcome your enthusiasm for our university, its academic programs, its cultural events, its athletic programs, and its regional and global impact.

We do, however, provide the following guidelines:

• We encourage thoughtful discussion, debate and differing viewpoints, with the understanding that all comments on UT Knoxville's page must be civil, respectful, and appropriate for our audience. That audience includes prospective students, current students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, fans and community members.

• When leaving comments, we encourage our fans to remain on topic, to respond directly to the content at hand, and to be mindful that their comments are public and are publicly attached to their personal Facebook profiles. Also, it's preferable not to post comments in ALL CAPS to get your point across, as this is interpreted as shouting.

• We will not tolerate use of lewd, offensive, libelous, demeaning, or otherwise hurtful or hateful speech directed toward either individuals or groups. Name calling and threats of violence—even theoretical—aimed at those with whom you disagree are inappropriate and are not conducive to a civil debate. We reserve the right—but assume no obligation—to delete such comments, and report offenders as appropriate.

• Mere disagreement with a particular article, posting, or with other commenters will NOT in and of itself be grounds for a comment's removal.

• We do not permit messages selling products or promoting commercial or other ventures. We will delete such messages without notice.

• Comments are also subject to Facebook's Terms of Use and Code of Conduct.

• Upon request of individuals named in comments, some comments may also be removed.