

Guidelines for Personal Use of Social Media

A employee's online presence always reflects their faith and organization of employment. Therefore, the Social Media + Big Data department of the North American Division recommends the following social media guidelines. The absence of, or lack of explicit reference to a specific site or platform does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. Where no guideline exists, employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible.

- **Disclose your affiliation:** Employees are allowed to associate themselves with their organization when posting, but they must clearly brand their posts as personal and purely their own opinions. This applies to directors and above. Employees below the director level should generally avoid associating their personal social media with their ministry or department.
- **Disclaimers:** Personal blogs/profiles should have clear disclaimers that the views expressed by the author are the author's alone and do not represent the views of the employer. However, including a disclaimer does not permit the violation of other social media guidelines and policies.
- **Share your story:** Be human, have fun, exchange ideas, and connect with others. Your life and work can be a powerful witness of what God is accomplishing through you.
- **Protect yourself and loved ones:** Be careful about what personal information you share online, and regularly check your privacy settings. Never publicly share your home address, social security numbers, login credentials to ANY account (especially passwords), credit card information, security question answers, complete birth date, etc. Only friend people who you actually know. Follow federal requirements such as the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) (HIPAA) of 1996 and the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA).
- **Act responsibly and ethically:** Be honest, be professional, and be kind. Always verify questionable content with credible sources before sharing information and remember to honor others' privacy. Respect the intellectual property rights of others and always give credit where credit is due. Do not publish, post, or release information that is considered confidential, this includes private medical information. Remember, you can be held personally liable for content you publish online. Make corrections to mistakes quickly and apologize.
- **Represent the church's values:** Social media can be a powerful witnessing tool; remember that your posts can have a greater impact and reach than you realize. **We recognize and value diversity of opinion within our church community, but as an employee, your followers may confuse your opinion with the official position of the church. While this is most likely not your intention, please prevent confusion by avoiding posts that conflict with your organization's official positions on matters and observe principles of impartiality.**
- **Images and language:** Do not post sexually explicit images of yourself or others. Do not use insulting, demeaning, vulgar, prejudice, racist, threatening, or violent language and profanities. Avoid gossip, mean-spirited comments, mocking or shaming others, bullying, making false statements against others, and any other behavior that causes emotional harm or distress.

- **Avoid conflict:** Avoid publicly discussing controversial topics and politics where emotions can run high and can result in inflammatory or inappropriate discussions. Take it offline, have a private discussion, or simply do not respond. Always show respect for others' opinions. If dealing with a complex or emotional issue is necessary, frame responses and posts in a positive way that seeks to improve understanding and unity.
- **Protect your work family:** Everyone has good and bad days. Do not air work grievances on social media or use your channels as a sounding board for the problems you see in the church. Others may be negatively impacted and turn away from the church. You could also embarrass yourself or endanger your job. The Adventist community is very closely connected online so your posts may be widely seen. It is always best to seek counsel offline and/or direct your concerns to HR. Focus on the positive and, like any family, resolve issues privately.
- **Special note regarding politics:** The North American Division does not officially endorse any candidate or political party. Voting choices are strictly up to the individual. Church leaders and employees should not inadvertently or intentionally use their influence to advocate for their political preferences. Employees of the church should maintain principals of impartiality and avoid promoting their political viewpoints on any of their social media profiles. Let us reflect Christ and His love at all times—avoiding public political discussions and conflict.
- **Use of work accounts:** Refrain from using your organization's brand accounts for outside business ventures, personal solicitations or political campaigns and causes.
- **Recommendations or referrals:** Avoid writing any recommendations or referrals for friends/associates that may appear as an endorsement from the North American Division or its entities.
- **Keep us informed:** Social media is dynamic and constantly active. If you see something that should be addressed related to the social media activity of or about our organization and mission, let us know by contacting socialmedia@nadadventist.org.
- **Remove old posts or accounts that may reflect poorly on you or no longer represent your beliefs.** Old posts or accounts that misrepresent who we are now, may detract from our ability to be effective witnesses, especially as many people seek to find fault with us. We are all growing in our faith and developing our character. It's a good idea to clean up old posts or profiles that are no longer relevant to who we are.
- **Privacy:** Employees should have no expectation of privacy regarding content shared on social media networks, even "private" profiles. Social media is never private, regardless of privacy settings. The content you create is public information and can be viewed or shared globally.
- **Create balance:** Social media can be addictive; know when to turn it off. It is healthy to take breaks from social media. Don't let social media interfere with your job performance and work commitments or negatively impact your personal life. Tune out roughly two hours before bedtime for optimal sleep, don't check social media while driving or walking, and maintain good posture.
- **In summary: If you are unsure whether or not to share something online, err on the safe side and simply don't post it. Follow these policies and be a living testimony to the church's values and philosophies. We all share the same goal.**

- **In case you are forgetful or ignore the guidelines above, here's what could happen.**
You could:
 - Inhibit the ability of the church to accomplish its mission
 - Turn someone away from the church
 - Get your organization in legal trouble
 - Lose your job
- **Note to employers:** Regarding an employee's personal life and sharing on their social media profiles, 'offenses' must be evaluated on whether the content or behavior is in clear violation of church doctrine, not individual preferences or interpretation. Behavior on social media prior to conversion or recommitment should not be used against an employee who is now a member of the church in good standing. It's important to consider that personal social media often captures snapshots at different points of an individual's spiritual journey. Given the gospel of grace, these snapshots should not be held against a person years after conversion and seasons of dedicated service.
- **We recommend that all church employees and leaders conduct a personal social media audit once a year.** For guidance, please review the following questions: sdadata.blog/personalSMaudit

Any employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Contact Us: We're Here to Help!

This is a living document and will be regularly updated as changes are needed. For more information and resources visit SDAdata.org or follow @DigiEvangelism on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/DigiEvangelism), [Facebook](https://facebook.com/DigiEvangelism), [Instagram](https://instagram.com/DigiEvangelism) and [YouTube](https://youtube.com/DigiEvangelism). You can also sign up to [receive our eNewsletter](#).

Have questions? Please do not hesitate to contact our team.

Paul Hopkins, *Director of Social Media + Big Data*
paulhopkins@nadadventist.org

Dan Weber, *Director of Communications*
danweber@nadadventist.org

Jamie Schneider, *Digital Strategist*
jamieschneider@nadadventist.org