

Your First Social Media Response Policy

Is your organization or team just starting out on social media? Spending time now planning your social media response policy can save you considerable time and resources later.

But first, consider the purpose of social media in your organization; this will help guide the rest of your response policy.

Responsiveness	Purpose	Responses	Resources/Time
Lower	One-way, safety-sensitive information stream	Respond less; standardize responses for efficiency	Lower
↑ ↓	↑ ↓
Higher	Two-way dialogue and information sharing	Respond more frequently; use more personalized responses	Higher

1. Roles

Identify ahead of time who monitors which channels, how frequently they should monitor, and whether they are empowered to respond. For each person:

Employee	Which channel(s)?	Monitoring frequency	Can respond?
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

... and so on.

2. Social media community policy

Internally, decide ahead of time when the following actions are appropriate (if ever).

Action	As Needed	Never	Case-by-Case
Responding to query publicly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Directly contacting commenter for more details	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deleting or hiding offensive comments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Banning or blocking a commenter from a channel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

...and so on. Set expectations upfront for visitors of your social media channels by stating ahead of time what specific types of comments and behaviors will result in deleted comments and profile blocks.

3. Canned responses/actions

If you intend to respond on one or more of your social media channels, creating pre-written responses to common types of posts can save time drafting them each time. Having publicly visible community guidelines ahead of time can prepare posters for warnings and blocks.

You can also determine the default action for certain types of posts, such as hiding them or asking the poster to take the conversation outside of the channel.

Examples of canned responses

Type of common post	Example response (if not hiding/blocking)
Someone generally praises your organization or says thank you for providing information.	<i>Thank you for your feedback! We will forward your comment to our internal team.</i>
Someone asks a safety sensitive question but does not provide sufficient detail in the post.	<i>Thank you for your question. Could you please direct message us or email us at [email address] to provide additional details?</i>
Someone posts a picture about a safety-sensitive situation or event.	<i>Thank you for your submission. Please contact us at [email address] if you would be willing to provide us more information.</i>
Someone has a general complaint for your organization.	<i>Thank you for your feedback. If you would be comfortable being contacted directly, please direct message us or email us at [email address].</i>
Someone posts something completely off-topic on your channel.	<i>We appreciate your interest in our channel. However, please remain on-topic, or we will have to ask you to discontinue using our channel.</i>
Someone posts a valid question but uses offensive or inflammatory language in the post.	<i>Thank you for your question. To best help you in the future, we ask that you remain civil in your posts on our channel. Thank you.</i>

4. Subject matter experts/teams and approvals

In larger organizations, some teams or individuals are responsible for all communications about a particular topic. There may also be protocols for when they need to be alerted.

Identifying these topics, individuals/teams and appropriate alerting timeframes ahead of time can significantly reduce the risk of providing your audience with incorrect information.

Topic	Individual(s) or Team(s)	Alert Timeframe

... and so on.

Getting additional assistance

For more help on creating your first social media response policy and to see examples of non-profit social media policies, check out Idealware's guide at idealware.org/smpolicy.

I hope this information has been useful. If you have any feedback for me or have a specific question about something in this document, please email me at thomas.bukowski@nsc.org.

-Thomas Bukowski, Associate Digital Content Producer on the *MyCarDoesWhat.org* campaign

