

ROTARIANS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS FELLOWSHIP

SNetiquette Guidelines

The rapid growth and ease of use of social media sites and technologies makes them attractive and effective channels of communication. However, there can be a host of unintended implications if they are used without applying the **Four Way Test** and seeing social media as just one part of the club's wider communication and public relations strategies.

These guidelines has been produced by the **Rotarians on Social Networks Fellowship** to assist members of the Rotary family to use social media safely, effectively, and respectfully.

By "social media", we are referring to Web 2.0 applications that enable people to share text, graphics, audio and video content, including commenting on the text and content of others. This includes many forums and websites that have social media features.

Contents:

1. [General guidelines](#)
 - A. [Be respectful](#)
 - B. [Keep on topic](#)
 - C. [Don't spam](#)
 - D. [Observe copyright and common courtesy](#)
 - E. [Be accurate and correct mistakes](#)
2. [Guidelines for posting as an individual](#)
 - A. [Adjust your privacy settings](#)
 - B. [Don't share anything that you don't want or wouldn't post in the public arena](#)
 - C. [Don't spam](#)
 - D. [Be aware of liability](#)
 - E. [Protect your identity](#)
3. [Guidelines for club and district presences](#)
 - A. [Ensure that you have authority to post officially](#)

- B. [Use the appropriate tools for the job](#)
- C. [Foster a positive, transparent arena for conversations](#)
- D. [Be aware of implications of “Liking” and “Following”](#)
- E. [Observe Rotary’s Policies](#)

1. General Guidelines

1.1 Be respectful

Your behaviour will affect how people perceive you as well as Rotary / Rotaract in general. Please be courteous and respect others and their opinions, even if you disagree with them.

It is okay to disagree with other posters and have vigorous debates without insulting anyone. State your opinions and build your case without deriding those with different views. Let your facts stand for themselves. You are more likely to achieve your preferred outcome or sway others to your point of view if you are constructive and respectful while disagreeing with a person or concept or discussing a negative experience. If someone makes negative comments about something you hold dear or you personally, resist the urge to be negative in return. **Always apply the Four Way Test**, and if in doubt, don't post.

Avoid discussing divisive topics such as religion and politics in Rotary-related social media groups, pages or accounts.

1.2 Keep on topic

Keep to one topic per post, to make it easier for people to follow threads they are interested in. Keep comments on topic. If you want to branch off into another topic, create a separate thread or post specifically for that topic.

If you are jumping in to a topic that has numerous replies, it is courteous to read all the replies prior to chiming in so that you don't repeat a question or comment that has already been added or dealt with. If you don't want to take the time to read all the replies, don't get involved with that thread.

Make sure that when you do participate in discussions that you contribute valuable insights; don't hijack the discussion purely for self-promotional purposes.

1.3 Don't spam

If you have a particular cause, event, or other piece of information that you would like to disseminate widely, avoid the temptation to post it to as many pages, groups, profiles or accounts as possible: this is spam! If a news feed is filled with posts from one source, people will tune you out – at the very least they will hide news from you in their feed, or more likely they will unlike or unfriend you completely. You may also be flagged as a spammer by the social media site and prevented from being able to post if you post the same content in multiple places in a short space of time.

If there is a particular event or cause that you would like to spread, post it to your own club presence(s), pinning it to the top of your page in Facebook or making it a “Managers Choice” in a LinkedIn group, and share it from there to select other pages or profiles on a delayed basis – wait several hours between each share. When you do share, add a personal note as to why it is of interest or relevant to that particular audience and invite them to Like your page or join your group for more updates.

1.4 Observe copyright and common courtesy

If something is posted publicly, then it is generally fine to share or repost that content, provided that the original source is attributed. This is easily done by:

- “Sharing” a post, as the original source is included in the shared post,
- “Linking” to the original external source,
- “Retweeting” if sharing something posted in Twitter.

Do not download an image or video and post it as if it was your own contribution. You should only share content that you have created or that you have permission to post.

If someone posts something to a non-public audience on their own profile that you would like to share, please seek their permission before sharing it to a wider audience.

Where possible, seek the permission of any people pictured in a photo prior to posting, particularly if it is going in a public forum. Some people may be concerned about their privacy; this is especially important if any children appear in a picture. Also consider whether an image is flattering; be very discriminate with any photos that you upload, even to “private” audiences.

1.5 Be accurate and correct mistakes

Make sure that you have your facts right before you post. Take time to verify information, either by discussing the matter with someone authoritative or by a quick google search to check if something is a known hoax. It is better to delay posting something to check with a source first than to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to sources wherever possible.

If you do post something that contains an error, be quick to correct it and be upfront about what correction has been made.

2. Guidelines for posting as an individual

2.1 Adjust your privacy settings

Check your general privacy settings at least every 3 months, to ensure that both your privacy and the privacy of “friends” is adequately protected. Also ensure that your privacy settings for each post and album have been adjusted appropriately.

Be aware that you can limit access to information to a fair degree, but you have no control over what someone else may share. The safest way to protect information is not to enter it in the first place.

2.2 Don't share anything that you don't want or wouldn't post in the public arena

Anything that you share digitally – and that includes email – can be distributed quickly and easily on the internet. Even if you share a comment, picture or video in a site that you believe is private, anyone with access to it can take it and share it beyond its intended audience. Others may also print or take screen shots of content that can be held up as proof long after the original post has been removed.

Any content that is posted in a public forum, including open groups and pages, can and will be indexed by search engines, and even if the original content is deleted, it can still be retrieved from Google's cache.

Consider whether certain sensitive personal information is safe to share in a public forum. Also consider how any negative comments can reflect on you if they were to become widely seen. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it is wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear headed.

2.3 Don't spam

This one is so important that it rates a mention twice!

Spam is more than unsolicited emails trying to encourage you to buy certain products. Spam is seen as any unwanted information, either the same message (or type of message) posted repeatedly, or a completely off topic post that has no relevance to that page or group.

Spam can include:

- inspirational messages or pictures – these are fine on your own profile, but are not necessarily appropriate in a Rotary forum
- promotion of non-Rotary causes or your business in a Rotary forum, unless it specifically allows business networking
- solicitation for funds for any project, even a Rotary or Rotaract club project (though sharing details of how to provide funds to a disaster relief effort is usually permissible if there has been discussion about that particular disaster and how clubs / individuals can help).

2.4 Be aware of liability

You are responsible for what you post, regardless of where it is posted. Individual bloggers have been held liable for commentary deemed to infringe copyright, or be defamatory or obscene.

2.5 Protect your identity

While you should be authentic and honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that thieves or scam artists could use. How much information do you want strangers to know about you? What could they do with that information? It is a good idea not to disclose your full home address and private phone numbers, and do not publicly "check into" locations or discuss travel plans.

3. Guidelines for Club & District presences

3.1 Ensure you have authority to post officially

When you interact on social media sites, including your own club or district pages, please use your own profile and represent yourself unless you are an officer of your club or district who is authorized to speak publicly and officially for your club or district.

Do not create a social media account for your club or district without gaining the authority of the necessary board to do so. It is highly advisable for clubs and districts to develop a social media strategy, so that everyone is clear as to which networks will be adopted, what the purpose of each presence is including who the target audiences are in each case, and who is responsible for those accounts.

Clubs and individuals should never represent "Rotary International".

3.2 Use the appropriate tools for the job

Social networks such as Facebook and Google+ have different offerings for organisations than they do for people. These offerings provide fields specifically relevant to organisations rather than individual people, and allow multiple administrators to manage the page without setting up a separate account for the club.

Make sure you set up the correct type of presence for your club and observe the terms of service for each site:

- For **Facebook**, your club's official public presence should be a **Page**, not a profile. Groups are designed for small, specific audiences, and can be beneficial in conjunction with a Page, but do not replace the need for an official page.

- For **Google+**, your club's official public presence should be a **Page**, not a profile. At this stage, there is no group equivalent inside Google+.
- For **LinkedIn**, it is possible to create a Company profile, but this is not equivalent to a Page in Facebook or Google+, and should not be used for a club profile.

3.3 Foster a positive, transparent arena for conversations

Social media is not about blasting your content out to the masses; it is about fostering relationships and engaging people in meaningful conversations.

To that end, set up your club or district Facebook page so that anyone can post comments to it and ensure that you monitor and respond to comments in a timely manner, as it builds credibility and community. Where appropriate, be open about who the admins are they are interacting with. Deal with any criticisms directly on the page rather than referring people to an email address unless it is a particularly sensitive issue that does need to be dealt with privately.

Your club or district should create, publish and adhere to posting guidelines. If a user flouts the posting guidelines, ensure that they are dealt with in the appropriate manner. Letting a user regularly conduct themselves in a manner that contravenes the posting guidelines will drive away the users that do conduct themselves appropriately. All administrators must understand and agree with the guidelines before taking on an administration role.

3.4 Be aware of implications of “Liking” and “Following”

If a club or district “Likes” or “Follows” another page or account, it implicitly endorses that other entity or cause.

Since Rotary is non political and non religious, it is generally not appropriate for a club to Like or Follow blatantly religious or political accounts. Such personal endorsements should be left to an individual's account.

5.5 Observe Rotary's Policies

Rotary International policies apply to social media too, including

RI's Circularization Policy: (from the [RI Code of Policies](#))

11.030.1. Rotary Clubs – Approval to Solicit Cooperation, Financial Aid, or Participation in Commercial Ventures, including Telemarketing

A club desiring to request the cooperation of other clubs or members of other clubs, in connection with any matter whatsoever, by any means, including telemarketing, shall first submit its purpose and plans to the governor or governors of the involved area and secure his, her or their approval. This is applicable only in cases where a club desires to request the cooperation of more than one Rotary club or members of more than one club.

- See more at: <http://rosnf.net/training/snetiquette/#policies>