

## Economic Development 101

### Social Media Strategy for Economic Development Organization

Most economic development organizations develop a strategic plan to ensure they have the right strategies and programs in place. Economic development is beginning to understand the potential that social networking, when used properly, can be an effective tool and organizations are starting to add in social media to their strategy. Just adding it in will not make it effective and a separate policy on what social networking means for your organization needs to be developed. Here are some tips on what should be covered in your social networking policy.

**Clearly state your organization's philosophy** – Before you can develop a policy you need to define your organization's overall attitude toward social media. Is it to make your organization an expert in your field or is it to brand your community? Is it more informal and personal? Your use of tools will depend on your philosophy. For example, [LinkedIn](#) is more business – [Facebook](#) is more personal – [Twitter](#) can go either way.

**Define "social networking" or "social media"** – This may seem pretty obvious but what is social media to your organization? Is it blogging, video sharing, photosharing, interactive or one way? Once defined, you can begin to choose the sites that fit your definition.

**Identify who is the organization or community** – In other words, is the organization's CEO going to be the social networker or is the organization/community itself the one that should be recognized? For example, your Twitter or LinkedIn account, who's name should be profiled – Joe CEO or YourCommunity?

**Terms of Service** – most sites require that users agree to their Terms of Service. Your policy should include direction for ensuring the Terms of Service are read, known and complied with. Don't just click "I accept" without knowing what your organization is agreeing to.

**Recommending or inviting followers/friends/contacts** – Some sites provide the opportunity for members to recommend or invite friends/associates, etc. Have a clear understanding of how these referrals are to be done.

**Careful what you say** – adhere to the golden rule "do unto others as you would have done unto you" or as I tell my kids "if you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all". The last thing you want to do is insult a competing community or client. Worse yet, you don't want a libel suit thrown at you. Also be careful of plagiarism and copyright issues.



**Confidential information** – You may already have a policy in place for how your organization’s confidential information is disseminated. If so, your social media policy needs to repeat those policies and provide specific examples on how they relate to social networking sites.

**Time is money** – social networking sites can be excellent tools for developing relationships, learning new tools or best practices but be aware of the time spent on social media activities. Your policy should be clear on the time expectations.

**Results** – Hand in hand with time expectations is the ROI. How much are you putting in and what are you getting out? Just like economic development, social media is a not a quick turn around. You may have to try a variety of different social media sites and methods to see what will be right for your community or organization. Define what your results will look like – increased number of visitors to website, number of Twitter followers, contacts turned into real opportunities. Just as you should have specific performance measures for your other economic development strategies, you need to measure social media.

