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BT social media guidelines

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1. What are social media tools and why are they important to BT?

The term social media (sometimes also referred to as Web 2.0) is an umbrella term used to describe a suite of tools on the web, which typically have the following characteristics:

*   mostly free to use
*   extremely simple to use requiring no prior training or technical knowledge
*   support global collaboration and sharing of opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives often with strangers
*   content within them, and often the functionality, is managed and regulated by the user community itself and not the provider of the tool or a third party institution.

Some typical examples of social media tools are: blogs; wikis; social networking sites; podcasts and message boards (see Glossary of tools and definitions). There is a fuller definition of social media on Wikipedia, the internet encyclopaedia.

While social media tools were originally conceived for *social* collaboration, businesses are increasingly finding that these tools can help them achieve their business objectives and are being rapidly embraced by corporations globally.

Typically, they are being used by businesses to:

*   interact and develop new relationships with their customers, partners and suppliers
*   seek input from customers on product and service development
*   improve customer service
*   accelerate problem solving
*   facilitate innovation through collaboration with third parties and industry experts
*   manage their brand and reputation
*   interact in new ways with their employees.

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BT recognises that its transformation into a global communication services company delivering software driven products relies on a workforce that can actively participate in collaboration and innovation with colleagues, customers, partners and suppliers on the web using social media tools. It is therefore important that we all understand how social media tools can help BT achieve its business objectives and that we are empowered to contribute effectively to this collaborative activity on the web when it supports our roles within the organisation.

2. Who can use social media tools?

Any BT person can use social media tools on the BT Intranet without approval. BT people may also use social media tools on the **internet** in support of their role and where there is clear business benefit provided they have permission to do so from their line manager.

3. Guidelines for the safe use of social media tools on the internet

If you decide that you need to take part in on-line collaboration on the internet to support your role in BT, you must ensure that you:

- have read and understood all the relevant policies relating to this activity (see Relevant Policies)
- have sought and gained approval to do so from your line manager.

Contributing to collaborative activity managed on a social media site on the internet can seem daunting, particularly if you are doing so in an *official* capacity as a BT employee. However, by following these simple guidelines you should be able to take an active part in this kind of activity safely.

- *BT's business principles*: understand and follow our business principles as described in The Way We Work.
- *Compliance*: never disclose commercially sensitive or privacy marked company information in your contributions, or publish information that might contravene BT's undertakings with Ofcom. You should ensure information you publish conforms to our Code of Practice.
- *Copyright*: ensure you are not infringing copyright rules.
- *Identification*: when discussing BT or its business, always identify clearly who you are, what your role in BT is and publish in the first person. Use a disclaimer when appropriate (see next bullet)
- *Disclaimer*: If you are publishing information about BT or your role in BT you should use a disclaimer along the following lines: *"The views expressed on this site are my own and don't reflect the views of my employer"*
- *Personal responsibility:* you are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be mindful that what you publish will be public for many years.
- *Authenticity*: always be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of BT as a company. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be the first to come clean and admit it – honesty of this type quickly builds respect among other users.

- *Keep calm:* don't pick fights by escalating *heated* discussions but be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are *angry* … leave it, calm down, and return to it at a later date when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.
- *Personal judgement*: if you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then the chances are you shouldn't do it. Remember, the information you publish will be visible to other web users for a long time. If in doubt, discuss it with your line manager first.
- *Discretion*: don't discuss competitors, customers, partners or suppliers without their prior approval.
- *Respect*: don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would be unacceptable in a BT workplace. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- *Personal privacy*: avoid publishing your personal contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them. It is better to contact an individual outside the collaborative space if you want to take something *off-line*.
- *Etiquette*: before your first contribution on any social media site, it is a good idea to observe the activity on the site for a while before launching in yourself to get a feel for the style of contributions, the nature of the content and any 'unwritten' rules that other contributors might follow.
- *Day job:* activity on social media tools during office hours should complement and/or support your role in BT

4. Specific user guidance for blogging and social networks

Blogging

Blogs can be used in two main ways:

- personal blogs – these are personality driven channels
- business blogs – these are content/issue driven channels.

Personal blogs – these are a vehicle for individuals to post business-related information in a *personal context* and some personal information about themselves. *Internal* personal blogs support knowledge management by:

- providing searchable skills and experience information about BT people
- providing searchable information about the issues/challenges individuals face in their work which can be shared and solved collectively
- getting more data in the network where it can be searched and shared
- providing a mechanism for building communities through which the collective power of the community can solve problems and issues individuals face
- reducing duplication
- sharing best practice across the organisation and sharing good ideas and valuable experiences

- encouraging innovation and inspiring and engaging BT colleagues.

Business blogs – may be *individual* in personality (although not containing *personal* information) or run by a group of people as a group blog. These blogs will focus on content or issues but be delivered by a named and recognisable individual or individuals. A business blog may be associated with existing published material of some kind, be part of a marketing or communications campaign, or complement an existing process (e.g. it might be part of an existing web site; set up in response to the issuing of a hard-copy newsletter; or to gather feedback about an existing process).

Getting approval to blog:

Internal: there is no approval required for BT people to blog internally on Blog Central – all the information you require to get started is available on the Blog Central homepage.

External: anyone wishing to blog externally, either as a blog host of a *personal* or *business/group* blog or to comment on third party blogs, must first receive approval to do so from their line manager having demonstrated clear business benefit. Once you have received permission from your line manage to blog, you should add your name to the list of BT Bloggers in BTpedia.

Editorial guidelines for external blogging:

When blogging externally, the following guidelines should be followed:

- *BT's reputation*: content must not bring BT into disrepute.
- *Relevance*: content should be relevant to BT's business.
- *Commercial*: content should not reveal or discuss commercially sensitive matters.
- *Quick read*: ideal article length will be no more than 300 words to ensure the content is quick to read and easily digestible as readers do not have much time to browse and read long articles.
- *Topical*: contributions should aim to be topical - related to current news or events.
- *Neutral*: contributions must avoid commenting positively or negatively on competitors or their products, but need to ensure articles are relevant to the appropriate audience, regardless of who provides them with their other services.
- *Separation of sales messages*: content should keep product and non-Product commentary entirely separate in order to build trust with readers and avoid confusion. Where non-BT product postings have a relevant BT product, that product may be referenced at the bottom of the post, but should not be promoted in the body of the piece. It should also be clearly identified as a BT product (e.g. 'to see more about BT's internet security product, click here').
- *Related links*: where another online source is pertinent to a blog post that source will be included as a link in the main body of the text. Any other links that are deemed relevant to the story may be included below the main body.
- *Honest but positive*: the content needs to be honest to encourage others to respond. However, this needs to be balanced with pragmatism and positive positioning of BT. Criticism should be replied to with facts and actions for resolution rather than ignored or accepted without challenge.
- *Compliance*: the content should comply with all legal and regulatory requirements, in particular the TSR Undertakings

Social networks

Be mindful of how you represent yourself on social networks as the lines between public and private, personal and professional are becoming increasingly blurred. If you identify yourself as working for BT in a social network, you should ensure that content associated with you as an identifiable BT employee is consistent with your role in the organisation and doesn't compromise BT's brand and reputation. Remember, you may well be connected to BT colleagues and even BT customers, partners and suppliers.

Groups on social networks: BT people are permitted to set up groups on social networks like Facebook or LinkedIn to connect or collaborate with other people provided they adhere to the following guidelines.

If you set up a group on a social network that is obviously branded BT then you effectively become the administrator for that group on behalf of the company. As the administrator, you are responsible for ensuring that:

- the purpose of the group is clearly laid out for new members
- members can easily tell whether the group is open to non-BT people and whether the content is accessible to non-BT people
- you publish the following disclaimer prominently on the site: *The views expressed in this group are those of the members and do not reflect the views of BT plc*
- you hand-over ownership of the group to another BT person if you choose to leave the group or if you leave BT
- any use of the BT logo or BT branding is in line with BT's branding policies.

If you want to create a closed group then this should be hosted on BT platform rather than a public platform.

The value of collaborative groups on the internet is the ability to engage in conversation and share with a wider group of people than just BT employees. If you are considering setting up an open group, or a closed group that includes non-BT people, then you must ensure that the content posted within it doesn't breach BT policies or compromise BT's business or brand. Consideration must also be given to the deletion or migration onto BT systems of content created in these groups when the collaborative activity is completed and the group shut down.

5. Relevant BT policies and guidelines
- The Way We Work – BT's business principles
- Code of Practice – how the Undertakings affect BT
- Appropriate use of the internet and intranet
- BT publishing standards

6. Guidance on the use of local languages in social tools
To ensure that as much of the content as possible in social tools on the BT Intranet can be reused by BT people around the world, it is recommended that content should be published in English

whenever possible. Content published in local languages should be preceded by a short description in English summarising the nature of the content below.

7. Guidance to help identify unsuitable content and be an effective moderator

Content provided by other people into a social media tool you own (e.g. a blog) that openly refers to BT and your association with the company should always be moderated if the tool is on the **internet**. The objective of moderating content before it is published is two-fold:

- to ensure unsuitable content is not published into a channel associated with BT
- to ensure comments made on blogs are clear and appropriate to the content/subject matter of the blog in question.

Moderation is NOT designed to:

- censure people from expressing their opinions
- correct grammatical or spelling errors in comments, except where such errors detract from the intended meaning of the comment.

As a general rule, comments should be published by moderators as close to the form and format in which they were input by the person making the comment with the bare minimum of changes, provided they are clear, appropriate and do not contain unsuitable content.

Postings should not be published if they:

- are considered likely to provoke, attack or offend others
- are racist, sexist, homophobic, sexually explicit, abusive or otherwise objectionable
- contain swear words or other language likely to offend
- break the law or condone or encourage unlawful activity
- are seen to impersonate someone else
- describe or encourage activities which could endanger the safety or well-being of others
- are posted anonymously.

Unsuitable Links:

Links to external web sites are permitted as long as they are not deemed to be unsuitable. A web page is classed as unsuitable if it contains, or directly links to, material which is …

Offensive:

- pornography & sexually explicit content
- text & images likely to offend most people
- hate sites (on grounds of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation)
- gratuitous violence

Unlawful:

- condones or encourages unlawful acts
- breaches copyright law or encourage others to do so

- defamatory and/or in contempt of court
- hacking or other technical disruption to online services.

Presents access or safety problems:

- pay-to-view or other subscription sites
- sites which might compromise the BT network (eg: sites which initiate a download)
- 18+ sites (eg: gambling).

8. Social media tools available on the BT Intranet

There are a number of social media tools available to BT people to use on the BT Intranet. The BT Intranet collaboration homepage explains which tools are best suited to which tasks.

9. Glossary of tools and definitions

Below are links to definitions of the most common social media tools – these links will take you to an external website called Wikipedia (an on-line, collaborative encyclopaedia based on a wiki in which all the content is updated and managed by the users themselves):

- Blogs
- Wikis
- Social networking
- Micro-blogging
- Podcasts
- Really Simple Syndication (RSS)
- Message boards

10. Guidance on what makes a good blogger?

A good blogger:

- Blogs regularly. Some say 3 to 5 times a week is a good number. Others work on a daily routine. Overall, once a week is probably considered the minimum amount.
- Should have a distinct voice/personality. You can tell if that person is just copying something or just recycling content. While aggregated blogs are okay in some cases, blogs that show that the blogger is a real person help to distinguish one blog from millions of others.
- Should be conversational. "I know I've found a good blogger when I feel like I just had a conversation with that person from reading a post.". Much like having a friend or a trusted colleague. Even if the blogger is trying to sell something, he or she shouldn't sound like a salesperson.
- Should have good content. Thought-provoking, entertaining, funny, intense, informational, inspirational, deep… whatever the style or the subject matter, good content is bound to touch and to reach out to the right audience.
- Takes the time to respond to comments (or emails, messages, etc.). While this may not always be feasible on an individual basis, especially for bigger blogs, it's always good to acknowledge your readers in some way. Individual responses make it personal. But, if that's

not possible, a "mass response" via another blog entry or comment can show your readers that you do pay attention … and that you do read and appreciate their comments.

- Takes time to pay attention to spelling and grammar rules. The writing doesn't have to be perfect and typo-free all the time. Even experts and professionals make mistakes. But, if a blogger doesn't try to do a better job at expressing oneself in writing, somehow the message gets lost in the muddle of writings that LooK likE thIS alL tHe tIMe… or LIKE THIS…

- Learns how to be brave. Blogging can be very scary business. It's terrifying to put yourself out there. Even if you're not writing about personal stuff, words are very personal things.

- Is tenacious/resilient. There are a lot of challenges in the blogosphere: how to learn the technology, how to 'work the web', how to find - and keep - readers, how to get listed in search engines and directories, how to keep up with news, how to come up with content…

- Practices blogging ethics/etiquette. Accept mistakes and own up to them, don't copy-paste complete blog entries and articles in to your own blogs (that's stealing), among other things. (Also See: Top 10 Weblog Ethics and Etiquette Tips)

- Knows how to maintain good relationships online. It's more than just responding to comments and emails. It's more than just linking, cross-linking, promoting and cross-promoting fellow bloggers. It's about knowing when to assert yourself and when to back down. It's about following up on your word and keeping your promises. It's about respect and responsibility.

- Needs a sense of humour!