

# Evangel University Social Media Policy

---

Updated September 2012

Evangel University supports the use of social media to engage prospective students, current students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, donors and the community. The University recognizes the opportunity that social media provides, as well as the potential hazards. In order to effectively leverage social media, any faculty, staff, or student who has been authorized to create an official Evangel social media site should abide by the following policies.

The University Technology Team has oversight of the Evangel University Social Media Policy. Any questions about this policy should be directed to a member of the Technology Team.

## **Steps to creating an E.U. Social Media site:**

### **1. Choose an administrator**

When a department decides to develop a social media site to represent the University, an administrator should be chosen. It is best to not have a student as administrator (unless the page is for a student-run organization), however you may have a student work with you to update the site. A staff or faculty member should keep a record of log-in and password information and provide a copy to at least one other person in their office. The administrator is responsible for ensuring that the site remains compliant with the University Social Media Policy, FERPA, and the terms and conditions of the social media site chosen. Please send a copy of the url for your site and the name of your administrator to the University Technology Team and University Marketing Department.

### **2. Obtain approved logos and images for the avatar.**

If you have been authorized by your supervisor to create an official Evangel social media site or a video for posting in locations such as YouTube, please contact the director of Public Relations for an approved logo and other images and to ensure coordination with other Evangel sites and content. Logos that have not been approved by the director of Public Relations or the director of Enrollment Marketing should not be used. This is critical for promoting and maintaining Evangel's brand identity.

### **3. Create a timeline for evaluation**

Social media is not just an outlet to "push out" information (that is what the website does). Social media provides an outlet to engage your audience and create a conversation. Create a timeline to ensure that information is updated, new content is regularly added and that messages posted by users are responded to. This timeline should include times to evaluate the effectiveness of your social media strategy. *A social media site must never be created and then ignored.*

#### 4. An important note about Facebook

Be sure to set up your Facebook site as a *Page*, rather than a *Profile* or a *Group*. Facebook profiles are only for individual users, and groups provide very few options for successful viral marketing. Facebook also offers great support for page administrators.

### Creating Content

Creating effective social media content requires first identifying your intended audience and the goals you hope to accomplish. For example, a Facebook page for prospective students will look much different than one for alumni. Keep your audience in mind as you produce content.

**Be professional.** Remember that you are posting as a representative of Evangel University; therefore your views will be perceived as the views of the University. Keep this in mind as you choose content. Be sure that your social media reflects the values and mission of the University.

**Be accurate.** Make sure you have all the facts before you post. It is better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later. Cite and link to your sources whenever possible (this helps build community). If you make an error, correct it quickly and visibly. This will earn you respect in the online community.

**Be timely.** Social media is a conversation. Stay active in the conversation. Users have “liked” or become a fan of your page because they want the information you have to provide. Do not disappoint them. We recommend that you update your content no less than three times per week and that you respond to comments and private messages daily. *Your site will only be as good as your last post.*

**Be apolitical.** Politics, whether related to candidates or issues, has no place on your Evangel social media site. This includes changes to your photo or avatar in relation to political issues. You may offend a prospective student or donor and put the University’s tax-exempt status at risk. Even the appearance of loyalty to a particular political candidate or party can create issues for the University. Reserve politics for your personal social media accounts.

**Be careful.** Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a “private” social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate to write about certain kinds of material in your role as an Evangel employee, ask your supervisor before you post. Remember that FERPA applies to social media.

**Be engaging.** Post content that helps create a conversation. Contents, polls, questions, photos and videos can all help create a vibrant social media community. Ask questions and call for feedback. If a user engages you, always respond, even if it’s only a simple *thank you*. Interaction will be

the key to your success in the social world. (See Managing Negative Information section for more information)

## Managing Negative Comments

As a facilitator of social media, be aware that a vibrant social media community will eventually involve some negative posting. It is tempting to immediately remove negative content, but a well-handled negative post can actually serve to improve your image. Often, other users on your site will come to your defense and the positive comments will far outweigh the negative. Social media is about real people having real conversations, not presenting a manufactured image. Here are some guidelines for managing negative content.

1. Review your page daily so you can manage negative situations that may arise.
2. Answer in a timely manner. Often you can provide corrected information, offer to assist the poster with their problem, or otherwise manage the situation in a positive way. Determine if there is something you can do. (Use discretion with each situation. Sometimes this is best done publicly, while other times you may wish to contact the person through a private message.)
3. Always take the high road and handle yourself professionally. You are representing the character and values of Evangel University.
4. If the poster has used profanity or otherwise inappropriate language or content, or attacked an individual or group, you may immediately delete the comments and block the user from your page (this option is possible through most social media sites).
5. Learn to recognize *trolls* – those who are not really a part of your community who will post just to stir things up. You can usually confirm you have a troll by clicking on their profile to look at their record of posting. Trolls can be immediately blocked by most social media sites. Never engage a troll.
6. Contact the director of Public Relations for advice if you are unsure how to handle a specific situation.

## Linking to the Evangel University website

The Evangel University website supports the use of social media for campus departments and is eager to link to well-managed social media sites. Social media integration is a key element in social proof, which – in terms of digital marketing – refers to consumers being more confident about your message if they see that real people (not PR and marketing professionals) support it. This is why an effective social media strategy is so important to Evangel's future in the digital information age.

The quality of your site is paramount to whether or not social proof becomes negative or positive. For this reason, the Evangel University website will only link to social media sites that are in compliance with the Evangel University Social Media policy. Your site must conform to the policy and be updated for three consecutive months or it will be removed from the website.

These policies and procedures were inspired by the DePaul University, MidAmerica Nazarine University, University of Oregon and Vanderbilt University.