



Social Media Guidelines for the Washington State Bar Association and Its Entities

Approved by the WSBA Board of Governors on December 4, 2009

Social Media is an important way for an association to interact with its members and the public as well as to facilitate member-to-member dialog. Social networks (such as, but not limited to, blogging, microblogging, networking sites, and social media) offer opportunities for outreach, information sharing, and interaction.

The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) supports the use of these Internet technologies to increase member engagement, build community, and improve access to information, resulting in greater value to our members and the public. These tools are another method to communicate with a variety of audiences but may not be appropriate in all instances nor for all kinds of outreach.

The following guidelines apply to WSBA volunteers, sections, committees, boards, divisions, panels, and related programs or groups (“Entities”) wishing to use WSBA’s name and/or graphic identity (e.g., logo) in conjunction with the creation or maintenance of a social media presence that identifies the Entity as being sponsored by, administered by, or affiliated with WSBA.

Administering the social media site

Each WSBA Entity desiring a social media presence will work with the Entity’s staff liaison/contact to determine the Entity’s objectives and the proper social media venues for the Entity. The Entity will create a plan for its social media presence, to include the social media tools they desire to use, the objective of the use, and plans for generating regular and relevant content. The WSBA staff liaison will establish the page/account for the Entity. The Entity shall work with the staff liaison to generate content updates to the page/account. The WSBA reserves the right to remove any content deemed inappropriate or not in keeping with these guidelines. Entities are responsible, in collaboration with their WSBA liaison/contact and all those individuals participating in the social network, for complying with these guidelines.

Guidelines for social networking

Be professional, respectful, and discreet in your online dialog. Represent WSBA and our profession well. Exercise good judgment. Entities and individuals who fail to do so, or who fail to comply with these guidelines, may forfeit the right to participate in social networking activities sponsored by WSBA. In some circumstances, inappropriate use of social media may subject you to discipline for failing to adhere to applicable Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC), as well as civil or criminal liability and penalties, as warranted.

- 1. Be responsible.** You are personally responsible for the material you post. Carefully consider content; what you publish will be widely accessible for some time and, in some cases, indefinitely. All statements must be true and not misleading. Do not post private information about yourself or others – keep the posts relevant. Adhere to all statutory prescriptions and Rules of Professional Conduct governing the privacy of individuals and confidential information of your clients.
- 2. Be upfront; identify yourself.** Your honesty – or dishonesty – will be quickly noticed in the social networking environment. Use your real name, and, if relevant, your role or interest in the

topic discussed. When appropriate, make it clear you are speaking for yourself and not on WSBA's behalf.

3. **Be civil and respectful.** It's alright to disagree with others, but do not use defamatory, libelous, or damaging innuendo; abusive, threatening, offensive, obscene, explicit, or racist language; or post illegal material.
4. **Be quick to correct an error.** If you make a mistake, admit it. Quickly provide the correct information. If appropriate, modify an earlier post to make it clear that you have corrected an error.
5. **Keep it relevant/add value.** Write about what you know. Information can add value if it contributes to the legal community's knowledge or skills, improves the legal system or public understanding of the legal system, or builds a sense of community.
6. **Follow copyright and fair use laws.** Always give people proper credit for their work. Make sure you have the right to use material with attribution before publishing. It is a good practice to link to others' work rather than reproducing it on your site. When in doubt as to the proprietary nature of material, don't use it. Recognize the potential professional and legal consequences of any failure to follow applicable laws governing the use of others' material.
7. **Protect proprietary and client information.** Do not discuss or misuse proprietary or confidential information, and follow all professional and ethical rules governing the disclosure of information shared with you by clients. When in doubt, leave it out.
8. **Endorsements of certain political positions are contrary to GR 12.1.** The activities of WSBA are defined by Washington Supreme Court rules (GR 12.1), and those rules apply to social networking activity, as well as a variety of other activities. As a membership organization, WSBA needs to avoid even the appearance that it directly or indirectly:
 - a. Takes positions on issues concerning the politics or social positions of foreign nations;
 - b. Takes positions on political or social issues which do not relate to or affect the practice of law or the administration of justice; or
 - c. Supports or opposes, in an election, candidates for public office.
9. **Comply with Washington rules governing lawyer conduct.** Comply with all legal restrictions and obligations governing professional conduct, particularly those regulating communication and advertising (RPC Title 7), when posting content to any social network, including postings by an Entity.
10. **Do not violate antitrust laws.** Antitrust laws prohibit postings that encourage or facilitate agreements between WSBA members of different firms concerning the following, as they pertain to legal services: prices, discounts, or terms or conditions of sale; salaries; profits, profit margins, or cost data; market shares, sales territories, or markets; allocation of customers or suppliers; or any other term or condition related to competition.
11. **Abide by the social network's rules.** By joining a particular social network, you agree to abide by that community's terms of use, so review those terms carefully.

Using the WSBA's name and/or logo

WSBA Entities may incorporate the WSBA's name and/or logo into their social media identity with prior approval from WSBA's Deputy Director for External Relations or his/her designee. To create consistency and community on the Web, the WSBA has established standard logo templates, disclaimers, and naming conventions. The Entity must work with their assigned staff liaison from WSBA to coordinate the development of the social network graphic and other site requirements.

All Entities must provide direct links on any social media page back to the "main" WSBA social media page.

Enforcing these guidelines

WSBA does not actively monitor these sites for inappropriate postings. If an inappropriate posting is brought to the attention of WSBA, however, WSBA will take appropriate action to enforce these guidelines.