



## Social Media Policy

### **Context and overview**

#### **Key details**

Policy prepared by: Guy Thierry Alincourt [Social Media Manager] / Caz Potten [Director]

#### **Introduction**

Employees of STAR Exeter can access social media services and social networking sites at work, either through company IT systems or via their own personal equipment.

This social media policy describes the rules governing use of social media at STAR Exeter and sets out how staff must behave when using the company's social media accounts. It also explains the rules about using personal social media accounts at work and describes what staff may say about the company on their personal accounts.

This policy should be read alongside other key policies (Emergency Action Plan and the Safeguarding Policy). The E-safety and Acceptable ICT Use Policy is particularly relevant to staff using social media.

#### **Why this policy exists**

Social media can bring significant benefits to STAR Exeter, particularly for building relationships with current and potential customers.

However, it's important that employees who use social media within the company do so in a way that enhances the company's prospects. A misjudged status update can generate complaints, could offend or damage our reputation. There are also security and data protection issues to consider.

This policy explains how employees can use social media safely and effectively.

## **Policy scope**

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, interns and volunteers at STAR Exeter who use social media while working – no matter whether for business or personal reasons. It applies no matter if social media use takes place on company premises, while travelling for business or working from home.

Social media sites and services include, but are not limited to:

- Popular social networks like Twitter and Facebook
- Online review websites like Reevoo and Trustpilot
- Sharing and discussion sites like Delicious and Reddit
- Photographic social networks like Instagram and Snapchat
- Question and answer social networks like Yahoo Answers
- Professional social networks like LinkedIn

## **Responsibilities**

Everyone who operates or is linked to a company social media account, or who uses their personal social media accounts at work, has a responsibility for implementing this policy. However, the following have key responsibilities:

- The Social Media Manager is ultimately responsible for ensuring that STAR Exeter uses social media safely, appropriately and in line with the company's objectives. The Social Media Manager is responsible for monitoring STAR Exeter's posts, interactions and performance and to remove inappropriate content that may appear on our social media sites. Profanity filters are set on the current sites we use including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- The Director is responsible for working with the social media manager to communicate marketing ideas and campaigns through our social media channels.

## **General social media guidelines**

### **The power of social media**

STAR Exeter recognises that social media offers a platform for the company to perform marketing, stay connected with customers, interact, and build a profile online.

STAR Exeter encourages employees to use social media to support the company's goals and objectives and represent us in a positive way.

## **Basic advice**

Regardless of which social networks employees are using, or whether they're using business or personal accounts in company time, following these simple rules helps avoid the most common pitfalls:

- **Know the social network.** Employees should spend time becoming familiar with a social network before contributing. It's important to read any FAQs and understand what is and is not acceptable before posting messages and updates.
- **If unsure, don't post it.** If an employee feels a post or update may cause offence, upset or a complaint – or be otherwise unsuitable – they should not post it. Staff members can always consult the social media manager for advice.
- **Be thoughtful and polite.** Observe basic good manners online. Employees should adopt the same level of courtesy used when communicating via email.
- **Look out for security threats.** Staff should be on guard for social engineering and phishing attempts. Social networks can also be used to distribute spam and malware. Further details below.
- **Keep personal use reasonable.** Although STAR Exeter believes that having employees who are active on social media can be valuable, unless specific to your job role, personal use on social media should be restricted to break times and out of core hours.
- **Don't make promises without checking.** STAR Exeter's social media channels are all public, which means anyone can view the content. Employees should not make any promises or commitments on behalf of STAR Exeter without checking these promises can be delivered. Direct any enquiries to the social media manager.
- **Handle complex queries via other channels.** Social networks are not a good place to resolve complicated enquiries and issues. Once someone makes contact, employees should manage further communication internally (by email, phone or in person).
- **Don't escalate things.** It's easy to post a quick response to a contentious status update and then regret it. Employees should always take time to think before responding, and hold back if there is any doubt at all.

## **Use of STAR Exeter 's social media accounts**

This part of the social media policy covers all use of social media accounts owned and run by the company.

### **Authorised users**

Only people who have been authorised to use STAR Exeter's social networking accounts may do so.

Authorisation to use our social media networking accounts will typically be granted when social media-related tasks form a core part of an employee's job.

Allowing only designated people to use the accounts ensures the company's social media presence is consistent and cohesive.

### **Creating social media accounts**

New social media accounts may only be created by the social media manager. The company operates its social media presence in line with a strategy that focuses on the most appropriate network, given available resources.

If there is a case to be made for opening a new account, employees should raise this with the social media manager.

### **Purpose of company social media accounts**

STAR Exeter's social media accounts may be used for many different purposes. In general, employees should only post updates, messages, or otherwise use these accounts when that use is clearly in line with our overall objectives. For instance, employees may use company social media accounts to:

- Respond to customer enquiries and requests for information
- Share relevant articles and other content created by STAR Exeter
- Share insightful articles, videos, media and other content relevant to the business, created by STAR Exeter and others
- Provide followers with an insight into what goes on at STAR Exeter
- Promote marketing campaigns and, on occasions, special offers
- Support new initiatives

Social media is a powerful tool that changes quickly. Employees are encouraged to think of new ways to use it and to put those ideas to the social media manager.

## **Inappropriate content and uses**

STAR Exeter's social media accounts must not be used to share or spread inappropriate content, or to take part in activities that could bring the company into disrepute.

STAR Exeter should not be seen to favour specific companies, organisations or individuals. All content should be reviewed before posting.

## **Use of personal social media accounts at work**

### **The value of social media**

STAR Exeter recognises that employees' personal social media accounts can generate many benefits. For instance:

- Staff members can make industry contacts that may be useful in their jobs
- Employees can discover content to help them learn and develop in their role
- By posting about the company, staff members can help to increase our presence online

### **Personal social media rules**

#### **Acceptable use:**

- Employees may use their personal social media accounts for work-related purposes at break times and out of the company's core working hours.
- Only staff authorised to use STAR Exeter's social media accounts may do so during working hours, providing there is a genuine reason to do so (such as posting updates and monitoring interaction).
- Social media should not affect the ability of employees to perform their regular duties.

#### **Talking about the company:**

- Employees should ensure their social media account does not represent STAR Exeter's views or opinions
- Staff may wish to include a disclaimer if posting about STAR Exeter: 'the views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer'.

### **Safe, responsible social media use**

The rules in this section apply to:

- Any employees using company social media accounts
- Employees using personal social media accounts during company time

#### **Users must not:**

- Create or transmit material that might be defamatory or incur liability for the company.
- Post messages, status updates or links to material or content that is inappropriate. Inappropriate content includes: pornography, racial or religious slurs, gender-specific comments, information encouraging criminal skills or terrorism, or materials relating to cults, gambling and illegal drugs.
  - This definition of inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that could reasonably offend someone based on race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, origin, disability, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law.
- Use social media for any illegal or criminal activities.
- Send offensive or harassing material to others via social media.
- Broadcast unsolicited views on social, political, religious or other non-business-related matters.
- Send or post messages or material that could damage STAR Exeter's image or reputation.
- Interact with STAR Exeter's competitors in any ways which could be interpreted as being offensive, disrespectful or rude. Communication with direct competitors should be kept to a minimum.
- Discuss colleagues, competitors, customers or suppliers without their approval.
- Post, upload, forward or link to spam, junk email or chain emails and messages.

#### **Users must:**

- Gain verbal permission from students aged over 18 before posting their images online.
- Check the Parental Permission form for any student aged under 18 to ensure they have consent to appear on social media/marketing material before using their images online.

## **Security and data protection**

Employees should be aware of the security and data protection issues that can arise from using social networks.

## **Maintain confidentiality**

### **Users must not:**

- Share or link to any content or information owned by the company that could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive.

This might include details of key contacts/agents or information about our future strategy or marketing campaigns.

- Share or link to any content or information owned by another company or person that could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive.

For example, if a competitor's marketing strategy was leaked online, employees of STAR Exeter should not mention it online.

- Share or link to data in a way that could breach the company's data protection policy.

## **Protect social accounts**

- Company social media accounts must be protected using strong passwords that are changed regularly and only shared with authorised users, if applicable.
- Whenever possible, employees should use two-factor authentication (often called phone verification) to safeguard company accounts.

## **Avoid social scams**

- Staff should watch for phishing attempts where scammers may attempt to use deception to obtain information relating to either the company or its customers.
- Employees should never reveal sensitive details through social media channels. Customer and student identities should always be verified before information is shared or discussed.
- Employees should avoid clicking links in posts, updates and direct messages that look suspicious. In particular, users should look out for URLs contained in generic or vague sounding direct messages.

### **Policy enforcement**

STAR Exeter reserves the right to monitor how social networks are used and accessed. Additionally, all data relating to social networks written, sent or received through the company's computer systems and network is part of official company records.

STAR Exeter can be legally compelled to show that information to law enforcement agencies or other parties. Knowingly breaching this social media policy is a serious matter. Users who do so will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Employees, contractors and other users may also be held personally liable for violating this policy.