

Social Networking: Tips for Utilizing Social Networking in Your Agency

Should agencies allow staff to use social networking in the workplace?

There are a variety of responses to the use of social networking in the workplace debate. While some organizations choose to indiscriminately censor the social networking world, others realize that if used correctly, these new technologies could revolutionize the workplace, much like telephones (which were also received with wariness) in the late 1800's. For some organizations, e.g., marketing firms, using social networking is essential because it provides free or inexpensive advertising instantly. Regardless of whether or not organizations and agencies support the usage of social networking technologies, they are advised to be transparent in the policies to their employees. A list of non-profit and government social media policies can be found at www.socialmediagovernance.com/policies.php?f=5.

How should agencies design a social networking policy for the workplace?

Tips for Designing a Social Media Policy

1. Design your social networking strategy

Seek input from staff, community stakeholders and youth to determine your social networking strategy. You should determine which social networking sites you will use and how you will market your sites.

2. Decide who is responsible

Determine who will be responsible for marketing your social networking sites, who will update the sites and who will respond to technical problems with your social networking sites.

3. Communicate the rules for engaging youth and families

Ensure you communicate the rules for utilizing social networking sites, including guidelines for ensuring employees maintain proper boundaries with youth and families when using social networking sites.

4. Monitor to ensure privacy

You should use the same level of protection for client data that is distributed online that you do for paper client data. For example, if you are going to create an agency social networking site, ensure you get releases for any photographs depicting clients.

5. Integrate crisis planning into your social media policy

It's important to make plans for responding to any crisis that is communicated to you using social media.

The chart below highlights how a few states, RHY grantees, and national organizations are using technology to communicate with youth and families. The websites vary in their degree of "youth-friendly" presentation, but all work to give consumers quick and easy access to information. Because of volume, the chart does not show the many facebook™, myspace™, twitter™ or other social networking sites that organizations have designed to engage their youth.

Hawaii

The Hawaii Youth Services Network operates a youth-operated YouTube™ site that is developed in collaboration with local educators and film and television professionals. www.youtube.com/user/HawaiiStudentTV#p/u

Iowa

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development provides resources designed for youth that help increase their career and education skills using multiple social networking sites (Facebook™, Twitter™, LinkedIn™, and Blogspot™). www.icyd.iowa.gov/Youth/youth_resources.html

Minnesota	Minnesota's Youth Corner provides a website with statewide resources for youth. www.minnesotahelp.info/Public/default.aspx?se=youth
Nebraska	The Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska utilizes Facebook™, Twitter™, and a phone and text-messaging hotline to interact with the youth and the general community. www.capwn.org/Youth.html
New York	The New York Office of Children & Family Services operates a Youth Leadership Advisory Team. They operate a web-based social networking port that provides information/links for the team, videos, and online training. www.youthinprogress.org/
New Jersey	Transitions for Youth is a multifaceted program that utilizes a positive youth development framework to address the various needs of youth transitioning to adulthood. They utilize Facebook™, YouTube™, Flickr™ and Blogs to provide information and resources for youth and service providers. www.transitionsforyouth.org
Oregon	The Yamhill Community Action Partnership utilizes Facebook™, Twitter™, Myspace™, YouTube™, and Word-press™ as part of their outreach program. Yamhill uses social media to provide a place for youth to access essential services, education and leadership development opportunities. www.yoservices.org/
Tennessee	The Interdependent Living Program for the Department of Children's Services is a broad-based spectrum of resources and resource linkages to help youth and young adults leaving foster care to become proficient in the necessary adult living skills to help them achieve real lifelong success. www.state.tn.us/youth/services/interdependent.htm
National	The National Runaway Switchboard serves as the federally designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth. Their website and social networking websites have a live chat application to communicate directly with youth and resources for youth who are looking for help or want to help others. www.1800runaway.org/default.html
National	The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth is an information resource of the Family and Youth Service Bureau. Their website contains a live chat feature, and interviews with youth. www.ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/

Additional Resources:

ConnectSafely: www.ConnectSafely.org

This site is designed for teens, parents and service providers who are interested in the impact of social media. Besides information on bullying, using Facebook™, and sexting, this website includes information on web experiences that most sites miss, such as tips for smart videogaming and advice on using Foursquare™ and other geolocation apps.

Internet Solutions for Kids: www.is4k.com

Internet Solutions for Kids is a research organization which focuses on understanding how new technologies impact adolescent health and the opportunities it provides. It is also the creator of the website Cyberbully411.org which was designed to provide resources for youth who have questions about or have been targeted by online harassment.

OnGuardOnline: www.onguardonline.gov

Created by the U.S. Federal government, the goal of OnGuardOnline is to provide practical tips to online users to help them guard against internet fraud, secure their computers, and protect their personal information.

PBS Video: digital_nation: life of the virtual frontier: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/

This PBS website provides access to the full 90-minute Frontline episode "digital_nation" released in February 2010. Also available are a plethora of smaller video clips on a range of subjects which generally range from 1 to 5 minutes in length.

Using Social Media to Engage and Support Families: www.adoptuskids.org/content.aspx?k=using-social-media-to-engage-families

AdoptUsKids recently conducted a webinar on using social media to engage and support families. The presentation used analytics and anecdotal examples of lessons learned in enhancing their work over the last year through a coordinated social media campaign with the Children's Bureau and the Ad Council.

For more information or to request technical assistance on Social Networking:

Call: (800) 806-2711

E-mail: rhytechnicalassistance@ou.edu

Visit us on the web: www.rhyttac.ou.edu

