Social Media for Volunteers and Members

Policy

Social Media for Volunteers and Members Policy

Social media networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are more popular than ever. As an IET volunteer, you're in a unique position to use these networks to make a difference to the work we do. By connecting with each other and sharing positive messages about the IET and engineering and technology, you can help us reach a wider audience and take us several steps closer to changing perceptions and promoting engineering as a great career choice.

1.   Who does this policy apply to?

This policy relates to all volunteers and members of The IET who create or contribute to blogs, wiki's, social networks, apps, forums, virtual worlds or any other kind of social media. It should be applied to all use and forms of social media where there is a potential impact on the IET, whether work related or personal use, or during work hours or otherwise and regardless of where social media is accessed.

2.   Scope and purpose of this policy

This policy is intended to minimise the risks of social media that can impact on the wellbeing of volunteers and members and the reputation of the IET. It is written so that volunteers and members can enjoy the benefits of social networking, whilst understanding the standards of conduct expected by the IET.

2.1.   This policy relates to the procedures and operation of social media sites that are managed, on behalf of or associated with the IET, by volunteers and members.

2.2.   For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki's, websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube and Twitter.

2.3.   This policy is in addition to and complements any existing or future policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the internet. The IET EngX® platform is also covered by this social media policy.

2.4.   IET members and volunteers are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. If you publish or comment via social media and identify yourself as an IET member or volunteer, you are subject to this policy.

2.5.   Publication and commentary on social media carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary.

2.6.   Members and volunteers' messages may be displayed at IET venues, such as the video wall at Savoy Place.

2.7.   All uses of social media should follow the same standards as set out by the IET's Bye-laws, Code of Ethics, Rules of Conduct (https://www.theiet.org/about/governance/rules-of-conduct/) and Volunteer Code of Conduct (where applicable).

2.8.   Access to the IET's social media channels is provided by the IET subject to this policy. Breach of this policy may lead to action being taken under the IET's Disciplinary Regulations or Volunteer Code of Conduct.

2.9.   The IET operates its social media platforms from within the UK. If you are using IET social media platforms from outside the UK, other laws may apply. It is the responsibility of users in other countries to ensure they comply with local laws.

2.10. Any person suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with the IET's investigation, which may involve handing over login details and passwords. Any user of the IET's social media platforms may be required to remove postings which breach this policy.

2.11. The IET reserves the right to update this policy at any time. It is the responsibility of users to ensure that they are aware of the terms of this policy in force from time to time.

2.12. By using the IET's social media platforms, you are agreeing to be bound by this policy. Please read the other provisions of this policy carefully, including the section headed "Key principles when using social media".

3.   Other Policies, Procedures and/or Guidelines you need to read in relation to this Policy

On the IET website:
3.1.1. Disciplinary regulations
3.1.2. Member Rules of Conduct
3.1.3. Social Media Guidelines

3.2. In addition, volunteers should also read the following IET policies and guidance available in the IET EngX Volunteering community:

3.2.1. IT Acceptable Use Policy
3.2.2. Information Security Facts and Guidance
3.2.3. Password Guidance
3.2.4. Volunteer Code of Conduct

4.   Why use social media?

4.1   Over the last few years, the IET's presence on social media has grown rapidly and we have been able to connect with engineers and technicians from across the globe, promoting the important professions we represent.

4.2   Using social media effectively will help you to connect with other engineers and give an insight into the work of other members and volunteers.

4.3   It only takes a few minutes to set up an account. Below is some advice on starting a new social media account and how to make it a success.

4.4   Each of the platforms below will benefit you in different ways, but you may feel you don't need all of them. Twitter is best for immediate updates, Facebook is best for sharing video content and images, Engineering Communities are good for reaching other IET members and the engineering profession and LinkedIn Groups are best for discussions.

5.   Setting up social media

5.1. Get in touch with your IET community manager or young professional representative, when you own an existing, or are thinking of setting up a social media account.

5.2. Ensure that no other groups created for the same purpose currently exist.

5.3. If you are thinking about setting up a social media account, first ask yourself the following questions:
- What are my objectives for the new social media account?
- Do I have the time or resource to update my social media account at least four times a week in the long term?
- Could one of the existing IET accounts promote my messages?
- Does my social media account have anything new to say? Will my new account target different stakeholders/audiences to existing IET accounts?
- Does my Twitter account have a name that is clear and meaningful to followers outside the IET?

5.4. When you name your social media page, make sure that it's clear what your relationship is with the IET. For Twitter accounts please do not use 'IET' as part of the @handle as this causes confusion when others are searching for the official IET Twitter accounts. You can of course mention the IET in the description of your account page. Here you should clarify who you are, what you do and your role as a volunteer.

5.5. Volunteers and members should comment within their own area of expertise and on non-confidential activities of the IET.

5.6. If you need any assistance or advice with setting up social media accounts and their settings, please contact the IET's Communications Department (communications@theiet.org).

5.7. The correct IET logo must be used in connection with the IET brand.

5.8. If you wish to use the IET logo, please refer to our brand guidelines. If you have any enquiries regarding branding or logos, please email branding@theiet.org.

5.9. If you would like content posted on the main accounts, instead of setting up your own, please contact the IET's Communications Department (communications@theiet.org).

6. Key principles when using social media

6.1. Don't Tell Secrets - it's perfectly acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialogue with the community, but do not publish confidential information. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about current projects, future product launch dates, financial information, research or trade secrets. Equally, we should respect the wishes of our members and customers regarding the confidentiality of their information or current projects.

6.2. Be honest:
- Volunteers and members should never represent themselves or the IET in a false or misleading way.
- Do not blog or post anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you represent the IET.
- Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. But also, be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.

6.3.   Protect your own privacy - privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the IET website. Other privacy settings that might allow others to post information or see information that is personal should be set to limit access. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.

6.4.   Respect Copyright Laws and other intellectual property:
- It is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and other intellectual property, and fair use or fair dealing of copyrighted material owned by others, including IET copyrights and brands. You should not quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work and attribute such work to the original author/source when you do. It is good general practice to link to others' work rather than reproduce it.
- By submitting a contribution to an IET social media channel, you agree to grant the IET a non-exclusive perpetual licence to use that contribution for any purpose and to waive your moral rights in that contribution. The licence will be free of charge and capable of sub-licence. By submitting a contribution, you are warranting that it does not infringe any person's intellectual property rights and that you can grant us the licence referred to in this paragraph.
- Publishing conversations or content should comply with GDPR or equivalent legal laws governed in your country of origin.

6.5.   Respect your audience:
- The public in general, and the IET's employees, volunteers, members and customers, reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't say anything contradictory or in conflict with the IET. Don't be afraid to be yourself but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion. Use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of the IET. However, do not rely on this as some users will perceive your comments to be official IET views. Disclaimers can be used where appropriate (see section below on disclaimers).
- Members, customers, partners or suppliers should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. Do not identify a member, customer, partner or supplier by name without permission and do not discuss confidential details of a member or customer engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for a member or customer (e.g. Customer 123) so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the member or customer or make it easy for someone to identify them. Social media is not the place to "conduct business" with a member or customer.
- A publicity consent form / Quote consent form must be obtained prior to posting images or text which may be used on social media. If you are tagging or posting images or text to anyone under the age of 18 you must receive parental consent to do so.

6.6.   Controversial Issues:
- If you see misrepresentations made about the IET [or yourself] in the media, you may point that out. Do so with respect and backed up with facts. If you speak about others, make sure what you say is factual and that it does not disparage that party. Avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end and you may discredit the IET or yourself. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Consider carefully what the appropriate response should be before sending. It may be better not to respond to negative comments. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct.

- You should seek guidance with the IET communications team before participating in social media when the topic being discussed may be considered sensitive.
- Should you have any concerns about a comment on social media or need any guidance or advice, contact the IET'S Communications Department on communications@theiet.org.

6.7. Be the First to Respond to Your Own Mistakes - if you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), deal with it quickly and remove it immediately if necessary.

6.8. Think about Consequences **-** it's all about judgement: using social media to trash or embarrass the IET or any member, is dangerous, ill-advised and may lead to legal action. Social media platforms can be regarded as "publication" for the purposes of the laws around defamation, and both the person posting and the organisation on whose platform the comment was made can be regarded as "publishers".

7. Disclaimers and endorsements

7.1. Wherever practical, you should use a disclaimer saying that while you are a member of the IET, anything you publish is your personal opinion, and not necessarily the opinion of the IET.

7.2. But remember that these disclaimers are not necessarily legally binding, so avoid publishing anything that could be defamatory or represent an infringement of someone's privacy.

7.3. Do not provide recommendations or references for anyone else on social media in any way which suggests any recommendation or endorsement by the IET, unless you have been authorised by the IET to do so.

8. Social media networks' terms and conditions

8.1. The terms, conditions and policies that apply to specific social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, also apply to the IET profiles they host. You should familiarise yourself with those terms, conditions and policies before posting on those networks.

8.2. Where there is a conflict between the terms of this policy and the terms, conditions and policies of the relevant social media channel, the relevant social media channel's terms, conditions and policies will prevail.

8.3. You are responsible for the security settings of any social media sites you use and should ensure they are set to the appropriate level if you wish to limit who can see your information.

8.4. Protect social accounts:
- Social media accounts should be **protected by strong passwords** that are changed regularly and shared only with authorised users.
- Where available use two-factor authentication to add an additional layer of security to your account.
- Volunteers must not use a new piece of **software, app or service** with any of the IET social media accounts without receiving approval from the Communications Department.

8.5.   Avoid social scams:
- Volunteers should watch for **phishing attempts**, where scammers may attempt to use deception to obtain information relating to either the IET or its audiences.
- **Avoid clicking links** in posts, updates and direct messages that look suspicious. In particular, users should look out for URLs contained in generic or vague-sounding direct messages.

9.   What happens if you do not follow this Policy

9.1.   If a volunteer or member's use of social media is considered to be derogatory, discriminatory, bullying, threatening, defamatory, offensive, intimidating, harassing, creating legal liability for The IET, bringing the IET into disrepute or breaching any IET policy or procedure (this may include comments, videos, or photographs, which have been posted on social media sites about the IET or its staff) then the IET may take action under its disciplinary procedure or Volunteer Code of Conduct.

9.2.   A volunteer or member should not engage in illegal activity through social media or engage in any activity that promotes terrorism. The very fact of possessing or disseminating terrorist material may be sufficient to warrant an investigation by the police and a volunteer or member would be put in the position of having to advance a credible defence.

9.3.   The IETs response to any misuse of social media in a personal capacity will be reasonable and proportionate to the perceived offence; the nature of the postings/comments made and the impact or potential impact on the IET.

9.4.   Social networking sites may be referred to when investigating possible misconduct/gross misconduct.

9.5.   The IET may require volunteers or members to remove social media postings/accounts which are deemed to constitute a breach of these standards and failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

10.   Queries and Comments

If you have any queries regarding how this Policy works in practice, or comments or suggestions as to how it could be improved, please contact Simon Timmis Head of Communications via communications@theiet.org.

Appendix

Control Sheet

Social Media for Volunteers and Members Policy

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Review/change history

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