Social Networking
A guide to best practices at Boise State University
by Marketing Minds 2011
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 guide was created by the Social Marketing Subcommittee of the Marketing Minds group, with input from the General Counsel's Office and Marketing Minds members.

- Information, data and recommendations were compiled between January 2010 and January 2011 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; rather it is a tool to help strengthen your social networking efforts at Boise State.
Getting Started – A Few Things to Ask

1. Is there a need and what is your purpose?

A national survey (Harris Poll, 2010) reveals almost 9 in 10 online Americans (87%) use social media

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

People network around a given topic or need – “If you build it, they will come,” doesn’t always apply

Know your audience and purpose, and provide information and/or services

Understand that people live in different places on social networks - some people like Facebook, others will only use Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
Getting Started – A Few Things to Ask

2. Will your community be responsive?

Be certain that having an online social network will matter to your most important audience or stakeholders.

Three in five 18-34 year olds (59%) say they prefer to interact with acquaintances using social media rather than face to face, compared to 38% of those 45-54 years old and 25% of those 55 and older.*

For business purposes, only one in five social media users (19%) say they feel “very connected” or “connected” to business associates through social media use.*

Ensure that there is enough information to provide regular updates and engaging dialogue with your community - infrequent communication will diminish interest in your network.

Provide updates with consistency suitable to the culture of the network.

*2010 Harris Interactive poll of 2,258 adults
Getting Started – A Few 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

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

- The e-mail 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 e-mail 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.
Make it “‘Official’”

- Make it clear that the social network is affiliated with Boise State and that it represents an official page for the university.
- Incorporate the Boise State logo with your profile image but adhere to the established graphic identify standards for logo use:
  - [http://www.boisestate.edu/printing/PDFs/logostyleguide.pdf](http://www.boisestate.edu/printing/PDFs/logostyleguide.pdf)
- Note: Normal rules governing the use of third party copyrights and trademarks apply to social networks - questions regarding fair or appropriate use of third party intellectual property may be addressed to the Office of General Counsel at 426-1203.
Include a Web Link to BoiseState.edu

- Provide a link to the web page that supports or promotes your area or department and include a link to Boise State’s homepage:
  - 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 “B Social,” the 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 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.
- Comply with university policy for fundraising and e-commerce activities.
Engage Your Community

- A social network is a social community, not a brochure
- Social networks require human energy and interest
- Engage people with passion to maintain your network
- A good network manager will ask probing questions and allow others to join the conversation
Growing and Maintaining Your Network

- Add value for the community by giving people a reason to join the network.
- Avoid pleading messages such as “we want more followers” or “help us reach 10,000 today.”
- Ask questions to prompt a response, invite the community to share an experience or express an opinion.
- Photos and brief videos have impact, but you must have permission before posting a student’s photo to a public network.
Growing and Maintaining Your Network

- Watch for opportunities to cross-promote and link to other Boise State interests and social networks.
- Monitor comments and questions and reply to all inquiries for more information, as appropriate.
- Allow the community to express itself, but monitor for profanity, threats or personal attacks.
- Keep track of the community’s growth, use the analytic tools made available by the network, watch for trends and other insights in the data.
- Benchmark numbers from launch and note discussions and activities that prompt a response.
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 but that you reserve the right to delete content

- Suggested disclaimer text:

  This network is a page fully accessible by the public. Please do not post confidential material, photos or content that violates someone else's rights and/or the law. 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 at our sole discretion. This page is not a public forum for general discussion but is an opportunity for you to communicate with us and to provide relevant feedback on our services and specific topics as may be posted.
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
- Social networks are public spaces, often monitored by the media
- Anything you post could potentially be quoted and attributed to your group and the university
Final Thoughts

- Some of the attractions of social networking sites are their casual, social nature and dialogue that emerges.
- This can blur the lines between professional and social interactions.
- When using a social network for official Boise State University business, maintain professionalism at all times.
- 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/or maintenance of your network, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing
  - communications@boisestate.edu or 426-1578

- GO BRONCOS!