

## SOCIAL MEDIA | POLICY

### USER | EMPLOYEE

## OVERVIEW |

These guidelines are an important addition to the Network's existing employee policies, including the company's ethics policy, the Network's Principles of Ethical Conduct for Newsrooms, IT Security Policy and Standards, and the Network's harassment, and workplace conduct policies. The existing policies all speak to different issues employees should keep in mind when interacting with each other – both on and off the job – as well as with customers, vendors, members of our audiences and the general public. Social media is an important part of how we, as a company, communicate with the public, our consumers, and with both current and prospective advertisers. Social media is also an important part of the lives of our employees, providing an environment where they interact with family, friends and personal communities. In fact, social media is transforming every aspect of society and is proving to be an enormous opportunity for the Network. Social media provides a mechanism to better understand and serve our local communities and to enhance and improve our journalism. It is core to our strategic goal of reinventing local and national journalism in the digital age. This policy speaks to how employees should conduct themselves and comply with other company policies in the social media environment. Nothing in this policy prohibits or interferes with employees' rights to communicate with work colleagues about terms and conditions of employment.

### All Employees

As a USA TODAY NETWORK employee, your use of social media should comply with the following standards:

- Refrain from writing or posting anything that could compromise the company's reputation as a trusted source of news and information. The ability of our customers and the general public to rely on the Network as a trusted source for news and information is vital to our company. This is our business integrity.
- Assume that all of your activities on a social media site are public, regardless of the privacy tools you may use, and exercise discretion in sharing personal information, as well as political, cultural or religious views.
- Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for the Network unless you are authorized to do so. If the company, its products or its people are the subject of content you are posting, be transparent about the fact that you are an employee the Network and/or your operating unit, and make it clear that your views do not represent the views of the Network and/or your operating unit, or its employees.
- Periodically review the Gannett Ethics Policy, including portions relating to use and disclosure of confidential company information. You are expected to maintain the confidentiality of Gannett's trade secrets and private or confidential information. Trade secrets may include information regarding projects you or others are working on, news content that has not been published or approved by news managers, products, financial information, know-how and technology. Do not post internal reports, internal businessrelated communications, or communications known to be protected by an attorney-client privilege. If you have questions or seek more information about the company's ethics policy, please email <https://reachlocal.ethicspoint.com>.
- Do not post comments that include discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence or similar content.
- Do not engage in conduct, whether in the social media environment or otherwise, that adversely affects your job performance, the job performance of your fellow employees, or the interests of our customers.
  - Abide by the Terms of Use of the social networking platforms you use. Respect copyright, and understand the consequences of using the intellectual property of others (including text, photography and video). If you have questions about the copyright, please refer to the company's copyright guidelines or reach out to the Network's Law department for guidance or email [contentfeedback@gannett.com](mailto:contentfeedback@gannett.com). Violation of the USA TODAY NETWORK's Social Media Policy is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

### Community-Facing Employees

Employees whose position or responsibilities require regular interaction with the public, government or business officials, or others in the community in such a way that they are seen as speaking for or on behalf of the Network

should exercise particular caution. These positions can include publishers, sales representatives, corporate communications, human resources and marketing professionals. If you are unsure about your role, please contact your manager. These employees may easily be perceived as representing the Network while off-duty. For this reason, these employees should be careful when making or endorsing statements on social media that might be viewed as controversial or political in nature. They should also exercise discretion when following, friending or liking other individuals or groups to avoid any actual or perceived conflicts.

### **Journalists**

In addition to the guidelines set forth above, USA TODAY NETWORK journalists should always abide by the Principles of Ethical Conduct for Newsrooms in journalists' use of social media. These principles are centered on the following themes:

- o Seeking and reporting the truth in a truthful way
- o Serving the public interest
- o Exercising fair play
- o Maintaining independence
- o Acting with integrity
- Be transparent in social media; always make clear that you work for the USA TODAY NETWORK or for your respective news organization when working on behalf of the Network.
- Consider that the content you post and share is public and should meet the same standards as information you publish and share on our news media platforms. Never post or share anything you would not be willing to publish. If you make a mistake, acknowledge your error and correct it as quickly as possible. Avoid oversimplifying or sensationalizing issues; place your thoughts in context.
- Remember that social networks are forms of public expression and can be used for strategic reasons to enhance your journalism, engage your community of followers, enlighten your news outlet's audience and promote your news organization's brand in a positive way. Like other forms of public expression – attending political demonstrations, voicing opinions publicly, making political campaign contributions – they are subject to the limitations that are placed on newsroom employees through the Principles of Ethical Conduct. These are designed to maintain credibility with audiences.
- Properly attribute your content and link to the original source if possible. Respect others' copyrights.
- Ensure that your public conduct – on and off the job – does not undermine your credibility with the public or the Network's standing as a fair and impartial source of news.
- While news staffers are encouraged to develop a public personality, that personality cannot cast doubt on the individual's or the organization's impartiality.
- Be sure to respect confidentiality of colleagues and sources. It may be appropriate to consider asking permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal.

For more detailed guidance, see the Social Media Guidance for Newsrooms.

**Note:** *With regard to maintaining impartiality, exceptions are made for those who share opinion professionally, such as editorial board members, critics/reviewers and columnists.*