SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY & GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Fostering Media Connections’ social media policy will help guide all FMC employees, whether administrative or editorial, as they participate in social media. Employees are required to sign a social media policy acknowledgment and defer to this policy as they engage personally and professionally with social media.

DESCRIPTION

Social media are works of user-created video, audio, text or multimedia that are published and shared in a digital environment, such as a social network, blog, wiki, email, or video hosting site. This policy applies to any current or future social media platforms.

GUIDELINES

1. As employees of a publicly funded nonprofit organization, everything we say and do in social media channels has the potential to impact our reputation as an unbiased, independent news organization. FMC staff should behave under the assumption that what they say or do online, both personally and professionally, can be linked to the organization and may help or hurt our journalism.

2. FMC staff may like, friend or follow political groups, advocacy organizations or any other entity with the intent of monitoring discussions and events. But they may not take positions or otherwise engage in discussions in social media channels.

3. All FMC employees, regardless of job title, must refrain from posting views that could be seen as expressing bias or favoritism.

4. FMC staff may use their personal accounts to share FMC-produced content, but they are not required to do so. When using social media to promote stories that our staff have written, or others have written, FMC employees will refrain from messaging that appears to take a side on the matter, or promote one cause or one character in a story over another, no matter how sympathetic the cause.

5. All of these policies apply to both original posts, messages and tweets, and to transmitting the posts, messages and tweets of others, as in the case of re-tweeting. Retweets and shares may be interpreted as endorsements; adding one’s own commentary/opinion to a retweet/share may weaken the individual’s or FMC’s immunity in the event of a legal challenge regarding libel or defamation.

6. No content may be posted within FMC’s social channels without internal review by the designated editorial or other team member.
7. Information found on social media sites may be used in reporting, but it must be clearly attributed and verified just as it would if found through any other source.

8. Threatening and negative messages should be ignored most of the time, but if a response is warranted it should be limited to getting more information, e.g. What specifically concerned you about my article? Truly threatening messages should be reported to HR.

9. When using social media, FMC employees or contractors will comply with the law and company policies. Any conduct that would be illegal or a violation of policy “offline” is illegal or a violation of policy online.

10. During working hours, FMC employees should use social media only for business use.

11. When using social media, FMC employees are speaking only for themselves unless they have prior authorization from their manager/supervisor to speak for FMC.

12. When any of the above is in doubt, employees should consult with their editor or supervisor.

Employees authorized to speak on behalf of FMC are not permitted to:

- Use profanity or derogatory language.
- Use sexually explicit language or material of any kind.
- Share copyrighted material unless permission is granted (e.g., through a "Share" button by the originator of the material).
- Engage in unethical actions, or illegal activities.
- Make libelous statements or aggressively attack any individual or group.
- Make solicitations that are commercial in nature, except when marketing or publicizing FMC publications.
- Share personal information about an individual or group without their permission.
- Share confidential FMC information.
- Share customer information: Do not talk about customers or release information about them.
- Share personnel information, e.g. sharing anything related to filling an open position other than the job listing itself, or anything about co-workers.
- Share legal information.

Posts or comments that contain the following are not permitted:

- Profanity or anything derogatory in nature
- Sexually explicit language or material of any kind
- Copyrighted material used without permission
- Reference to dishonest behavior, unethical actions, or illegal activities
- Libelous statements or aggressive attacks on any individual or group
- Solicitations or any comments commercial in nature
- Personal information of an individual or group without their expressed permission
Employees using social media are encouraged to:

- Be smart.
- Be respectful.
- Be authentic.
- Be transparent.
- Be careful.

CONSEQUENCES

FMC employees who do not follow company policy and guidelines are subject to the disciplinary policy as outlined in the FMC Handbook.