

Do you have a social media policy for your business?

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We acknowledge that social media is now a part of everyone's lives. So where does a business draw the line on what employees can say and how they are allowed to behave online - both during work and private time?

Many people will have an instant view that commonsense would be enough, but time and time again we see people slip up via various forms of digital media. Here are some examples.

Email: Arguments over who stole their lunch from the fourth floor fridge saw a prominent Melbourne law firm sack two staff members when the emails went outside the office.

Facebook: Numerous instances of people posting photos and comments while taking a sick day or informing their friends about their lack of job satisfaction - forgetting they befriended their boss.

Twitter: Just this week we have seen a prominent columnist Catherine Deveny at *The Age* newspaper ousted from her job by a few over the top satirical tweets during the Logies. Albeit the current Twitter incident saw the journalist in question probably cross the line of good taste it is important to note she posted these comments in her own time, after work from the privacy of her own home. She posted them from her private account. Still, *The Age* felt it was reason enough to terminate her services.

This tells us that social media knows no boundaries or time zones and that SMEs will now be forced to adapt in order to protect themselves - both publicly and legally - from potentially harmful exploits both inside and outside the office. As a business there needs to be a form of recourse when trouble rises.

So, where to begin?

There is a fantastic resource over at the **Social Media Governance website** that has a list of social media policies for you to download. Best of all – they're free!

The policies available are generally from larger companies such as Coca Cola, HP, Dell, Reuters, etc but it also has a few public relations agency policies in there as well - Hill & Knowlton, Porter Novelli - which are definitely worth looking at.

Given recent events this list might prove a useful starting point to work from for SMEs looking to implement their first social media policy. Don't forget to have your legal team go over the finer details. Some companies might even wish to go a step further and engage the services of a firm that specialises in crisis communications.

*Benjamin Nicoll is a founding partner of **GoDigital Media**, one of Australia's best value digital media agencies, which provides up-to-date, affordable products and services for SMEs.*
