

Social Media Policy

Approved by Presidents Council on 2/20/2012

The Social Media Policy describes general guidelines and the approval procedure for employees to create social media accounts.

*Lamar Institute of
Technology*

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Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Introduction

The *Social Media Policy and Guidelines* document outlines online communication guidelines for Lamar Institute of Technology (LIT) via social media. Social media is presently a mainstream method of communication and there is a high probability that employees use online social media tools for personal and/or professional purposes.

Social media guidelines set expectations, while empowering employees to tweet or blog. In addition, guidelines educate faculty and staff on issues to avoid in both personal and professional status updates.

All LIT employees must comply with institutionally uniform policies and present a reputable image of the institution. These guidelines apply to employees participating in social media for LIT and during personal online activities that may appear that they are still speaking for Lamar Institute of Technology.

Policy

Communication among LIT employees and the community is diverse and varied. LIT employees who choose to communicate through social media must comply with the *Social Media Policy and Guidelines*. Employees who do not comply with the guidelines will be required to deactivate a LIT social media site.

Social Media

Blogs, social networks, and web sites such as Wikipedia, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube are examples of social media. Each provides a unique channel to share knowledge and connect with others.

Both general and departmental guidelines outline best practices when sharing and communicating in social media channels. The following guidelines originate from respected online and industry sources. They expose employees to the effective use of forums while protecting personal and professional reputations. Additionally, the guidelines improve the quality of communication in channel.

The Purpose of Social Media

Social media offers LIT the opportunity to engage in communicating and gathering feedback directly from those who care about LIT. Social media helps to initiate new conversations, respond to feedback, and maintain an active dialogue with a diverse audience. Involvement by the Institution's Office of Public Information and Marketing in social media allows for brand growth, stronger connections between the institution and the community that LIT serves, and an increased awareness of LIT's reputation.

General Guidelines

1. Be responsible in your communications.

The keys to success in social media are honesty, thoughtfulness, and awareness of the target audience. Communications must be professional and be sensitive about linking to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement. Above all, exercise good judgment and common sense. Do not use profanity, slurs, or derogatory comments. Be civil. There is no such thing as a “private” social media site. Remember that a post has a longer shelf life than the individual posting the comment does. Archival systems save information even after deleting a post. Always post or communicate with a calm and clear head.

2. Be transparent and authentic.

Be honest about one’s identity. If a supervisor authorizes an employee to represent LIT in social media, say so. If choosing to post about LIT on personal time, please identify yourself as a LIT faculty or staff member when appropriate. Never hide one’s identity for the purpose of promoting LIT through social media.

Never pretend to be someone else and post about LIT. There have been several high profile and embarrassing cases of company executives anonymously posting about their own organizations.

The essence of a community is that it exists so that employees can support others and they, in turn, can support the institution. Learn to balance personal and professional information and the important role that transparency plays in building a community.

A good resource about transparency in online communities is the Blog Council’s “Disclosure Best Practices Toolkit” at <http://blogcouncil.org/disclosure/>.

3. Be accurate.

Ensure all the facts have been gathered before posting a comment or communication. It is better to verify information with a source first rather than post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link sources whenever possible.

If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This earns respect in the online community.

4. Respect copyrights and fair use.

Always give people proper credit for their work, and make sure you have the right to use something before publishing. Only those authorized by LIT may use the institution’s branding. Do not include LIT branding in personal postings.

5. Protect confidential & proprietary information.

Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about LIT, its students, its alumni or colleagues. Use good ethical judgment. Follow campus policies and federal requirements, such as FERPA.

6. Productivity matters – respect institutional time and property.

LIT computers and employee work time are for campus related business. It is appropriate to post at work if instructed to or comments relate directly to accomplishing established work goals. For example, seeking sources for information or working with others to resolve a problem. Maintain personal sites on one’s own

time using non-LIT computers.

7. Endorsements.

Do not use LIT's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, political party or candidate.

Linking to other sites is occasionally acceptable. However, it is important to consider associations with potential applicants, donors, and research funding agencies. Share links appropriate and relevant to the institution.

8. Monitoring comments.

Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments. They build credibility and a community. However, a site can be modified where comments must be reviewed and approved before appearing. If choosing to delete comments, create a policy on unacceptable posts easy for viewers to see. For example, the following comments are subject to editing or rejection:

- Comments including blatant profanity, or racist, sexist or derogatory content
- Product advertisements
- Political support
- Comments that are off topic or SPAM
- Comments that are personal attacks on an individual

In general, if the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then the content is approved, regardless of whether it is favorable or unfavorable to LIT.

9. Be relevant.

Facebook, YouTube, and other social media sites aspire to be interactive, current, and engaging. If a site is not relevant, has few posts or receives little traffic, it would be best to kill the site and use resources on other communications endeavors.

10. Add value.

Social media will more likely pay dividends for the institution if you add value to the followers, readers, fans and users. If it contributes directly or indirectly to the improvement of LIT; allows the public to learn about LIT; or builds a sense of community; or helps fans and friends connect to LIT, then it is adding value. If an LIT-focused Facebook, YouTube, Flickr or Twitter platforms offer links, employees are encouraged to tie them into the school's core branded sites.

Approval Procedure

1. Contact the Office of Public Information and Marketing prior to creating a social media account for a unit within the campus. Use a dedicated administrative account to create the social media site. An LIT sponsored social media site does not belong to any one individual in the college.
2. The Office of Public Information and Marketing will review sites periodically to insure the institution follows the guidelines and that sites remain active. If social

media sites become inactive or do not follow guidelines established by the institution, the administrator must discontinue the site.

3. LIT discourages smaller units from setting up social media pages that provide little value. Units should consider setting up social media sites that represent a larger unit, such as a department or center, as opposed to a smaller unit, such as a program or individual initiatives.
4. If individuals choose to utilize social media tools it is critical to *delineate* between personal and professional initiatives. Include another LIT full time staff or instructor within the network and set clear guidance for individuals who choose to participate in the social network. An example of good practice is to:
 - a. Obtain approval from the Office of Public Information and Marketing.
 - b. Think about searchability. Search engines such as Google and Twitter's own search engine will pull up accounts based upon key word relevance. Pick something obvious and relevant.
 - c. *Remember to use LIT in the name since it is the most frequently used term by individuals looking for the LIT website.*
 - d. Set clear guidelines for individuals who choose to become a member of the social network.
 - e. Include at least one other full time LIT instructor and/or staff member within the social network.

Approval Process

Units that want to communicate via social media must receive approval from their immediate supervisor and the Office of Public Information and Marketing. The Media Request Form (page 6) is located on the forms drive in the Distance Learning/Forms folder.

Media Request Form

Office of Distance Learning



Media Request Form

<input type="checkbox"/>	Requester	
	Owner / Administrator	
	Media]	
	Media Account Name	
	Media Account Description and Purpose	
	What will be posted?	
	Who will participate?	

Approval Signatures:

The signatures below designate the approval of the creation of an LIT Social Media Account.

	Signature	Date
Requester		
Supervisor		
Office of Public Communication and Marketing		

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Appendix

Facebook Guidelines

Communicate with students, potential students, alumni and interested community members in a preferred mode of communication. Take advantage of the viral nature of Facebook — spread the word through our “friends” networks.

Facebook page owner	What to post?	Who will be your fan?
Departments Use model: News, events, sharing thoughts and comments	Department news, events, links to relevant information	Current students, alumni, advisory board members, industry contacts
Development Use model: Relationship management, events	Alumni- or donor-related news and events	Alumni, donors, interested community members
Marketing and Communications Use model: News, events, crisis communications	University news and events	Students, faculty, staff, media, interested community members
Student Relations/Recruiting Use model: Promotion, sales, customer relations	Links to online information, application and admissions updates, student-related news and events	Potential and current students, parents

Facebook facts (2009)

- The 25 to 34 year-old population is doubling every six months
- 18 to 35 year-olds account for 41 percent of all users
- The 35 to 54 year-old population is growing the fastest—276 percent in six months
- 55 percent of all users are female

Understand the lingo

- **Page.** Stand-alone page; mimics the profile page of a person but designed for an entity rather than an individual; followers are called *Fans*.
- **Group.** Collections of persons under a common purpose.
- **Cause.** Collections of persons who may join under a common cause, usually to collect money.
- **Person.** Individual people who get a home page update list and a profile page where they can add optional applications; followers are called *friends*.

Facebook Naming Conventions

Think first and foremost about searchability. Search engines such as Google and Twitter's own search engine will pull up accounts based on key word relevance. Pick something obvious and relevant. That is one way to acquire followers.

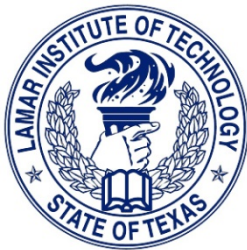
Tip: Remember to use LIT in your name as it is the most-used Google search term by people looking for our website.

- **Departments.** facebook.com/LIT[department]

LIT Colors:

- Blue: Pantone 541
- Red: Pantone 485

LIT logos (additional logos are available on the Y drive):



Available Options

- **Wall Postings.** Messages, photos, videos; allow fans to comment on these. All comments show up on every fan's home page list and on their friend's entire home page list.
- **Discussion Board.** A no frills message board; allows fans to post comments that are visible on the page.
- **Events.** Each event gets its own page, so it becomes a micro-site. Each event page has its own set of options, including an invite option that you can push out to all the page fans. Fan responses to those invites are posted on all fan/fan friends home page lists.
- Event pages are opened and closed by date and then archived as past events on the master page.

- **Links.** Post links to http:// locations; includes option to include a summary, image from the webpage and our own comment. New links activate a fan notification; notifications are 'on' by default and may be forwarded both in and outside of Facebook.
- **Notes.** This is a longer copy option that is similar to another page and allows text, photos, links and ability to link to other groups and persons. New notes activate a fan notification.
- **Video.** Posting a video library accessible from the page. New videos activate a fan notification.
- Photo gallery
- E-mail capability to all fans for direct communication; exposure to all fans' friends through the home page updates and fans' forwards

Twitter Guidelines

Strategy

Twitter is, in essence, micro-blogging. From a business point of view, it's a newswire in 140 characters or less. Use Twitter to release brief news and to provide links to additional information. Use Twitter to inform your followers.

Tweeter	What to tweet	Who to follow?	How to engage your audience?
Departments Use model: Department news, events and links to information	Department related news and events, job postings	Current students, alumni, advisory board members, industry	Answer questions promptly. Respond to comments. Know your followers.
Development Use model: Relationship management, events	Alumni- or donor-related news and events	Alumni, donors, interested community members	Answer questions promptly. Respond to comments. Know your followers. Thank them for their support.
Marketing and communications Use model: News, events, crisis communications	University news and events	Students, faculty, staff, media, interested community members	Answer questions promptly. Respond to comments. Be transparent.
Student Relations/Recruiting Use model: Promotion, sales, customer relations	Links to online information, application and admissions updates, student-related news and events	Potential and current students, parents	Answer questions promptly. Respond to comments. Provide more information when warranted.

Tip: While it may seem obvious, please remember you are Tweeting on behalf of LIT

Twitter naming conventions

- try to **limit to 13 characters**
- Think first and foremost about searchability. Search engines such as Google and Twitter's own search engine will pull up accounts based on key word relevance. Pick something obvious and relevant. This is one way to acquire followers. Consider these suggestions when choosing your name:

- Departments - [twitter.com/lit\[location\]\[department\]](https://twitter.com/lit[location][department]), i.e. twitter.com/LITAHSC
- Development and Alumni Relations – twitter.com/LITAlumni

Adding URLs, links, or images to your Tweets

You will see that there are many [tinyurl](https://tinyurl.com) links in Tweets across Twitter. This is an automatic feature built into Twitter. While you can go to tiny URL sites such as tinyurl.com and many others, Twitter will automatically convert long links to smaller URLs so the link fits your post. Twitter tracks click-throughs on the tiny URLs.

If you need image hosting to supplement a Tweet, you can use a service such as twitpic.com, which lets you share photos on Twitter.

Feeding Twitter to your Facebook, MySpace and other social media

Make it easier on yourself and connect your Facebook, MySpace and Twitter accounts so a profile update or tweet in one goes to the other.

Customizing your page

Stick to simple graphics that represent the LIT brand. Contact Marketing & Communications for help with graphics and design for your Twitter page.

LIT Colors:

- Blue: Pantone 541
- Red: Pantone 485

LIT logos (additional logos are available on the Y drive):

