



Wake County Social Media Guidelines

SUMMARY

Wake County uses social media as a way to communicate with stakeholders, media, employees and our residents. These guidelines outline how Wake County will use social media and will continually evolve as new technologies. Wake County's social media guidelines apply to all employees that fall under the leadership of the County Manager including volunteers, vendors and contractors when representing Wake County.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media uses Internet and Web technologies for sharing content between people. Social networking describes large sites that contain multiple communities of people engaged in sharing content and information.

SCOPE

Departments are expected to follow the procedures outlined in this document to request social media accounts and receive approval before publishing content to those accounts including blogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media both on and off the County's Web sites.

WHY USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

New and emerging online social media platforms are fundamentally changing the way the world works and communicates. Many people, businesses and community partners are actively participating in online interactions happening in blogs, forums and social networks. Like many private and public groups, Wake County believes social media provides options to get messages out into the community and to reach people in the ways they routinely communicate and interact. For these reasons, it is important that Wake County government join the conversations in social media platforms.

WHO CAN USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

For defined and approved uses, departments, divisions and programs may be permitted, on a case-by-case basis, to use social media tools, including but not limited to:

- Wikis such as MediaWiki, Wikispaces, PBWorks,
- Team and group sites such as Google Sites, SharePoint, Yahoo Groups
- Blogs such as WordPress
- Micro-blogs such as Twitter
- Social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace
- Visual media sharing such as YouTube, Flickr or Picasa

WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO GET A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT?

1. Wake County representatives who would like to use any social media tool should first discuss business reasons for using social media with their supervisor.
2. After receiving supervisor approval, applicants should fill out the Social Media Project Request Form located at www.wakeemployees.com/support. All of the members of the Social Media team will be notified of the request. The Social Media Team will consist of managers from the Public Affairs Office, the Web Administrator, Applied Technologies Manager and one Business Analyst.
3. A member of Information Services' Applied Technologies Team will receive requests and begin assisting the department in formulating an application for their request.
4. When the business case is ready for review, the department will be scheduled to present to the Social Media team. From this meeting, the Web Support Team and Public Affairs Office will prepare a recommendation document.
5. Upon completion of the recommendation document, it will be sent to the requesting department's director, the Public Affairs Director and Chief Information Officer for approval.
6. Upon approval, the Web Support Team and Public Affairs Office will review the approved scope with the department. A date will be set for training and a review session at an upcoming Electronic Communications Committee meeting.
7. Denied requests will immediately be communicated to the department with supporting reasons.
8. Any modification or expansion of a preapproved social media accounts will be considered using the same process unless otherwise outlined in their approved scope document.

GUIDELINES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Usage of social media tools must be restricted to the purpose for which permission is given. Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and county laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, public record, First Amendment, privacy laws, and Wake County's information security policies, Web Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Human Resources' Administration Manual. Violation of these policies and guidelines can result in the removal of the assigned social media service and disciplinary action.

Representing Wake County – Use of Social Media

1. Creation and maintenance of all social media sites will be conducted as part of a department, division or program’s communications plan and strategy.
2. Departmental Web Content Coordinators must be involved in the establishment, administration, content creation and maintenance of all social media sites. This is to ensure departmental and the County’s mission and messages are being consistently articulated and aligned with other Web communication channels, including our Web sites.
3. Departmental Web Coordinators, the PAO and the Web Support Team each must have administrator rights to all social media sites.
4. Social media sites are considered public records, and as such will be subject to archiving under the state public records law.

Technical Administration

1. The Web Support Team will acquire and establish all social media accounts once they are approved. During this process, county branding will be applied and administrators and users will be added to the accounts.
2. Links, badges and widgets will be added to the WakeGOV site, linking to the social media accounts where appropriate.
3. All accounts when set up will include the following public disclaimer:
“This site may contain ads, comments, external videos or images that do not reflect the opinions and position of Wake County Government.”
4. Approved users are required to establish individual accounts using their County e-mail address. These accounts should only be used for County business and should be separate from any personal social media accounts.
5. A departmental administrator and alternate will be trained for each approved social media account. This person will coordinate publishing on the social media site and alignment with content on the County’s Web sites.
6. Technical training in conjunction with the Public Affairs Office will be provided for administrators and publishers.
7. Users who are given administrator status should not change the administrative status of other users without receiving permission from the Web Support Team.
8. The Web Support Team will back-up all posts on social media sites monthly.
9. The Web Support Team will compile monthly statistical reports to share at the Electronic Communication meetings.
10. The Web Support Team will monitor all social media sites for technical compliance.

Content Publishing Guidelines

1. Content publishing on approved social media sites must stay within their defined scope, area of expertise and provide unique perspectives on their divisions' programs and services.
2. Posts should be factual and meaningful, and comments should be respectful.
3. When possible, content should always link back to the County's website for more information.
4. Proprietary information, content and confidentiality will be respected.
5. Links should be to reputable and factual/accurate sources.
6. When a response is appropriate, comments must be replied to in a timely manner. Use the **Social Media Response Decision Guide** for responding to social media comments and consult with the Public Affairs Office as needed.
7. The Public Affairs Office will prepare and train employees on how to write and prepare effective social media messages for the appropriate channels.
8. The Public Affairs Office will monitor for content compliance on all social mediate sites.

Monitoring Guidelines

1. The departmental administrator must frequently monitor social media sites. In addition, the Public Affairs Office and Web Support Team will monitor for compliance.
2. The County reserves the right to remove posts that contain:
 - a. Profane language or vulgar content
 - b. Advocate illegal activity
 - c. Offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, or religious group
 - d. Spam, off-topic content or links to other sites that are:
 - i. Clearly off topic
 - ii. Promote particular public sector services or products
 - iii. Endorse a candidate, political organization or platform
 - iv. Infringe on copyrights or trademarks.
 - v. If content must be removed, follow the **Social Media Post Removal Decision Guide** and consult with Public Affairs when necessary.
 - vi. Removed content must be recorded, documented and submitted to the Public Affairs Office and Web Support Teams for record retention.

CONCLUSION

It's your responsibility. What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social media on behalf of the County is not a right and it therefore needs to be taken seriously and with respect. When responding, be sure you're the correct person in your department to respond. Know and follow the County's social media guidelines and follow the decisions guides when necessary.

It's a conversation. Talk to your readers like you'd talk to real people in professional situations. Avoid bureaucratic or formal language. Consider open-ended content that invites response and comments. Stay professional – don't be combative.

Be open. One of the great benefits of social media is the interaction between you and our residents. Take in ideas. Share relevant feedback & input with your department and supervisors. When in doubt, contact the Public Affairs Office or your department director.

Are you adding value? There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write stuff people will value. Communication should help our residents, employees, and community partners. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community.

Did you screw up? If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you're posting to a social media site, you may choose to modify an earlier post — just make it clear that you have done so noting the correction.

If it gives you pause, pause. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute to review these guidelines and try to figure out what's bothering you, then fix it. If you're still unsure, check with your manager. Ultimately, the decision about what you publish is yours — as is the responsibility. So be sure.

Follow the rules. Employees who fail to comply with these policies are subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal and removal of your department's social media account.