

Social Media Guidelines

Social Media has become a popular tool for communication. As technology evolves we can expect that the medium will continue to grow in both functionality and popularity. Many universities use social media to engage in new ways with prospective students, current students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators and alumni.

As a constantly evolving but increasingly effective tool, many universities have encountered fundamental problems establishing and enforcing formal social media policies. These guidelines offer assistance to university representatives including students, faculty and staff as they move forward with approved social networking ventures.

Because social media technology is changing, we are continually redefining our approach to how USD should represent itself in social media spaces. USD already has a presence on many of the social networks and we expect this to grow.

Naming Conventions in Social Media

- Try to use University of San Diego when naming your account. This helps to distinguish us from other colleges and universities with USD as initials.
- If possible, avoid acronyms. We are all familiar with University of San Diego's own brand of alphabet soup, but your audience may not be.
- If your department or unit name is too long to use in its full form, abbreviate as necessary, but be sure to use the full name and University of San Diego in your biography or description.

Use of the University of San Diego Logo in Social Media

USD Marketing and Strategic Partnerships released a new version of the logo guidelines that included best practices for web usage.

Social Media Do's and Don'ts

DO Confer with Digital Communications and ITS.

Before you add a social media platform, it is wise to check with Digital Communications (dcim@sandiego.edu). Discuss the way the platform will be presented, such as the name, graphics, department group, student group and come up with a strategy. Think about the audience, who will manage the content, what kind of content will be shared, and what platform would be best. ITS can offer suggestions on technical considerations

and tools to efficiently administer social media sites; contact them via the [online web request form](#).

DO Plan for site administration.

A USD staff or faculty member should always oversee and take responsibility for a department's or organization's social networking accounts. It's great – and, in fact, desired — to have students tweeting or posting to Facebook so the voice and interaction is genuine and organic, but when a student graduates or moves on to other position, it's critical university employees and faculty have access to any social media accounts open on behalf of the university.

DO Be transparent.

Tell your audience who you are and what you do at the University of San Diego. Community members can feel deceived if you hide your identity or intent. Use the space to share some of the fun and entertaining things about USD and your unit. Places like Twitter and Facebook are casual and informal in nature. People go there to play, connect and engage in entertainment, in that regard, the medium is perfect for informal interactions with the university.

DO Respond to comments and questions.

It is easy to think of social networks merely as tools to push out University of San Diego content and forget they are actually built around dialogue and interaction. Responding to questions and comments builds relationships and credibility and keeps the human element prominent within a social networking site.

DO Take advantage of trusted students to do your social networking, when appropriate.

Depending on your intended audience, using trusted students to maintain Facebook pages and Twitter accounts brings the benefit of an authentic voice. If, for example, you are trying to connect with prospects, there is really no one better equipped to tell them what it's like here than current students. These audiences are savvy and will recognize spin when they see it.

DO Be timely and update regularly.

Nothing is more frustrating to users than an account that has not posted content in over a week. You can mitigate the burden by having multiple administrators for an account. There are also several kinds of social media management tools that could help schedule posts ahead of time and monitor several accounts at once, such as TweetDeck, HootSuite, Feedly, or Buffer. Try to schedule posts as they come up — even in the middle of the night.

DO Pay attention to (and delete) spam.

Facebook pages, in particular, are subject to spam in the comments. One way to avoid this is to not allow comments on your posts, but the trade-off is you are having a one-way conversation. The site/page administrator should pay attention to all of the social networking accounts being used and delete spam as necessary. Be careful in what you choose to delete, though, as it can be seen as a form of censorship. A rule of thumb we use on the University of San Diego Facebook page is to delete anything that does not relate to the university and keep anything that does — even if we don't particularly like it.

DO Be engaging in your prose.

You will get the most reward for your effort when your content is engaging. Because of the casual nature of social media, it is encouraged to be witty, punny, and tongue-in-cheek when appropriate to the subject matter. “Casual” does not equate to sloppy, however, and too much use of online shorthand (e.g., “OMG, I h8 that! ROFLMAO!”) is not appropriate if you’re communicating on behalf of the University of San Diego.

DO Know your audience.

Mediums like Facebook and LinkedIn give you access to your audience demographics. Pay attention to this when determining what to post. For example, the primary audience for the University of San Diego Instagram account is current and prospective students; therefore, it makes little sense to use this Instagram account to promote alumni events unless they are geared towards the entire USD community.

DO Allow conversations to blossom.

The point of social media is for people to connect and build relationships — both with one another and with USD. It is possible you might post something that leads to a conversation with comments you or your supervisors might be uncomfortable with. You should resist the urge to moderate these conversations unless things degenerate into hate speech or otherwise onerous tones. **If you become aware of rogue or offensive dialogue, please report it to Digital Communications, dcim@sandiego.edu.**

DO Consider the use of multiple kinds of media.

It's easy and effective to post photos and video content, in addition to text. As a University of San Diego social media site administrator, keep in mind it is advised to seek input from Digital Communications specific to photos and video content. There are no strict rules about using photographs of the campus, events, or other USD-related themes, but keep in mind you are representing the university to the outside world and choose images that are of high quality. It is strongly recommended individuals interested in placing photographs on their social media sites seek input from Digital Communications.

DO Respect copyrights.

Always give people the proper credit for their work and make sure you have the right to use something before you share it. Never post copyrighted photos, music, text or video content without the permission of the copyright owner. For more information on copyright see: <http://www.sandiego.edu/legal/resources/copyright.php>.

DO Protect your community.

Understand that USD's official discrimination and harassment policies apply online. Every member of the university community is responsible for creating and maintaining a climate free of discrimination and harassment. USD's policies can be found at: <http://www.sandiego.edu/safety/reporting/hate-crimes/>.

DON'T Sink to their level.

Like any social interaction, you will encounter people who are rude and offensive. Resist the urge to respond, either from the official account, or your own personal perspective. You cannot win the argument. Engaging in the exchange will only escalate conflict. Instead, trust your community to self-police bad behavior. In many cases of negative dialogue, other users will call out the bad behavior and, eventually, it will self-resolve. If users threaten the safety or well-being of other community members, or the institution itself, please report the individual to the platform managers, or send a screenshot or other example of the post to Digital Communications (dcim@sandiego.edu).

DON'T Rely on institutional news to be your sole source of content.

It is certainly valid to post links to the USD News Center or student Vista articles and other official sources, but it's worth noting that things we find important (e.g. Presidential speeches, dean's announcements, etc.) are not always seen to be so by our audiences. *For example, a University of San Diego Facebook post on USD third baseman Kris Bryant being drafted second overall by the Chicago Cubs received 318 likes and 7 comments, while a post about a new academic program only received 1 like.*

DON'T Put all of your eggs in one basket.

Social media can be a wonderful complement to existing communications platforms and web pages, but never forget you are a user of any given platform, not a client. Functionality within social network platforms will change without any advance notice or consultation, and user support often consists of FAQ pages and user forums. In other words, don't depend exclusively on social media for anything that's critical to your mission.

DON'T Ban a user without thinking twice.

It may be difficult to rescind a ban. Ensure you really want to do it before you click the button to ban someone from your network.

DON'T Over-saturate the Market

Try not to send more than five or six tweets a day unless you are tweeting live from an event. Similarly, limit your Facebook posts to two or three per day. Flooding your readers with content may seem like a great way to get the word out, but high-volume posting will likely be perceived as spam and people will choose to “unfollow” you.