

Social media guidelines for staff

Many of us make use of social media to communicate with a variety of audiences, including customers, media, investors and each other. These guidelines should help everyone at Pearson to use social media in a positive, responsible way, and to protect all staff and Pearson from the risk of disclosing confidential information, legal claims and negative publicity.

Use these guidelines if you post on:

- blogs, wikis, forums & social networking sites such as (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Neo, Google Plus, YouTube and Quora
- websites hosted or sponsored by Pearson (or through a third-party's servers)
- websites featuring Pearson products or business (including our competitors).

These guidelines are for:

- Pearson people, contractors, or other Pearson representatives (eg agencies etc)
- anyone who is blogging or posting on any websites from their Pearson computer or on one of Pearson's communications systems
- additional guidance alongside any other advice set out for your part of Pearson or any training you receive about effective social media use.

All uses of social media should follow the same principles outlined in the Pearson Code of Conduct, including doing our best to communicate honestly and openly with everyone who has an interest in our company. These social media guidelines should be used in conjunction with a healthy dose of common sense.

1. Getting started:

You'll probably have your own personal social network accounts when you join Pearson and we'd certainly encourage you to keep posting, tweeting and commenting on the things that interest you. Neither the brand name Pearson nor any Pearson logo should form part of your user name (eg @PearsonSarah) or profile imagery.

If you think there's a business case for starting an account for your part of Pearson, get in touch with your local Social Media Council member before you set anything up. If you get the go-ahead, there'll be a short training module to complete before you get started.

2. Be honest:

Tell the truth when you post. If you're posting on behalf of Pearson, remember to use your social media training – you'll be using the Pearson tone of voice and avoiding stating any personal preferences or opinions. If you're posting as you, identify yourself as a Pearson employee if you comment about one of Pearson's products/businesses and ensure that what you say about the product/business is accurate and verifiable. If you make a mistake, own up and correct it as soon as possible, explaining why you have done so.

Wherever possible, include a disclaimer in your personal bio, eg 'This is my personal Twitter account/ blog and the views expressed are my own, not those of Pearson.'

Remember that you are personally liable for what you post on personal Twitter accounts, blogs etc, so avoid making vague, misleading or dishonest claims, whatever you happen to be talking about.

3. Respect copyright and other intellectual property rights:

You should never quote anything other than a short excerpt. Instead, link directly to the original source materials and provide a page reference to the material. Always attribute the source(s) in your post. If you're using an image, make sure you only use those that have open licenses and attribute the original source.

4. Don't share confidential information:

We're all for transparency, but certain topics are either inappropriate for discussion via social media (unless you have express permission) or strictly confidential. These include (but are not limited to) statements about Pearson stock or financial information; human resources issues; Pearson's legal issues or disputes; unreleased product information or intellectual property; information about customers or business processes; or information regarding mergers, acquisitions or divestitures.

5. Protect all private information:

Don't post anyone's personal information, even your own. That includes social security numbers, credit card numbers, medical information, passwords, birth dates, or other private information (including photographs) that could cause embarrassment, loss or injury to you or others. Keep up to date with the ever-changing privacy settings of your social networks to ensure that the content you want to keep private is protected. As a rule of thumb, assume that everything you post online might be visible, even if you've taken steps to hide it.

6. Be decent:

Be respectful of others and never insult or attack when posting: don't use profanity or obscene, threatening, defamatory or discriminatory language. Avoid posting in haste or in anger – whatever you post is going to be public for a very long time, so think about it carefully before you hit the 'send' key. If you wouldn't feel comfortable explaining it in person to your manager, it probably isn't appropriate for social media either.

7. Be sensitive:

This one is self-explanatory, but we're a diverse group from a variety of cultures, so we need to be sensitive to the fact that not everyone's customs and outlook will be the same as our own. What might feel a perfectly acceptable topic or point of view to you, could seem inappropriate to someone else.

8. Don't be afraid to ask for help:

If you have a problem or question with any posting or blog, don't hesitate to get in touch with your local communications team for guidance. If anyone contacts you with a complaint about a posting or blog, or if you think there's a risk that they might, inform your manager, your local communications team and legal department (if appropriate), as soon as possible.

9. Don't forget your day job:

Unless using social media or blogging is part of your role at Pearson, please make sure it does not interfere with your commitments and responsibilities at work.