

Social media guidelines

For institutions like Missouri S&T, social networking sites provide another opportunity to reach out to various audiences, particularly prospective students, current students and alumni.

The Missouri S&T Marketing and Communications Department is responsible for the university's official social media presence but encourages other departments and units to establish a presence of their own in the social media sphere. A [social media directory](#) for the Missouri S&T community is available. The following steps and guidelines will help individual units in their planning and deployment of a social media presence.

Official presence

Missouri S&T Marketing and Communications is responsible for the university's official presence in social media. Currently, the department maintains and monitors the following social media sites:

- Facebook – www.facebook.com/MissouriSandT
- Joe Miner on Facebook – www.facebook.com/JoeMiner
- Twitter – www.twitter.com/MissouriSandT
- YouTube – www.youtube.com/MissouriSandT
- Instagram - www.instagram.com/MissouriSandT
- LinkedIn – www.linkedin.com/missourisandt
- Flickr – www.flickr.com/MissouriSandT
- Delicious – www.delicious.com/MissouriSandT

Each of these sites is designed to provide broad-based information about the university to our primary audiences of current students, prospective students and alumni. The department also shares administrative responsibilities for the Facebook site with staff from Enrollment Management and Alumni and Constituent Relations. Based on several considerations, including the demographics of our audiences and staff resources, the department has chosen not to establish a presence on other social media sites at this time. But, as the social media landscape continues to evolve, we will be open to expanding the university's presence to new mediums.

Objectives

Missouri S&T's presence in social media is designed to accomplish the following objectives.

- Extend the university's reach and influence online by connecting and building relationships with key audiences, such as prospective students, current students and alumni.
- Provide additional channels for these key audiences to communicate and interact with the university.
- Provide additional channels for audiences to receive official university information.
- Monitor the university's reputation in the social media sphere.

Departments and organizations

Departments, offices, student organizations, etc., that wish to establish a presence on any social media site are asked to follow these guidelines:

- Learn about social media – Which social media platform is right for you? In other parts of the world, other social networks are important and should not be neglected. If your department is responsible for recruiting international students, for example, you may wish to look at other social

networks.

Also, keep in mind that social media is an extremely fast and open medium. Be prepared for that. In many cases, a step by step approach in which you learn to use the different tools as an observer is advisable. The first step to participate is to listen.

- Have a plan – Before you get started in social media, think about it from a marketing standpoint. Ask yourself:
 - Who is my audience? Are you primarily trying to reach current students? Prospective students? Alumni? Each audience has different interests and responds to different messages and different communications approaches.
 - What do I want to accomplish with this audience? How will social media help me accomplish my goals? Keep in mind that the nature of social media is two-way communication. If you aren't willing to engage in that kind of dialogue with your audience, then maybe a social media presence isn't right for you.
 - How do I want my audience to respond? What is the ultimate goal of using social media? Develop the right metrics to measure how well your meeting your goals.
- Integrate social media into your communication plan – Social media is not a stand-alone solution to your communications and marketing challenges. For example, even tech-savvy prospective students are far less likely to trust a social networking site than, say, a university website or a traditional viewbook.
- Experiment – If you're not yet familiar with the social media tools you're interested in using, start by creating a personal account and learning how it works. Sign up for [Facebook](#). Create a [Twitter](#) account. Read blogs and other sites that keep tabs on the latest in social media. Take time to explore the social media space (for starters, we recommend www.mashable.com and www.readwriteweb.com).
- Choose the right tool – Once you've learned about the social media, choose the right tool for your objectives. Beware of jumping on a bandwagon just because one social media tool is the "in" thing today. As we've seen during the brief history of social media, trends and tastes change very quickly. MySpace was created in 2003 and was the dominant social network for a few years, but it has since been eclipsed by Facebook. Who knows which social media tool might be the next big thing?
If you're uncertain which tool is right for you, Facebook is a safe bet. It's popular, easy to use and easy to update.
- Follow [Missouri S&T graphic identity and editorial standards](#) – Use the Missouri S&T logo or signature and, in text, be sure to use the correct university name (Missouri S&T, not MS&T or MST, etc.).
- Follow all campus and UM System computing policies – Your use of social media should comply with [Missouri S&T's Internet Usage Policy](#) as well as the [University of Missouri System's Acceptable Use Policy](#) as it pertains to computing, Internet usage and the use of mobile devices. Social media users also should be familiar with [other Missouri S&T computing and usage policies](#).
- Follow all campus and UM System policies regarding privacy, personnel, records, etc. – Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Missouri S&T, students, prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, business partners or research partners. Employees using social media on behalf of the university still must follow all applicable federal requirements such as [FERPA](#) and [HIPAA](#), as well as [NCAA](#) regulations. Adhere to all applicable university privacy and confidentiality policies. Employees who share confidential information do so at the risk of disciplinary action or termination. [View a listing of policies, procedures and regulations governing Missouri S&T and the UM System](#).
- Feed your creation – Like living beings, social media sites will die if they are not fed regularly. This means providing frequent updates to your Facebook, Twitter or other social media account. Some organizations rely solely on RSS feeds to automate their information. But in these conversational media, personal messages are more effective, even if they are meant to convey official information. Providing short status updates – with links to official information if appropriate – is always more valuable than an impersonal news feed.

- [Contact us](#) – Let us know that you have created an online presence for your organization so we can help promote it. Also contact us if you would like any guidance on developing your social media presence.

Blogging

While not considered a social media per se, blogging incorporates many of the same features that make social media sites so attractive (i.e., the opportunity to comment and engage in conversation). Missouri S&T Communications maintains several blogs to communicate internally and externally. [Contact our Electronic Marketing Communications Office](#) for guidance and consultation if you wish to create a blog.

The same social media guidelines listed above apply to blogs as well.

Best practices

When posting on behalf of a university unit, follow these guidelines. (They also may be helpful for participating in social media in any capacity.)

- Don't tell secrets – It's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it's not okay to publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about proprietary research, details of current projects, financial information and personnel information.
- Protect your own privacy – Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the Missouri S&T website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.
- Be honest – Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. Missouri S&T is committed to the principles of transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you work for Missouri S&T. Nothing gains you notice in social media more than honesty - or dishonesty. Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.
- Respect copyright laws – It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others, including Missouri S&T-owned copyrights and brands. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work, and always attribute such work to the original author/source. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.
- Respect your audience, Missouri S&T, and your coworkers – The public in general, and Missouri S&T's employees and customers, reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't say anything contradictory or in conflict with the Missouri S&T website. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of Missouri S&T.
- Protect Missouri S&T students, prospective students, alumni, faculty, staff, business partners and suppliers – Students, prospective students, alumni, faculty, staff, partners or suppliers should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Never identify a student, prospective student, alumnus, faculty member, staff member, business or research partner, or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a customer engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements

- that may be in place with the research partner or make it easy for someone to identify the customer.
- Controversial issues – If you see misrepresentations made about Missouri S&T in social media, you may point them out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.
 - Be the first to respond to your own mistakes – If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly - better to remove it immediately to lessen the possibility of a legal action.
 - Think about consequences – For example, consider what might happen if a Missouri S&T employee is in a meeting with a customer or prospect, and someone on the customer's side pulls out a print-out of your blog and says "This person at Missouri S&T says that product sucks." Saying "Product X needs to have an easier learning curve for the first-time user" is fine; saying "Product X sucks" is risky, unsubtle and amateurish. Once again, it's all about judgment: using your blog to trash or embarrass Missouri S&T, our customers, or your coworkers, is dangerous and ill-advised.
 - Disclaimers – Many social media users include a prominent disclaimer saying who they work for, but that they're not speaking officially. This is good practice and is encouraged, but don't count on it to avoid trouble - it may not have much legal effect.

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