



# Social Media FAQs

People prefer to work with organizations they trust. An effective way of connecting SCG's constituents to the community is through dialogue on social media sites. SCG supports the use of social media for online communications concerning our mission, community relations, marketing, and recruiting activities. However, misuse of social media can lead to a breach of trust and damage the reputations of SCG, its employees, and its clients. Therefore, SCG has established guidelines through its Social Media Code of Conduct to educate employees on using social media and ultimately protect SCG, its employees, and its constituents from uninformed (and often unintended) misuse of social media. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) provide more information about SCG's Social Media Code of Conduct, acceptable social media practices for SCG's official channels, and employees' use of personal social media accounts. The FAQ is a living document to be reviewed and updated as needed to accommodate our evolving use of social media and any new questions frequently raised by SCG employees.

## **1. What is social media?**

Social media generally refers to forms of electronic communication that are used to share information or content and allow users to network with other users. Examples of social media include social networking sites like Facebook®, Twitter®, and LinkedIn®, blogs, message boards and chat rooms, news site comment sections, and photograph- and video-sharing sites such as Instagram® or YouTube®.

## **2. What are the types of social media participation at SCG?**

SCG has official accounts on sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram; however, only personnel authorized by SCG management may edit and post content on official SCG social media channels. Employees that desire to contribute to official SCG social media channels should contact SCG's Communications Director.

## **3. Can I discuss SCG business on my own personal blog or social media accounts?**

Yes, you may discuss issues related to SCG on your own personal blog or social media account as long as you comply with your confidentiality obligations as an SCG employee, SCG's Social Media Code of Conduct, and all applicable laws. You are legally and financially responsible for your own postings.

It also is important to remember that you should not speak for SCG. Make it clear that your opinions are your own and do not necessarily reflect the views of SCG. Please use the following disclaimer on your personal social media accounts:

*"The opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of my employer SCG."*

**4. What should I be aware of before I post personal information about myself on social media sites?**

We encourage you to create user accounts under your true name. Using a pseudonym may diminish the credibility of your contributions online. Almost all social media services require users to use their real identities. Even anonymous comments and updates can be traced back to you using IP addresses and other tracking technology. Therefore, post only personal information that you want the public to have access to and avoid posting information that might make you vulnerable to identity theft or compromise your safety. Manipulation of users into divulging confidential information is a common threat on social media sites. Be sure to review the privacy policies of the social media sites that you choose to use. Information you post is almost impossible to remove because it may be reposted on other sites without your knowledge and viewed by unintended audiences.

**5. What is SCG's policy with regard to comments on social media sites?**

We do not promote censorship of online comment postings. On our official social media channels, we have the right to remove any posted comment, video, or photograph that does not relate to the topic being discussed, uses inappropriate language, or was posted without obtaining written permission for the content, when applicable. For personal social media sites that mention or link to SCG, SCG expects employees to adhere to our Social Media Code of Conduct and all laws pertaining to the social media sites.

**6. What should I do if I read an inaccurate post about SCG or a scientific and/or environmental topic on a third-party social media site? Do I have to respond and provide an accurate comment?**

You should not always feel the need to be the one to respond to something you see or read online. If you are surfing the Internet and see a blog posting on a third-party blog, for example, and you are not the subject matter expert, you should contact SCG's Vice President of Administration or Human Resources Manager to find the appropriate person to respond. Also, remember that not everything warrants a response. Be sure you are adding value when commenting, and do not comment just for the sake of commenting. If you are not sure, please contact SCG's Vice President of Administration or Human Resources Manager.

**7. How do I determine what SCG information is proprietary or confidential and whether or not it is OK to post externally?**

Information such as proposals, bid decisions, and SCG's financials are confidential and should never be divulged. Contract awards can be posted after they are announced and the contract is signed. You must also keep personal information about SCG's employees, members, clients, or suppliers or anyone who works on behalf of SCG confidential. Federal and state laws also require that certain information about SCG employees remains confidential. Disclosure of any confidential information may violate laws and may subject both you and SCG to liability. Please contact SCG's Human Resources Manager or Vice President of Administration if you have any concerns or questions about confidential information.

**8. What else should I consider when posting to my site or anyone else's site?**

Do not post inappropriate or disrespectful comments to your site or anyone else's site or comments section that are intended to embarrass SCG or anyone associated with the company, including our clients. Always act professionally. If you have comments or suggestions for improvements at SCG, we encourage you to use proper internal channels rather than resorting to public postings.

Inappropriate postings may include racial epithets, discriminatory remarks, sexual or racial harassment that could have a connection to your employment at SCG, as well as threats of violence against any individual. Employees should avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that is malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating, profane, or that might constitute harassment or bullying of any

individual. Employees also should avoid offensive posts meant to intentionally harm reputation or posts that contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or other protected statuses. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end and you may negatively affect your own reputation, and SCG's, in the process.

If you witness illegal, unsafe, or unethical conduct by an SCG employee, client, or contractor, we would prefer that you not discuss this on social media sites. Instead, we urge you to contact SCG's Vice President of Administration or Human Resources Manager to report an issue. Some examples of issues to report include the following:

- Theft, fraud, or any other dishonest conduct
- Discrimination or harassment
- Waste or abuse of SCG resources
- Conflicts of interest
- Unsafe situations
- Mismanagement
- Any actions that violate SCG's policies

Reporting issues like these directly to those who can make corrections is the best course of action. Posting a concern on a social media site may not be the most direct or efficient way to resolve these types of issues. All good-faith reports of suspected violations are protected by SCG's nonretaliation policy. Please refer to SCG's Harassment and Discrimination policy for direction on reporting procedures.

**9. Is it appropriate for managers and subordinates to “friend” each other on social media sites?**

Managers and their subordinates are free to “friend” each other on social media sites. Both managers and employees, however, should try to avoid any interactions or communications that may create a conflict of interest or that may compromise SCG's ability to enforce our policies, especially policies against harassment and discrimination.

**10. Is it appropriate for employees and clients (or related professionals such as subcontractors, vendors, etc.) to “friend” each other on social media sites?**

Employees and individuals engaged in professional working relationships such as, but not limited to, clients, contractors, subcontractors, and vendors are free to “friend” each other on social media sites. If you choose to do so, however, you will be subject to the guidelines and rules established under SCG's Social Media Code of Conduct. Because of the sensitive nature of the professional relationship, employees should try to avoid any interactions, posts, or communications that may create a conflict of interest, disclose confidential information, or may compromise SCG's ability to enforce our policies, especially policies against harassment and discrimination. Please feel free to contact the Human Resources Manager or Vice President of Administration if advice is needed before responding to these types of “friend” requests.

**11. What are the copyright guidelines for posting content that is not mine?**

You may not post content that is not yours without express written permission. Failure to secure appropriate permission for postings that include copyrighted information belonging to third parties (e.g., music, videos, or photographs) may result in costly liability. All such postings on SCG's social media pages, without the proper permission by the owner of such works, are prohibited. Please see the Social Media Code of Conduct.

**12. Can I use photos from SCG's libraries on my social media accounts?**

No, you may not use photos from SCG's libraries without express permission from SCG's Vice President of Administration or Human Resources Manager. Do not use SCG's stock photography (e.g., people, scenes) in a personal blog or on a third-party site. Please keep in mind that such images may be protected by copyright and there may be restrictions on how SCG is allowed to use them.

**13. Can I publish someone else's photograph on my personal social media account or personal blog?**

You should obtain written permission prior to publishing photographs or videos of others on your personal blog. This includes photos located in the SCG's Shared Drive or team building photos.

**14. Can I post an internal SCG video (both company and client material) to an external video-sharing site such as YouTube?**

No, videos produced for an internal SCG audience should not be published to external video-sharing sites. Keep in mind that internal videos are at a minimum classified as SCG Confidential and not encrypted, so there is a chance that an internal video could be inadvertently shared outside of SCG. As a result, please use caution when including confidential or proprietary information in an internal video. If the information is questionable, contact SCG's Vice President of Administration or Human Resources Manager.

**15. Can I endorse a skill, capabilities, or experience of an SCG employee on LinkedIn or another social media site?**

Yes, you can endorse skills, capabilities, or experience if you have first-hand knowledge of such skill, capability, or experience. However, you are not permitted to recommend a current or former SCG employee for employment. It is against SCG's policy for any employee to provide employment recommendations for any current or former SCG employee. Employees are encouraged to endorse, as appropriate, colleagues' skills and capabilities on LinkedIn as these endorsements showcase SCG's corporate capabilities.

**16. Are there training workshops available to learn how to improve my use of social media for work-related activities?**

SCG does not offer specific training for blogging or other social media uses. However, if you are interested in learning more, you and your supervisor may discuss what opportunities are available as part of your professional development plan. You also can talk to members of the Communications team who may be able to provide guidance in this area.

**17. Can I use my personal social media to connect with potential clients, speakers, and so on, as part of my work for SCG?**

You should use SCG resources, such as your SCG e-mail, to connect with potential sponsors, speakers, authors, and so on, as part of your work for SCG. Using SCG services adds credibility to your communications and avoids confusion about the nature and purpose of your communications. However, using your personal account may be the only way to reach out to certain people. In these cases, obtain approval from your supervisor before approaching someone and be clear when identifying who you are and who you are representing.

**18. Can I be subject to disciplinary action if I violate the Social Media Code of Conduct and other SCG guidelines and employment policies?**

Yes. If you are not sure about what is or is not appropriate, review the Social Media Code of Conduct, speak with your supervisor, and feel free to contact SCG's Vice President of Administration or Human Resources Manager.

## 19. What are examples of preferred vs. less desirable social media practices?

Below are examples that may help employees who use their social media accounts to do business. The appropriateness of a comment may depend on your role within SCG. Context is important for this determination. If you are ever unsure about the appropriateness of a comment or post, please check with the Communications team for guidance.

### A. Twitter or Facebook type posts

#### 1. Preferred: Reinforcing an idea from a client

Example: *“Check out the latest research on this blog post from an NIH author on the effects of the Zika Virus on pregnant women!”*

**Less desirable:** Opinions (positive or negative) on federal funding or related issues

Example: *“I totally agree with the NIH when it comes to the lack of funding they are receiving from the federal government.”*

#### 2. Preferred: Sharing client news

Example: *“Sharing this article from EPA regarding clean air resources. Couldn’t agree more.”*

**Less desirable:** General statements about client news

Example: *“Environmental protection is a tough profession.”*

Example: *“Governmental officials aren’t paid enough.”*

#### 3. More examples of less desirable posts:

**Less desirable:** *“The government hiring freeze is hurting our client’s ability to fund our projects.”*

**Less desirable:** *“We at SCG support current stem cell research.”* (This is not a stated SCG position and it makes an individual’s opinion seem like SCG’s opinion.)

**Less desirable:** *SCG won the most recent NIDDK proposal and will be formally announced by NIH next week.* (This is inappropriate if posted by someone before the decision is officially announced to the public.)

**Less desirable:** *“This NIH researcher’s work is outdated.”* (This questions the relevancy of our clients and their work.)

## 20. What are real-world examples of the consequences for employees who did not exercise appropriate behavior on social media?

### A. Disclosing confidential information about customers

A server from a major restaurant chain was fired after posting a photo on a social media site of a receipt from a customer who refused to tip. The photo shows a receipt for a \$34.93 bill with an 18 percent gratuity (\$6.29) automatically added underneath, which the customer had scribbled over with the phrase *“I give God 10%. Why do you get 18?”*

The server was terminated because the restaurant said her actions violated not only the company’s social media policy but also the privacy rights of the customer because the customer’s personal information was on the receipt.

**B. Disparaging remarks about management**

*"OMG I HATE MY JOB!! My boss is a total pervvy (sic) wanker always making me do sh\*t stuff just to piss me off!! WANKER!"*

The post was made in the context of deriding the employee's supervisor. The employee was terminated.

**C. Taking a cheap shot at constituents**

An employee who worked at the Connecticut-based Martin House, a nonprofit residential facility for the homeless with mental health issues, posted on Facebook that the residents were "spooky." The employee was terminated. What is the lesson here? Do not talk negatively about your constituents.

**D. Taking a cheap shot at your employer for something unrelated to work.**

A salesman for a Land Rover dealership let a 13-year-old sit in the driver's seat of a car and the child accidentally drove it into a pond. Another salesman at the dealership posted pictures of the accident with the following caption:

*"This is your car: This is your car on drugs."*

The dealership terminated the employee.

**E. Inappropriate racial comments**

After protests broke out after a grand jury did not indict a police officer, who shot an unarmed African American man, a health care employee in Louisville, Kentucky, posted the following remark urging authorities to shoot protesters:

*Real ammo not rubber!!!! The authorities have betrayed their law abiding, peaceful citizens by allowing this to happen. If you shot a few of them the others would scatter like the cockroaches they are!!!!"*

The health care provider terminated the employee.

Updated March 8, 2017