

#DefyHateNow initiative code of conduct for Social Media use

The following guidelines are based on material from the “Journal of Mass Media Ethics” by Shannon A. Bowen (School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of South Carolina, USA). There are many forms of guidelines and best practice activities for interaction with social media, and these sum up most pertinent points in clear and straightforward terms. While it is neither possible - nor desirable - to ‘police’ social media usage, awareness and strict application of these guidelines is also in your own professional best interest as well!

In considering and applying these guidelines to your own work, please be aware that in most cases what you write, link and refer to online is public information and shared with everyone else. Distinctions are generally not made between ‘private’ and ‘professional’ opinions. Statements, tagging or other actions, including ‘Liking’ comments etc. on Facebook can be interpreted as a direct reflection of your opinion regardless of the context. These actions, even if they are not your intention, can be taken out of context and be used against you, your colleagues, your work etc.. (see ‘Clearly identify’ below) Ultimately, agreeing on, and adhering to a common set of guidelines will strengthen your own work in hate speech and online incitement mitigation by helping to identify irregularities, hoaxes or the ways in which rumours spread!

Guidelines	Rationale/Implementation
1. Be fair and prudent	Consider fairness, justice, access to information.
2. Avoid deception	If it is deceptive, even arguably, simply do NOT do it.
3. Maintain dignity and respect	Ensure that the communication maintains the dignity and respect of the involved publics.
4. Eschew secrecy	Barring trade/competition secrets, if an initiative warrants secrecy, it needs ethical examination.
5. Is it reversible?	How would you feel on the receiving end of the message? Is it still ethical then?
6. Be transparent	Paid speech should be transparently identified as such “(Paid-Msg)” or similar phrasing.
7. Clearly identify	Personal speech and opinion versus speech as a representative of the organization should be identified.
8. Rational analysis	Examine messages from all sides; how would it look to other publics; how could it potentially be misconstrued?
9. Emphasize clarity	Even if the source or sponsor is clear - make it clearer.
10. Disclose	Transparency in message creation and facts/data are needed for an informed decision.
11. Verify sources and data	Be consistently credible; do NOT use or forward rumor or speculation.
12. Establish responsibility	Does the message maintain your responsibility to do what’s right?
13. Examine intention	Is your decision made with good will alone?
14. Encourage good	Does your message help to build connectedness, engagement, and community?
15. Consistency builds trust	Consistency allows publics to know and understand you, and you, and you can meet their expectations.

BE TRANSPARENT.

Acting in a transparent manner can prevent audiences from being misled about your organization's intentions or meanings when it contributes on social media. Communication should be identified as individual speech or speech on behalf of an organization. All individuals that contribute social media content for your organization should be required to identify any personal social media interactions as such. Be upfront if the views being expressed are personal. For example, if you have your own blog or other public website a disclaimer is recommended such as: "The views expressed on this website/blog are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of my institution or its clients"

BE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT.

Post clear messages. Take responsibility for the content you post. Be consistent in how and when you post, because this allows to build trust and understanding with the audience that is a key component of strong relationships.

CHECK YOUR FACTS.

Check facts on the information you post. You should consider the content of your posts rationally before posting, examining messages from all possible perspectives to prevent misunderstandings by the audience.

BE GOOD.

Encourage the good, helping to build connectedness, engagement, and community. Following this logic, with every post, have contributors consider their intention, which should reflect the organization's social media goals as well as simple, good intention

BE ACCURATE.

Posts should be accurate and fact-checked and capable of substantiation. If you do make a mistake, ensure you correct it promptly. It is important to reference the earlier comment because even if the erroneous comment has been deleted, someone may have saved it as an image or other.

BE PROFESSIONAL.

Always act in a professional and constructive manner and use sound judgement before posting. Always be polite and respectful of individuals' opinions, especially when discussions become heated. Show proper consideration for other people's privacy.

BE FAIR AND RESPECTFUL.

Never post malicious, misleading or unfair content about your organisation, colleagues, competitors or other stakeholders. Do not post content that is obscene, defamatory, threatening or discriminatory to an individual, brand or entity. Do not post comments that you would not say directly to another person and consider how other people might react before you post. If you respond to published comments that you may consider unfair always be accurate and professional. Refer to section 3. Accuracy and 4. Professionalism. Remember to be authentic, constructive and respectful.

BE SMART.

Respect other people's intellectual property including trade marked names and slogans and copyrighted material. It's best practice to assume that all content online is protected by copyright. Make sure you have permission to post copyright items, properly attribute the work to the copyright owner where required, and never use someone else's work as if it were your own. If you are unsure as to who might own an item of content, it's better to err on the side of caution and not post the content. In addition to the laws pertaining to copyright and IP, respect all laws and regulations in relation to privacy, spam, and other applicable laws relevant when publishing on social media.