



10 Social Media Faux Pas You Should Avoid

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10 SOCIAL MEDIA FAUX PAS YOU SHOULD AVOID

Even with the smallest presence on social media, you are in the public spotlight. And, as we have said before, social media can be a valuable tool for building your profile and network and enabling conversation with stakeholders.

While most posts and content are informative and harmless, there are many examples of bad posts and poor practice that risk damaging a carefully constructed and nurtured image.

So here are 10 tips for you to be aware while you are using social media.

Inappropriate material

Inappropriate material is not just the sort of content that caused upset for Hollywood's superstars. Insensitive opinions, jokes in bad taste, photos from *that* party and anything that could be taken in the wrong way should be avoided.

Don't ever post anything that could harm your image, or cause major embarrassment for either you or your organisation. You never know who's watching. Your career might thank you for it later. Once something has been posted on the Internet, it can never truly be deleted.

Changing your name

It's all very well to hide behind a clever alter ego (particularly on platforms like Twitter), but when you replace your surname with nonsense, it can really paint a bad picture of you.

What you think implies a healthy sense of humour, really might make you look a bit foolish in the eyes of others.

Game invites

This one only really applies to Facebook but it's a humdinger. Not all your contacts, if any, are interested in playing the same games as you are. And there's little that is more annoying on these platforms than endless requests to play too.

It's a very quick way to lose connections, followers and interest in your accounts and profiles, so it's best to avoid it.

The written word

Bad grammar, spelling mistakes, use of text-speak, poor structure of sentences and needless capitalisation of words in the middle of a sentence – all of these should be avoided at all costs.

A minor annoyance on your personal profiles, but on professional networks and in a formal setting these are unforgiveable. Take the extra 2 minutes to check and sanitise your posts and it will make a big difference.

Laziness

Social networks are communication tools; let's not forget this. But there are times when they are used as substitutes for meaningful, real-life interactions (including when people are holding conversations with others in the same room as them).

This does happen, but you can avoid it by using the networks to connect with people and arranging a call or meeting and expanding the conversation. You can't quantify the value of face-to-face networking.

Hashtags

Hashtags (#) have their uses, but in the wrong hands they can turn into weapons of mass annoyance. Don't litter your status updates with them, but instead employ some common sense.

A general rule of thumb is stick to a maximum of 2-3 in one Tweet and try to make them part of the message if you can. They don't work well on Facebook posts so don't worry about them there.

Arguing in public

Don't air your dirty laundry in public. It's ugly and not enjoyable for the people following your feed. Plus, why would you want the rest of the world knowing your business.

All of the major social networking platforms offer private or direct messaging functionality – use them instead of causing a social media storm. It also looks wholly unprofessional, so keep any heated discussions private.

Validation services

Validation is all very well if you are a large corporate looking to weed out endless zombie or bot accounts on social media. If you're on social media, you should be fully aware of who's following you, liking your pages, and interacting with your 'brand'. Therefore leaving it to an automated tool like TrueTwit or TweetDeck (for instance) almost feels like missing the point. You shouldn't be doing it.

Saying that, there is nothing wrong with TrueTwit (and others of its ilk) but if you are just starting out on social media, we'd encourage you to cultivate personal connections first.

LinkedIn embarrassment

Do you receive emails from LinkedIn telling you to 'congratulate' Bob Mills on his work anniversary or new role?

In this fast-paced modern world, roles and functions change all the time, so there's every chance that the person you're congratulating on a new role has actually updated their profile after leaving their current job.

It's also pretty impersonal to use the auto-function on here – if you have something meaningful to say to the person in question, use a private message. Or better still pick up the phone.

Commitment

If your heart's not in it then it soon becomes blindingly obvious to the people sitting at the other end. No matter your social network of choice, people ultimately choose to follow you for a reason – so don't let them down.

Post often, be friendly, engaging, and show some personality will you? A dormant account is a waste of everyone's time and network.