

6 Tips for Social Media Interaction and Moderation

An October 2008 Cone Research Study stated that approximately 60% of Americans use social media. 85% of these users agree that companies should be present and interact with consumers through social media. So, it's simple - Social Media is a good idea if you're not already participating. Here is the challenging question: How do you protect your company's image while engaging in the social media process? Social media tools are great ways to engage audiences and boost page traffic, but moderation needs to be part of the strategy from the very start.

Here are 6 tips for social media interaction and moderation:

- 1. Know your target audience**

Depending on who you're trying to reach, some users may think that moderation will censor their comments. If the topics related to your company or industry are particularly controversial, this is an important consideration to plan for.

- 2. Check moderation settings**

Every social network is different. Make sure to check how much control you can have over what users post or exactly what they're allowed to post.

- 3. Post your usage policy**

Tell your users the purpose of the page, profile or group. For example: "This page is meant to provide product and information updates for the XYZ Company. Any posts that deter from this topic will be removed."

- 4. Use filters and tools**

Profanity filters are a starting point because those lists of keywords can trigger a block to the person posting that forces them to think again about what they are writing. Smart content tools can also flag up the posts that have been edited after profanity checks as this can help moderators focus their attention.

- 5. Keep posts on topic**

Sometimes you just need to stimulate conversation. You have to consider what's ethical in terms of building your online community. However, if discussion isn't in line with audience expectations, the health of the community weakens and a negative effect on traffic appears.

- 6. Have a plan of action**

If you receive negative comments, make sure you have a process and stay consistent with your communication. Whether this means using the same strategy to approach the situation, or a custom message, you should expect that you will receive these comments. For example, if a user types "I hate Starbucks" on the Starbucks Facebook fan page, there are a few ways to go about responding. Try engaging the user by asking a question, such as, "What's your favorite type of coffee?" In most cases, you're better off if you address it in a conversational manner, rather than answering defensively.