

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Social Media Policy
EFFECTIVE: October 23, 2017
APPROVED BY COUNCIL: October 23, 2017



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the Township of Scugog's use of social media technologies as a strategic communication tool. This policy will ensure social media is used in a way that positively manages the Township's reputation by providing guidelines for Township employees who operate official Township social media accounts and/or personal accounts where Township interests may be involved.

- 1.1. The Township of Scugog recognizes that there is both value and public interest in its participation in social media. This policy states clear expectations about corporate use, personal use standards and guiding principles.

2. Goals

This policy is intended to guide social media usage by Township of Scugog Staff. Social media is an effective means to engage with the community and share information in a timely, cost-effective manner to support Township initiatives and enhance the Township's reputation. In using social media, just as with traditional communications, it is important to always remember that the Township's mission is to serve the community of Scugog and that, as a representative of Scugog; employees must recognize that they share responsibility for the reputation of the Township.

- 2.1 Social media is an effective way to connect with residents, get information out quickly to a targeted audience, and develop community partnerships and ambassadors. Social media can complement traditional communications tactics by:
 - Increasing awareness of the Township of Scugog's programs and services
 - Listening to the community and providing two-way communication
 - Distributing time-sensitive information
 - Providing timely answers to inquiries with a customer service approach
 - Building and developing partnerships with other community leaders using social media
- 2.2 This policy establishes the acceptable use of social media within the Township of Scugog. The following key principles form the basis of the Township of Scugog's Social Media Policy:

Social Media Policy

1. **Responsibility:** The Township supports the responsible use of social media for official municipal business purposes with the goals of enhancing public communication and improving civic engagement.
2. **Engagement:** The Township recognizes that social media sites and/or networks create opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration with stakeholders.
3. **Accuracy:** To ensure accuracy of information when using social media technologies, only designated Staff can represent and make comments on behalf of the Township and must follow departmental approval processes in doing so.
4. **Communication:** Initiating a social media account for a project or program should be considered and evaluated with a full understanding of the resources and procedures required to use them effectively as outlined in this policy and the Social Media Account Procedures.
5. **Accessibility:** The Township is committed to inclusivity and accessibility, and the use of social media can provide increased access and convenience to municipal services and information for specific audiences.
6. **Transparency:** In its commitment to openness, the Township accepts the risk of sharing negative feedback and criticism in a public forum when utilizing social media and will be accountable for its actions.

3. Definitions

Please see Appendix A for definitions relevant to this policy and social media terminology.

4. General (overview of the policy)

This policy applies to the Township of Scugog's corporate and department social media accounts and all employees (e.g. full time, part time, temporary, contract, summer etc.) as well as anyone retained to represent the Township such as contractors, consultants, committee members participating in any online social media community while under contract with the Township of Scugog.

- 4.1. If a program area/department is interested in using social media to further promote their services, program staff should contact the Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives to assist with the facilitation of approvals from their Department Head.
- 4.2. Communications will flow through current corporate and department level channels. The development of additional social media accounts is subject to approvals by the appropriate Department Head, Chief Administrative Officer and Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives to ensure the best use of corporate resources and to avoid duplication of efforts.

Social Media Policy

- 4.3. The use of social media accounts by the Township of Scugog will adhere to existing policies and guidelines of the Township of Scugog, applicable laws and regulations and the terms of service of each social media site.
- 4.4. Staff must be aware that all corporate social media accounts, along with login and password information, are, and will remain, the property of the Township of Scugog and not the individuals managing the content. The Manager of Corporate Communications and Strategic Initiatives shall have administrative access to all accounts.
- 4.5. Staff will always conduct themselves as, and in a manner befitting, a representative of the Township of Scugog when overseeing the Township of Scugog's social media accounts, in accordance with this policy and all Township policies.

5. Guidelines

5.1. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1.1. The standards set forth herein apply to all departments of the Township of Scugog. It is acknowledged that departments not serviced by Corporate Services may develop their own protocols pertaining to the use of social media within their program areas. That is permissible, provided that said protocols are consistent with the overall corporate policy contained herein.

5.1.2. The Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives shall:

- Ensure a consistent approach in the development of the Township of Scugog's social media strategy for the departments and its services
- Oversee the Township of Scugog's social media accounts, by providing protocols and guidelines to meet the outlined purpose of corporate use of social media
- Securely hold confidential social media login and password information to co-ordinate corporate social media accounts
- Provide a framework for approvals processes for existing corporate social media accounts, and co-ordinate approvals related to the development of new social media accounts
- If necessary, work with the appropriate Department Head to designate additional/existing staff as required to oversee corporate social media accounts
- If necessary, assign temporary access to seasonal staff as required to assist with posting from events
- Keep a master list of social media platforms approved for corporate use
- Administer access to approved social media accounts to designated staff
- Address potential security concerns

Social Media Policy

- Respond to other information technology issues at the discretion of the Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

5.2. Official Township of Scugog Social Media Accounts

5.2.1. Social media tools should only be used with a full understanding of the corporate resources and procedures required to effectively use them. To assist in this regard, Staff should follow the steps outlined in the **Social Media Account Procedures** document that accompanies this Policy. Social media is not a sole communications tactic; it should always be considered as one component of a successful communication strategy and integrated with a variety of communications tools and tactics.

5.2.2. When considering using social media, Staff must be clear about the purpose and the resource implications that maintaining and monitoring the account will involve. Site moderators will be held accountable for the accuracy and appropriateness of the content they produce. The views and opinions of any one employee or council member(s) will not be disseminated. Official Township of Scugog social media accounts are categorized as follows:

- **Corporate Accounts**
Corporate Services will manage all primary Corporate Accounts on behalf of the Township in adherence with the **Social Media Account Procedures** for the purposes of:
 - 1) Disseminating public information from the municipality;
 - 2) Engaging the community in municipal events, programs and services;
and
 - 3) Monitoring and responding (when necessary) to social media postings and conversations related to the Township and its interests.
- **Department Accounts**
Social media accounts currently in use will remain in use and all moderators will meet quarterly to evaluate the channels success, make improvements, maintain analytic tracking and determine whether the channel should continue. Any new channel requests will require approval from Corporate Services and a department representative must meet the following criteria:
 - 1) Submits a preliminary request by email to, and receive approval from the Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives.

Social Media Policy

- 2) Submit a Business Case to Corporate Services outlining the need and use of a channel as well as examples of content and resourcing for content management
- 3) Consults with Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives on the development of a communication strategy.
- 4) Account adheres to the **Social Media Account Procedures** for all aspects including initial setup, design, content, management and termination (if necessary).
- 5) A Site Moderator is identified, trained, meets with Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives to create the site, follows procedures for post management and a designated backup Staff member is identified and trained.
- 6) Any unauthorized accounts will be deactivated. Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives will maintain a list of all Township of Scugog social media accounts, and have administrator access to all sites.
- 7) In the event of an emergency or significant event, all department level channels will cease and suspend post schedules to allow for official corporate communications. Department leads will await instructions from Township Emergency Information Officer to resume post schedules.

Appendix A
Social Media Definitions

- a) **“Blog”** is a contraction of the term ‘Web log’; a website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Blog can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a Blog. Most Blogs are interactive by allowing visitors to leave Comments, which distinguishes them from other static websites.
- b) **“Comment”** is a reply (usually of personal opinion) in reference to a topic on a Social Networking site. Comments can also be referred to as a post or posting.
- c) **“Corporate Accounts”** are the official social media accounts for the Township of Scugog that are used to communicate municipal news, events, information and engage with the community. They are administered by the Corporate Services Department.
- d) **“Intellectual Property”** describes ownership of an intellectual ‘product’ which may have commercial value. It encompasses areas including: copyright, trademarks and patents.
- e) **“Message Board”** or **‘Forum’** is an online discussion site where people, looking to discuss particular issues or needing support, post threads (or messages) on the forum or message board to gain more information or start a conversation.
- f) **“Moderator”** or **“Site Moderator”** is a Township of Scugog employee who is appointed and approved by their supervisor to act as an official online spokesperson. A Site Moderator is granted access to creating, posting and managing the content on a social media site for the purpose of moderating discussion, responding to questions and comments and ensuring proper use is adhered to.
- g) **“Post”** or **“Posting”** refers to the action of creating an entry or comment or the entry or comment itself in a place of public view on the Internet.
- h) **“Department Accounts”** are social media accounts that represent specific projects or programs that the Township of Scugog manages. These are typically larger scale projects and programs that have a specific audience they are targeting. They are administered by the respective division/department Staff responsible for the project or program with assistance and guidance provided by the Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives.
- i) **“RSS”** (also called a “feed” and most commonly expanded as Really Simple Syndication) is a family of web feed formats used to automatically publish

Social Media Policy

frequently updated content such as Blog entries, news headlines and Podcasts in a standardized format that allows readers to subscribe to timely updates from a website or to aggregate feeds from many sites into one place.

- j) **“Social Media”** refers to Internet-based tools and platforms that are used to help people produce, publish and share online user-generated content and to interact with one another in the public realm. Examples include Blogs, Wikis, Message Boards, Forums, Podcasts, photos, videos, etc.
- k) **“Social Networking”** is defined as engaging in a social service which builds and engages online communities of people who share similar interests and/or activities and content. Some commonly used Social Networking sites include, but are not limited to:
 - I. Facebook - An online community for people to connect with others who share a common interest through the sharing of information, photos and videos to build their own personal network.
 - II. LinkedIn - A professional online community used to network with fellow professionals, share contacts and resumes based on industry, education and/or employer.
 - III. YouTube - An online site for uploading, viewing and commenting on videos.
 - IV. Twitter - A micro-blogging community where posts (called Tweets) and links are limited to 140 characters or less.
 - V. Instagram – a photo-sharing application and service that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly or privately.
 - VI. Google – The world’s most popular search engine, used to find information on the World Wide Web.
- l) **“Township” or “Township of Scugog” or “Scugog”** in this Policy and the Social Media Account Procedures means the Corporation of the Township of Scugog.
- m) **“URL”** stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) that specifies where an identified resource is available and the mechanism for retrieving it. The best-known example of the use of URLs is for the addresses of web pages on the World Wide Web, such as www.scugog.ca.

RELATED DOCUMENT:
Social Media Procedure