

Social Media Guidelines

Carnegie Mellon University

Expressing and Protecting the Carnegie Mellon University Identity

Using social media on behalf of the university

If you're using social media for professional networking or disseminating information as an authorized representative of the university, including using "Carnegie Mellon University" in your profile, we ask that you follow the guidelines in this document.

Personal views

If you participate in social media but do not have an official university social media channel, and you have not contacted the university's Marketing & Communications team, you are posting your personal views, and they do not represent the views of Carnegie Mellon University. We ask that you use the media responsibly and carefully consider any possible professional implications.

Social media guidelines

The following guidelines can be applied to using any social media — including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Getting started

Please check in with the university's Marketing & Communications team (marketing-info@andrew.cmu.edu) if you plan to use social media on behalf of the university. In addition to answering any questions you might have, the team will help you understand where your page fits in with other university pages — and leverage existing channels for your page's benefit.

Who you are

Carnegie Mellon's schools, departments and centers vary in missions, but they're all part of the larger institution — Carnegie Mellon University. When naming your social media page, be sure to use Carnegie Mellon University, Carnegie Mellon or CMU, as space allows. If the full "Carnegie Mellon University" doesn't fit as the page or account name, be sure to include it in the description area. For advice on including the university wordmark in page graphics, contact Sue Layton, Marketing & Communications brand manager, at 412-268-9523 or marketing-info@andrew.cmu.edu.

Frequency and timing

Before starting a social media channel, think about who will manage it and how it will fit into the normal routine of duties. In many cases, it's best to have one person responsible for all of the social media in your department. Frequency of posting depends on which platform you're using. But overall, updating frequently helps users to interact with you and your content. For instance, many Twitter channels are updated several times a day. On the other hand, some YouTube channels are only updated on a monthly basis. Take your situation into account.

As a general rule, we suggest that Facebook and Twitter are updated (at the very least) once per week. You should aim for more frequent updates.

Audience

Always keep your goal and audience in mind. Thinking through your goal for using social media will help immensely in getting started, deciding which social media to use and knowing how to use it well.

Accountability

When you're writing on behalf of the university, you are "Carnegie Mellon's voice." If you have to think twice about a post, it's probably best not to post it.

Be polite

You're certainly allowed to disagree with a comment or posting, but be polite about it — don't be rude.

Make it easy for your audience

Ask for help if you don't know the answer. If you can't answer a user's question, don't be afraid to confer with the larger university social media community — either privately or publicly — to get the correct answer. Give direct URLs, not "go to cmu.edu." Give them a person's name and phone number, not "call Student Affairs."

Listen. Don't be defensive

If a user is complaining about your services or product, use the communication as an opportunity to obtain their frank feedback. If you have a reasonable explanation, offer it, but remember there's only so much appetite for excuses. It is often best to simply make sure they know you are listening.

Almost more important than what you post is what you hear or read. Social media has become the new suggestion box. The customer service line. Don't be afraid to enter a conversation to let them know that you want to help.

Represent the tone of your service/department

Think about your service or department, including your mission and culture, and bring that same personality to social media. For instance, if you handle functions like financial systems or other business operations, you will want to communicate in a more formal tone.

Always check links OR sources before posting

This seems like a no-brainer, but it is easy to just repost a link you've seen somewhere else. Take some extra time to click on the link yourself and make sure it is appropriate for your audience.

Be a friend/fan/follower

The goal of social media is to connect people and information. In order to use it successfully, you'll need to be a part of the conversation — not just the broadcaster or the listener. A great way to join the discussion is by connecting with individual users and replying to messages/posts. Similarly, a good way to broaden your network is to watch other university social media outlets and learn from each other. A social media directory with links to many of the social media pages can be found at www.cmu.edu/social-media/.

When to delete

When using tools like Facebook, administrators have the ability to delete comments made by users on your page. Make these deletions very sparingly, since the point of social media is to allow open, honest communication. Only delete comments when they are vulgar or disparaging to a particular individual or particularly egregious and inappropriate. If someone

simply makes a complaint, use it as an opportunity to listen to the feedback, not as an opportunity to cover up imperfections.

Admit a mistake

When you make a mistake (posted the wrong URL; made a typo, etc.), admit it. If someone points out your mistake, thank them for letting you know. Be gracious.

Use every instance as a way to connect with your community

Any time you post something or receive a reply, the world is watching. Use such contacts as an opportunity to share information and expand your audience.

Contact

If you have questions or wish to provide feedback about our social channels, contact Laura Kelly at 412-268-4831 or laurak@andrew.cmu.edu.