Social Media Policy Proposal

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Community Service Employment Training (CSET)

Social Media Policy Proposal

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Executive Summary

Background

In today's digital world, there are special concerns for employer. [1]"Employers can face potential liabilities and reputational harms stemming from the social networking activities of their employees, both during and after work hours." For this reason, it is important for businesses to have a written social media policy. Without a written social media policy, [2]"employees will not learn proven methods to moderate risky communications and will not be on notice about which behaviors and disclosures are prohibited or require pre-approval."

Currently Community Service Employment Training (CSET) does not have a written social media policy. This leaves the organization open to the following risks:

- Data security vulnerability
- Confidentiality breeches
- Defamation liability
- Harm to CSET reputation
- PR issues

Objective

CSET is in need of a well-crafted written social media policy. This policy should clearly articulate expected employee behavior and outline the do's and don'ts when communicating via various media platforms. This should include but not be limited to [3] "blogs, Web site comment boards, online encyclopedias, and social network sites."

Goals

Social media has become a primary channel of communication between organizations and the consumers of their goods and services. It has also become a tool for continued professional development. Employees look to social media to collaborate with colleagues both within and outside the organization. Because social media is widely used by employees on their own time, simply banning its use in the workplace does not protect companies from legal liability. [4]"Organizations are advised by legal experts that a better course of action is to develop a policy that clarifies for employees the boundaries of social media participation."

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[1] Raysman, R. (2012). A Practical Look at Social Media Policies. Computer & Internet Lawyer, 29(3), 10-14.
[2] Raysman, R. (2012). A Practical Look at Social Media Policies. Computer & Internet Lawyer, 29(3), 10-14.
[3] Raysman, R. (2012). A Practical Look at Social Media Policies. Computer & Internet Lawyer, 29(3), 10-14.
[4] Jennings, S. E., Blount, J. R., & Weatherly, M. G. (2014). Social Media—A Virtual Pandora's Box: Prevalence, Possible Legal Liabilities, and Policies. Business Communication Quarterly, 77(1), 96-113. doi:10.1177/2329490613517132

The CSET social media policy should achieve five main goals.

1. [5]To be a "vision statement that guides staff yet empowers them"
2. Reflect a consistent organizational external voice.
3. Define roles and responsibilities of various staff
4. Guide staff regarding creating and sharing content
5. Provide guidelines for responding to what people outside the organization post.

Method

CSET Information Technology (IT) staff and the Human Resources department are best equipped to create the social media policy. Members have these two department will collaborate to create the policy. [6]"There are many examples of good social media policies that can be found online." Final approval of the policy will occur after review by the CSET legal advisors.

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[5] Techsoup. (2015). Techsoup.org. Retrieved from http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/creating-a-social-media-policy

[6] ALVAREZ, G. (2014). A Guide to Social Media Compliance. Econtent, 37(6), 30-31.

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss employee social media use and present this proposal. There has been much talk at CSET about the increase in social media use by staff in the last few years. Many staff have found that social media is a great way to connect with clients and prepare them for job search and employment. With this increased use comes increased responsibility. This proposal addresses the need for a comprehensive social media policy that will set guidelines for staff to follow and protect CSET from liability issues related to social media use.

Background

The past decade has seen the inception and rise of people connecting to each other through social media. Founded in 2004, Facebook® initially was a [7]"Harvard-only exercise and remained a campus-oriented site for two full years before finally opening to the general public in 2006." This began the popular use of social media, as we know it today. Along with this new tool for connection, collaboration, and promotion came new issues regarding confidentiality, image, and liability. Since the Facebook® exploded on the scene, the way in which people communicate has drastically changed. Blogs and news feeds have become the primary way that individuals receive information on any given subject. The ability to interact with information had profoundly changed. One can comment on articles and have discussions with the author and others relating the content.

Along with these new tools of communication came new concerns for individuals and for organizations. With the increased access to the world, business found not only a powerful tool for connecting to customers but also a powerful tool that could make or break their ability to operate in the global market. At any given moment, disparaging comments regarding a company can go viral causing unimagined damaging effects. The only way for an organization to protect itself is to have a comprehensive social media policy in place.

CSET does not have a social media policy. This leaves the company venerable to a multitude of issues such as:

- Data security vulnerability
- Confidentiality breeches
- Defamation liability
- Harm to CSET reputation
- PR issues

The creation of a social media policy would serve to protect the organization and guide staff in the proper use of social media as a dynamic tool.

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[7] Digital Trends. (2014). *The History of Social Networking*. Retrieved from http://www.digitaltrends.com/features/the-history-of-social-networking/

Rational

The majority of CSET staff has privet accounts on social media sites such as Facebook®, LinkedIn®, and Twitter®. In addition, many staff members follow blogs on subjects such as interviewing, resume writing, and employment trends.

Employees must understand that once content is posted to any type of social media Website that it becomes public. Even if the content is deleted it still may reside somewhere on an internet server and can be retrieved. What an employee posts reflects not only on his or her own reputation but also on the organization. Clear guidelines help the employee discern between appropriate and in appropriate content.

An employee's online activity reflects their in-person reputation. What they post creates an impression of the employee in other uses minds. This impression can affect the way an individual is perceived in-person. Others form an impression of the person before ever meeting them. An individual's online persona must be consistent with their in-person persona.

Employees taught to use social media responsibly find that it can be a powerful tool for professional development. Through social media, staff can create a personal leaning network consisting of other in the employment service profession. Social media connects them to the latest information regarding a multitude of employment service related topics and helps them better serve their clients.

At present there are no guidelines regarding what can, and cannot be posted on various sites. This leaves the organization and the individual open to liability. The following proposed actions will remedy this situation.

CSET will be able to hold employees accountable for misuse of social media through monitoring. This monitoring can be done by using a social media compliance tool. [8]"Compliance tools allow a business to manage its employees use of social media by allowing them to post preapproved content to their individual social network accounts or by providing a level of moderation or review before and employees post to social networks."

Proposed Action

The action covered by this proposal outlines steps needed to create a comprehensive social media policy. The first step is to create a social media policy taskforce. This taskforce should include representatives from the Information Technology and Human Resources departments. Next, the taskforce should research social media policies of organizations similar to CSET.

The policy should achieve five main goals:
1. [9]To be a "vision statement that guides staff yet empowers them"
2. Reflect a consistent organizational external voice.
3. Define roles and responsibilities of various staff

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[8] Alvarez, G. (2014). A Guide to Social Media Compliance. Econtent, 37(6), 30-31.

[9] Techsoup. (2015). Techsoup.org. Retrieved from http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/creating-a-social-media-policy

4. Guide staff regarding creating and sharing content
5. Provide guidelines for responding to what people outside the organization post.

The policy should include topics such as (1) the individuals covered by the policy, (2) Reasons for the institution of the policy, and (3) Guidelines.

[10]The guideline should include but not be limited to the following topics:

1. Getting started with social media
2. Account agreements
3. Confidentiality
4. Privacy
5. Access and security including password guidelines
6. Personal responsibility and liability
7. Transparency and endorsement
8. Use of CSET name
9. Resources

Closing

Social media used reasonably is a powerful tool for marketing, client engagement, and professional development. Employees use social media both in their off work time and during work. By instituting a comprehensive social media policy CSET will empower staff to use social media to develop professionally an better serve CSET clients. A well-crafted social media policy will help protect the organization form issues regarding liability for employee activity on social media.

Thank you for allowing me to present information and thoughts regarding the use of social media and the need for development and implementation of a comprehensive social media policy. I look forward to discussing the above proposal with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

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Accepted for CSET

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[10] Modeled after: Harvard University. (2014). *Guidelines for Using Social Media* . Retrieved from http://provost.harvard.edu/files/provost/files/social_media_guidelines_vers_2_0_eff_081814.pdf

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____