

Social Media Guidelines

Blogs, social networks and web sites such as Wikipedia, Facebook, Flickr, Second Life, YouTube and others are exciting channels to share knowledge, express creativity and connect with others who share your interests. The HEO supports your participation in these online communities.

Since social media channels are fairly new, we've assembled "best practice" guidelines from respected online and industry sources to help you use these forums effectively, protect your personal and professional reputation, and follow HEO Policies. The keys to success in social media are being honest about who you are, being thoughtful before you post, and respecting the purpose of the community where you are posting.

Be Transparent

Be honest about your identity. State who you are and the association/league you are representing along with your role and goals.

Be Accurate

Make sure you have all the facts before you post. It's better to first verify information with a source than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible; after all, that's how you build community. You should respect copyright laws and never plagiarize. If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in the online community.

Be Respectful

You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person. As a member of the HEO, you understand our organization's commitment to respect for the dignity of others and to the civil and thoughtful discussion of opposing ideas. Some online communities can be volatile, tempting users to behave in ways they otherwise wouldn't. Your reputation, and that of the HEO, is best served when you remain above the fray.

Think Before You Post

There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

Maintain Confidentiality

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the HEO, its partners, or your fellow employees/volunteers. Use good ethical judgment. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not say in front of all of your co-workers. Apply a "good judgment" test for every activity related to the HEO: Could you be guilty of leaking information, trade secrets, customer data, or upcoming announcements? Is it negative commentary regarding the HEO? Activity showing good judgment would include statements of fact about the HEO and its products and services, facts about already-public information, or information on the HEO Web site.

Be Aware of Liability

You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to be proprietary, copyrighted, defamatory, libelous or obscene (as defined by the courts). Businesses are increasingly conducting regular Web searches to ensure that their confidential information is not being breached and that their organization is not being unfairly attacked or criticized. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

Protect Your Identity

While you want to be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you. Don't list your home address or telephone number or your work telephone or e-mail address. It is a good idea to create a separate e-mail address that is used only with your social media site.

Follow a Code of Ethics

There are numerous codes of ethics for bloggers and other active participants in social media, all of which will help you participate responsibly in online communities. If you have your own social media site, you may wish to post your own code of ethics.

Monitor Comments

Most people who maintain social media sites welcome comments; they build credibility and community. However, you can set your site so that you can review and approve comments before they appear. This allows you to respond in a timely way to comments. It also allows you to delete spam comments and to block any individuals who repeatedly post offensive or frivolous comments.

Disciplinary Action

Associates who participate in online communication deemed not to be in the best interest of the HEO will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include termination or other intervention deemed appropriate.

Clients, Customers and Partners

The HEO's relationships with clients, customers and partners are valuable assets that can be damaged through a thoughtless comment. Even a positive reference could be picked up by a competitor and used in a manner that may be detrimental or embarrassing to this Branch. Members are not to reference any clients, customers, or partners without obtaining their expressed permission and only after getting approval from the Director of Marketing.

Intellectual Property, Trade Secrets, or Customer Data

The HEO's intellectual property, trade secrets, and customer data are strictly forbidden from any online discourse except through mechanisms managed internally by the Branch Finance and Marketing Committees.

Company-Sensitive Matters

Any online communication regarding proprietary information such as layoffs, strategic decisions, or other announcements deemed inappropriate for uncoordinated public exchange is forbidden. Inaccurate, distasteful or defamatory comments about the HEO are strictly prohibited.

Reporting Breaches

If any HEO Member becomes aware of social networking activity that they believe may violate the provisions of this policy, they should advise the HEO Office immediately.