U.S.VETS Social Media Policy
Revised: Nov. 17, 2015

INTRODUCTION

U.S.VETS recognizes that in the 21st century, Social Networking is a matter of course in day-to-day life for the majority of the world’s population. Social media includes personal websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, reddit, chat, and other platforms that keep people interconnected through computers, tablets, phones, apps and other technology.

The organization acknowledges that employees may well check social media during the course of their work day, in a variety of mediums, for a variety of reasons. If posting on social media is a part of the designated duties of an employee’s job (if he or she is a social media manager, or serves this role in development for the organization), he or she may stay logged in to these platforms from open to close of business.

We recognize that, in some cases, the widespread use of social media by employees can actually help U.S.VETS get the word out about events, promotions, campaigns and other important public relations and marketing efforts. If U.S.VETS, for instance, gets positive news exposure and employees share the article or video or radio clip with their friends and colleagues, this behooves everyone.

During U.S.VETS events, at all sites, employees will be encouraged to share what’s going on, for instance under a company-designated event hashtag.

What follows are some basic recommendations for utilizing social platforms, in the midst of this ever-changing media landscape. We would like to emphasize that this is not static procedure, but simply a best-practices guide to ensure the greatest success. As the organization continues to grow in its social media usage, and as we learn what works and what doesn’t, this document is liable to change.
2015 U.S.VETS Employee Guidelines for Social Media Use, Personal and Professional

U.S.VETS respects the right of our employees to maintain a blog or post a comment on social networking sites. However, U.S.VETS is also committed to ensuring that the use of social media serves the needs of our business by maintaining U.S.VETS’ identity, integrity and reputation.

Please make sure that you are aware of your obligations in this regard. They are as follows:

1. U.S.VETS strongly recommends that employees use the utmost caution that social media time not interfere with productivity on the job. If a supervisor believes that employee is too distracted by social media that does not pertain to official duties, this is a matter to be taken up directly between supervisor and employee.

2. U.S.VETS requires that employees use the same standards of conduct to their behavior and comportment online as they would to in-person interactions. Inappropriate, predatory behavior online will not be tolerated, and could result in disciplinary action.

Further, policies prohibiting violence as well as discrimination, retaliation, and/or harassment based on age, race, sex, religion, national origin/ancestry, and (other protected categories, if any) apply equally to employee comments concerning U.S.VETS and its employees on social networking sites, even if done on nonworking time. Employees are encouraged to review those sections of the Handbook for further guidance.

3. U.S.VETS urges employees to function under these key assumptions around social media: Everything is public, and everything is permanent. Even if someone deletes a tweet, there’s a chance someone else took a screenshot of it. Even if someone has set strict privacy settings on Facebook, that doesn’t ensure that the wrong person won’t see it through back channels.

   a. There’s a reason why “online reputation management” is a growing field. Social media is powerful. People can lose jobs over a misguided post into the ether (read about Justine Sacco), and organizations’ reputations can be pulled through the mire. Don’t avoid social media, but simply err on the side of caution.

   b. Pause before you post and use common sense about content. If you have any doubts or misgivings about a post, wait and consult someone else in the office, first and foremost a social media manager.

   c. Above all else, employees should respect clients’ privacy and dignity when it comes to social media.

4. Establishing a chain of command: Any articles or posts concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs, or an issue that would require taking a political stance, should not be posted by any U.S.VETS identity on social media until it has received approval from National.

   a. Manager of Public Relations for the National Office will oversee the organization’s overall social media strategy and efforts, reporting to the heads of Development.
b. Each U.S.VETS site will have a designated social media manager. This role will be assumed by either the Executive Director or the Development & Activities Coordinator, and will entail keeping track of all social media efforts going on for the site.

c. Each U.S.VETS location will let National know who is managing social media for the site, and collaborate with National on social media campaigns and other larger organizational efforts.

5. Social media managers should try to make sure that posts are as accurate as possible and from reliable sources. Respect copyright/permissions for material, including photos.

6. If an employee identifies himself or herself as an employee of U.S.VETS on Twitter or any other profile that is free and open for anyone in the public to see, the communication must include a disclaimer that the views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of U.S.VETS. This can be worded in whichever manner the employee chooses but must clearly convey a separation between organizational stance and employee’s individual thoughts and politics.

7. All rules regarding confidential business information apply in full to blogs and social networking sites.

8. Employees are prohibited from misappropriating or using without permission U.S.VETS’ corporate logo and U.S.VETS intellectual property on any social networking site or other online forum. Employees are reminded that there are civil and criminal penalties for posting copyrighted material without authorization.

Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. However, before any disciplinary action is taken, an employee’s manager must discuss in a clear way concerns around the employee’s social media usage, and must be able to prove that the employee has been informed, and has understood, which policies they may be in violation of.

U.S.VETS reserves the rights to its own official Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networking sites and the content contained there. If you have any questions at all regarding this policy, please contact Human Resources.