# 18 Ways to Improve Your Social Media Etiquette



If you took a Business and Technical Writing course before the advent of social media, you probably learned several hard-and-fast rules of business communications: You Attitude. The Positivity Sandwich. How to use passive voice to avoid corporate responsibility. The Inverse Pyramid Paragraph Structure. Does communicating via social media require a new skill set?

Yes and no. In general, the rules of business etiquette and communications apply to social media. Many etiquette breaches, however, come from a failure to understand the tone and conventions required on different social media platforms.

Think of your social media presence as a dinner party. What would happen if you threw a dinner party and spent the whole party pitching a new product your company was selling? Or if you repeated the same phrase over and over without listening to any of the other guests? Or if you silenced people who had different opinions and made them leave? You probably wouldn't be very popular.

Most users see social media as an extension of their social life: a place where they can chat with friends, have discussions, share hobbies and interests, and even meet new friends. While it's widely accepted that businesses and organizations use social media for self-promotion, businesses that go overboard without adding anything of value to the conversation will be quickly unfollowed.

## We've assembled 18 great ways to improve your social media etiquette.

- Think before you post. Ask yourself how a post could be taken out of context, double- check that it's error-free and ensure you're posting on the right account.

- Understand the platform you're posting on and the conventions of that platform. On Twitter, for example, you can post several times a day, while the same behaviour might be considered

spammy on Facebook. On Facebook, hashtags are widely considered #annoying so #DontUseThem #ever .

- Speaking of which, don't use too many hashtags even on Twitter. Recent studies have shown that hashtags play little role in increasing the virality of your tweet and can impede understanding. When you do use them, ensure that every letter of a new word is capitalized. (I.e. #GoTeamGo not #goteamgo)

- Don't auto-post from Facebook to Twitter and vice versa. Though auto-posting might save you some time, no one will read a Twitter post that gets cut-off mid sentence or a Facebook post with @ tags.

- Strike the right tone: If you post in language that's too stiff and formal, your organization will look aloof and out of place. If you're too casual, you will look unprofessional.

- Don't disguise your intentions. Be up front whenever you promote something you have a vested interest in.

- Use correct grammar and spelling.

- Don't sign your posts, unless you're a) posting from a Twitter account that's handled by multiple people or b) Mark Twain/ Oscar Wilde/ Ghandi or some other famous quotable figure.

- Don't use Capslock (no one likes being shouted at) or go overboard with exclamation marks/emoticons. Unless your team has just upset its arch-rival with 1 second to go at the Olympics/Paralympics, you probably don't need more than 1 exclamation mark per sentence.

- Respond to questions and comments promptly.

- Don't let social media accounts fall idle. It reflects poorly on your organization. If you're strapped for time, use some of the many post-scheduling devices such as Hootsuite to schedule some content.

- Use blocking or banning only as a last measure. Your social media channels should be a place for healthy debate. If someone is speaking negatively about your organization, politely respond to their concerns and encourage them to contact you by email to follow up. If someone is being harassing or using threatening language, however, feel free to block and ban them.

- Be careful with humour. If something will offend even 1 person out of 100, don't post it. Humour can backfire more than any other posting type. (This doesn't mean you can't be funny -- in fact, you *should* be funny -- but err on the side of caution).

- While it's okay to share something from another organization's page, ask before you share something from someone's personal page.

- Vary your message. If you want to increase the visibility of a big event with multiple posts, change the language and tone of each post.

- On Twitter, shorten your links using a link shortener like Ow.ly or go.gl.

- Many people who work in social media for sports organizations have an existing relationship

within the sports community (i.e. a former athlete) and may have friends there. Be mindful of the distinction between your personal and professional social media life and keep your tone professional when engaging with your real-life friends on your organization's social media channels.

- Above all, be genuine. Traditional business communication methods can come off as wooden and hollow on social media. Ditch the passive voice and the stock phrases and speak directly to your audience.



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