A Guide to Best Practices

- What follows is a compilation of advice, suggestions and practical guidelines for employees and students at Boise State University who want to create an official social network on behalf of a university department, group or affiliate.

- The content was created by the Social Marketing Subcommittee of the Marketing Minds group with input from the General Counsel's Office.

- Information, data and recommendations were compiled between January 2010 and January 2011, then revised 2012 from various sources and surveys and by utilizing and testing many communication tools and styles while engaging in social networking communities.

- This is not meant to be a complete or exhaustive guide but a start to help strengthen your social networking efforts at Boise State University.

- This guide does not include AP style or formatting direction – please refer to the Boise State Style Guide.
Getting Started – Three Things to Ask

1. Is there a need?

Social networking resonates with some audiences and age groups better than others.

Ensure there is enough information coming from your area or department to provide regular updates and engaging dialogue – infrequent communication will not sustain interest in a social network.
Getting Started – Three Things to Ask

2. Will your community be responsive?

More than 66% of adults are connected to one or more social media platforms.

College students, or those who have completed some college, represent the majority on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Digg and Reddit.

Among Facebook users, 57% have completed some college, 24% have earned a bachelor’s or master’s degree.

People 45 and older make up 46% of Facebook users.

About 57% of Facebook and 59% of Twitter users are women.

Pinterest has the heaviest gender imbalance, 82% of users are women.

71% of Google+ users are men, and about 50% of Google+ users are 24 or younger.

LinkedIn reports an even ratio of men and women – 49% over age 45 – who use the site to connect with other business professionals.

All above data compiled from Mashable.com, http://mashable.com/2012/03/09/social-media-demographics/
Getting Started – Three Things to Ask

3. Who is in charge of content and updates?

Maintaining a social network as part of a marketing mix requires an estimated 1-10 hours per week*

Identify who is in charge of updating the network and recognize that a consistent, respectful ‘voice’ is important

Ideally, more than one employee should have full access as an administrator to any social network affiliated with the university

*The Use of Social Media in Higher Ed for Marketing and Communications: A Guide for Professionals in Higher Ed · Rachel Reuben
Create an Official Email Address

- The email address used to get the social network operational should be a generic Boise State University address (which the OIT Help Desk can create), rather than someone's personal university email account.

  - This prevents the situation where the originating employee or student leaves, and the university or group has no way of accessing or maintaining the network.

  - The exception is Boise State Google+ pages, which must be linked with a personal Boise State email account.

  - Alumni groups recognized by the Boise State Alumni Association may establish a network using a personal, non-Boise State email address.
Do you **REALLY** need the logo? Yes

- The social network may use the Boise State logo, but must adhere to the established graphic identify standards for its use:
  - [http://www.boisestate.edu/printing/PDFs/logostyleguide.pdf](http://www.boisestate.edu/printing/PDFs/logostyleguide.pdf)

- Some of the most active social networks at Boise State (or anywhere) do not use a static logo as a profile image, instead a photo displays the people or an activity that typifies the group and the logo is used within the photo
Include a Web Link

- On the information tab or in a prominent place, make it clear that the site is an ‘official’ network for the Boise State department or group you are representing.

- Provide a link to the web page that supports or promotes the area and include a link to Boise State’s homepage:

  - [www.boisestate.edu](http://www.boisestate.edu)
Next Step

- Once the social network site is established, send the link to communications@boisestate.edu so it can be added to the “B Social,” web-based, social networking directory for Boise State University.
  
  - The Office of Communications and Marketing will confirm the network’s affiliation with the university, then add it to the directory.
  
  - This helps to promote the network, leverage the Boise State brand and add interest in your online social community.
Professionalism

- Social media networks should not be used by university employees to endorse private businesses, or for personal financial gain.
- State laws and university policies governing ethical conduct and conflicts of interest are applicable to social media sites.
Growing and Maintaining Your Network

- Add value for the community, give them a reason to join the network and ‘like’ your page, follow your boards, repin your photos or share your updates
- Create an inviting, exclusive dialogue
- Ask questions to prompt a response, invite the community to share an experience or opinion
- Photos and brief videos have impact, but keep in mind you need to have a student’s permission before posting their photo to a public network
- When appropriate, offer meaningful incentives to your audience
Growing and Maintaining Your Network

- Any and all threats to campus safety or security should be taken seriously – notify university security and police services at 426-6911
- Monitor comments and questions and reply to all inquiries for more information, as appropriate
- Allow the community to express itself, but monitor comments for profanity or personal attacks and remove such posts
  - Posts by third-party vendors attempting to sell a product or service should be removed
  - Watch for opportunities to cross-promote and link to other Boise State interests and social networks
- Keep track of the community's growth
- Benchmark numbers from launch and note discussions that prompt a response
- Ask for feedback, opinions and create a conversation with the community
Privacy and Disclaimer

- You are responsible for what you post
- Any information that should not be shared with a third party under existing policy should not be disclosed on a social networking site
- It is critical that employees contributing content to Boise State social networks adhere to all policies and laws governing privacy of information and records, whether concerning students, employees, protected health information, trade secrets, or otherwise
Privacy and Disclaimer

- Establish for the online community that the social network is a public page and that you reserve the right to delete content

- Suggested disclaimer text:

  This network is a public page. Please do not post confidential material or photos. By adding content to this network you agree to be solely responsible for the information you contribute and release Boise State University from any liability related to your use. We reserve the right to remove content.
Opinions

- Public criticism of the university or its officials by university employees should be avoided on these social networking sites.
- This does not mean that legitimate concerns cannot or should not be discussed; however, recent Supreme Court authority has made clear that First Amendment protections do not guarantee the right of public employees to publicly criticize their employers in the course of their employment.
Opinions

- Social networking sites should not be used by university departments to endorse particular political candidates or electoral causes
Final Thoughts

- When using a social network for official Boise State University business, maintain professionalism at all times and limit the communication and postings on the site to official business or university activities only.

- Enjoy your network, keep the conversation going, listen to your community and have fun!
Questions?

- If you have questions or concerns regarding the development and maintenance of your network, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing

  communications@boisestate.edu or 426-1577