**14 Essential Social Media Etiquette Rules**

Recording a Broadway play…

Eating food from someone else’s plate…

Use speaker phone when talking on public transportation…

RSVP for a wedding and then don’t show…

**There’s a way to behave (and not to) for nearly everything.**

Same for your social media protocol.

Act poorly, be seen poorly, perform poorly. One small social slip can result in many big hits to your brand.

Ready, set, behave.

**1. Read the room**

Saying the right things at the right time makes a difference.

Giving your (strong) opinion about immigration with your new boss on day one—not a good move.

Be thoughtful about your social media etiquette.

Grace, eloquence, and good conversation is what you want. Your brand should be a good conversation partner. Sure—apply humor, wit, and personality too (thoughtfully).

Here’s a few tips to be, get, and stay social on social:

* Research your audience
* Determine the best time to post
* Use the right image sizes
* Use the right words and phrases, too

In other words, listen before you talk. So you’ll appear like polished pro. And, to learn more about your audience.

Otherwise, you’ll have to go into ‘save-face’ mode. But you can’t—it’s too late.

**2. Respond to humans, fast**

Fifty-three percent of you asking a company a question on Twitter expect a response within an hour. For a *complaint*, that number jumps to 72 percent of you.

So respond to people. Quickly.

Too busy, you say? Delegate, I say.

If your unit/post home has a social media account. You can assign messages to members. Some organizations have different people responsible for answering messages each day of the week, while others have a single point of contact for the messages. This allows you to be present and responsive on social media.

Think when you last left a message. Then… crickets. Your message unheard, unread, for sure ignored.

Sucks, huh?

Don’t do that to your members, fans and followers.

Don’t ignore a negative review, either.

That can lead to bad PR. The best way to turn a digital frown upside down is to ‘handle it’—right away. Stuff happens, so what. Now it’s on you to show what you and your brand are really made of.

**3. Be nice to your peers, no matter what**

Bantering with competing brands on social can be entertaining and useful. People watching can get a kick out of it. And see how you move and groove with others in your field.

But not if it gets ugly.

**You waste precious time.** You’ve got enough on your e-plate building awareness (and likability) for your organization.

You look unattractive. You’re encouraging people to leave, versus participate, when trashing others.

Now…

What if someone *calls you out* on social?

Then forget everything above and rip into them with all your digital might. Roar with war.

**Of course not.**

Stay poised, stay nice, and don’t go dark. Respond respectfully, taking the high road so everyone will see how well you behave. Plus, your audience (and theirs) deserve to hear the whole story.

Be professional, respectful, and nice. Always. This will win you more fans, more likes, and more business.

**4. Go easy on the hashtags**

Hashtags are cool. They help people search for, and find, you and your brand.

#so #long #as #youdont #gooverboard

They just become noise and distracting—and make you look #desperate.

Use hashtags sparingly and wisely, so they’ll have more meaning.

**5. Don’t mix business and pleasure**

Because it usually causes problems.

You’re spending time, bucks, and effort building your brand on social, most likely over years.

Think of the visual trend you achieved—a curve probably angling up just a bit over time.

Now imagine that curve spiking instantly downward. Which can happen after sharing something personal or outrageous.

What you built over a long haul can crumble in an instant. Whether you did this on purpose or by accident.

A few tips:

* **Think before you post.** You’re busy, I get it. But take an extra breath to be sure. It’s a lot easier than having to apologize to your audience—and boss too.
* **Have a social media policy.** It is important to ensure that all of your members are on the same page about the content that will be shared on your page. It is also important so that everyone understands what happens if you don’t abide by the policy.

**6. Follow with a purpose**

Following everyone and anyone will dilute your brand. And, saturate your feeds with irrelevant posts. Which will tarnish your brand reputation. Again, the one you’re working so hard to achieve over time.

The number of followers is not what matters most. It might say something about how aware people are of your brand. But context matters more.

Consider this before hitting the ‘follow’ button:

* Would you repost much of what they have to show, say and share?
* Might they do the same for your posts and shares?
* Are they a good ambassador, pro, and influencer in your industry?
* And active, not dormant?

In other words, can they help you and you help them? Yes? Then by all means, click ‘follow’.

**7. Give credit**

Social media is a recycling bin of content.

Meaning, lots of eyeballs can see your stuff, in a flurry-hurry, as it spreads like digital wildfire.

And plagiarism can too (or other absences of credit).

Show and share a steady stream of great content, no problem. So long as you give, versus take, credit for it.

* Mention the creator’s handle in a post
* Ask for their permission to share (and score polite points)
* Or share it and make it obvious it’s not yours

If not, you’ll look greedy and disrespectful.

**8. Don’t overshare**

Are you or your organization posting once, a couple, maybe a few times a day?

Seems reasonable.

What’s not reasonable is when you suddenly triple or quadruple that number.

People. Get. annoyed.

And become more likely to *unfollow* you. And why not? What’s with the sudden post-idemic?

Now, if for some reason you’re going to change your post cadence, let people know. *“Heads up out there. We’ll be posting more than usual to share what we learned at the MidWinter conference this week.”*

That was nice. Your followers will think the same.

By the way, how much should you tweet, pin, and share per day?

* **Facebook:** 1 post per day
* **Twitter:** 15 Tweets per day
* **Pinterest:** 11 Pins per day
* **LinkedIn:** 1 post per day (oops, I’m doing twice)
* **Instagram:** 1-2 posts per day

**9. Go easy on tone**

Bragging, complaining, retorting, or venting in high doses turns readers off. With good reason.

If you want to do more of that, better to do it somewhere else than social media.

Write a post, create a video, give a speech. See a shrink. Run for President.

But don’t take it out on your loving, social audience. You’ll associate your brand with the negative.

That’s it. Nothing more I need to say on this one. You get it.

**10. Apply the golden rule**

Act how you want others to act.

* Want to be credited? Credit others.
* Want to be treated politely? Respond politely.
* Want people to share insights, not promotions? Share insights, not promotions.

You get the point. Be the person (and brand) you want others to be. Simple, huh? So simple we forget about this too often.

**11. Relate, don’t sell**

Ever follow someone then whamo… You get some response sounding like salesman versus a human?

Wait, I’m not saying salesmen aren’t human. No, no, not at all. That’s not what I meant.

What I do mean…

How did that make you feel when you followed someone for the right reason, then find yourself in their sales funnel?

Not good, right? Tricked?

See, already, somebody forgot the golden rule above. Don’t be that someone.

**12. Follow because you want to**

Not because you want them to.

Don’t follow someone because you want them to follow you back.

I’m guilty.

Avoid the temptation to ask them, too.

* You look desperate
* You can’t control others
* It’s not genuine

Follow, friend, like or pin because you dig what they said, showed or shared. Without expecting anything in return.

**13. Be interested, not interesting**

When you try to be interesting, you make it about you.

When you show interest, you make it about them.

We all have a dominance in either talking or listening. It’s just how we’re wired. And, most people are talking-dominant.

Me, included.

However, I learned a long time ago that one learns little when focused on transmitting information versus receiving information.

And…

It’s (absolutely) the best way to connect with others.

We’re humans, we can apply conscious thought to do and be better. The same goes for social. People will like you better. You will like others better. Guaranteed.

Check out the attached template for your unit/county to use to develop a social media policy. This will ensure that you are all on the same page with how social media will help positively promote your organization, and ensure that all members understand any repercussions for inappropriate use of your social media platform.