



Update your nonprofit's social media policy

Perhaps you wrote a social media policy several years ago when your not-for-profit set up a Facebook page. Since then, not only has your nonprofit likely changed, but new social media platforms have emerged. At the very least, the sites you use have probably revised their terms of service. That's why it's time to revisit your policy.

The basics

A social media policy helps ensure that staffers, board members and volunteers use online accounts to promote and enhance — not damage — your nonprofit's reputation and fundraising efforts. Without a policy, you risk confusing and offending stakeholders, inviting lawsuits and even incurring financial costs.

To prevent negative outcomes, your policy should address:

- Which sites you'll use,
- Who in your organization has access to them,
- What subjects they're allowed to discuss, and
- Whom they can "friend."

Also specify whether staffers and board members can discuss their work on their personal social media accounts. If so, require them to post a disclaimer saying that their opinions about your organization are their own.

Evaluate site use

As you revisit your social media policy, consider the sites your nonprofit currently uses and whether they still enable you to reach your target audience. Do your staffers post frequently enough to be effective? Is your follower base growing? If not, you may want to shift resources elsewhere.

Another consideration is whether the social media outlets you use have changed their terms of service. In the past couple of years, many sites have expanded their rights to share user account information with third parties. Such changes may raise privacy concerns within your organization.

Other updates

Also review who has account access. In general, the fewer people with access, the less likely someone will post something damaging. But, if your nonprofit is struggling to maintain a regular posting schedule, it might make sense to add new, enthusiastic staffers to the account.

Be sure that, whenever you remove a user from an account, you change the password. Social media sites increasingly are being hacked, so your policy should require longer, more difficult passwords.

Another issue that you can't afford to ignore these days is intellectual property (IP) rights. Contrary to what some believe, nonprofits aren't immune from IP infringement lawsuits. Make sure you have permission from IP holders and properly credit them when you post third-party images, videos, music and text.

Fast-moving target

These are only some of the many issues that may require you to revisit your social media policy. Social media changes quickly. To use it effectively, pay attention to evolving developments.