

CIO 2106.1 GSA Social Media Policy

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

CIO 2106.1
July 17, 2009

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: GSA Social Media Policy

1. Purpose. This Order establishes policy for employee use of social media.
2. Applicability. This Order applies to all GSA employees. It also applies to contractors engaged in social media on behalf of GSA as part of their duties.
3. Background. GSA encourages the use of social media technologies to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange in support of GSA's mission. By openly sharing knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned within the agency, with and from other federal, state, and local partners, and with and from the public, we can provide more effective solutions and efficiencies to enhance excellence in the business of government.

As the technology evolves, this order and its accompanying handbook will evolve, but in general terms, this order defines guiding principles for use of these technologies by GSA employees. The use of social media technology follows the same standards of professional practice and conduct associated with everything else we do. Common sense and sound judgment help avoid the most vexing issues.

4. Definitions. "Social media" and "Web 2.0" are umbrella terms that encompass the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media use many technologies and forms, such as blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, podcasts, social networking, mashups, and virtual worlds. The GSA Handbook on Social Media defines these and other tools.

5. Guiding Principles.

a. Know and follow GSA and Executive Branch conduct guidelines, such as *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch*.

These standards cover topics of prohibited activities such as:

Engaging in vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind, or offensive terms targeting individuals or groups.

Endorsement of commercial products, services, or entities.

Endorsement of political parties, candidates, or groups.

Lobbying members of Congress using GSA or any other appropriated resource.

b. Published content is persistent in the public domain. When you are representing GSA in an official capacity, GSA is responsible for the content you publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Assume your communications are in the public domain, available for publishing or discussion in all forms of media.

c. When you discuss GSA or GSA-related matters, you may need to coordinate your writing with the Office of Citizen Services and Communications (OCSC) and the Office of General Counsel (OGC). Consult OCSC and/or OGC when in doubt.

d. If you publish content to any website outside of GSA's official online presence (this may include GSA websites as well as GSA's official presence on third party sites) and it has something to do with subjects associated with GSA, consider a disclaimer such as this: "The postings are my own and do not necessarily represent GSA's positions, strategies or opinions." Never use or reference your formal position when writing in a non-official capacity. Consult OCSC and/or OGC when in doubt.

e. Those with leadership responsibilities, by virtue of their position, must consider whether personal thoughts they publish, even in clearly personal venues, may be misunderstood as expressing GSA positions. They should assume that their team and those outside GSA will read what is written. A public blog is not the place to communicate GSA policies to GSA employees. Assume your thoughts are in the public domain and can be published or discussed in all forms of media. Have no expectation of privacy.

f. Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws. Always protect sensitive information, such as protected acquisition and personally identifiable information. Do not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be pre-decisional or internal to GSA unless given permission by management.

g. Be aware of your GSA association in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a GSA employee or have a public facing position for which your GSA association is known to the general public, ensure your profile and related content (even if it is of a personal and not an official nature) is consistent with how you wish to present yourself as a GSA professional, appropriate with the public trust associated with your position, and conforms to existing standards, such as *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch*. Have no expectation of privacy.

h. Remain focused on customers, existing commitments, and achieving GSA's mission. Your use of social media tools should never interfere with your primary duties, with the exception of where it is a primary duty to use these tools to do your job. Existing policies covering employee behavior on acceptable personal usage can be found in ADM 7800.11A, Personal Use of Agency Office Equipment, CIO 2104.1, IT General Rules of Behavior, and CCHCO 9751.1, Maintaining Discipline.

i. Ensure use complies with applicable mandates, such as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, IT Security Policy, and the Federal Records Act. The GSA Handbook on Social Media provides greater detail on applicable mandates.

6. Labor management relations responsibilities. Implementation of this order with respect to employees represented

by a labor organization is contingent upon completion of appropriate labor relations obligations.

Casey Coleman
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