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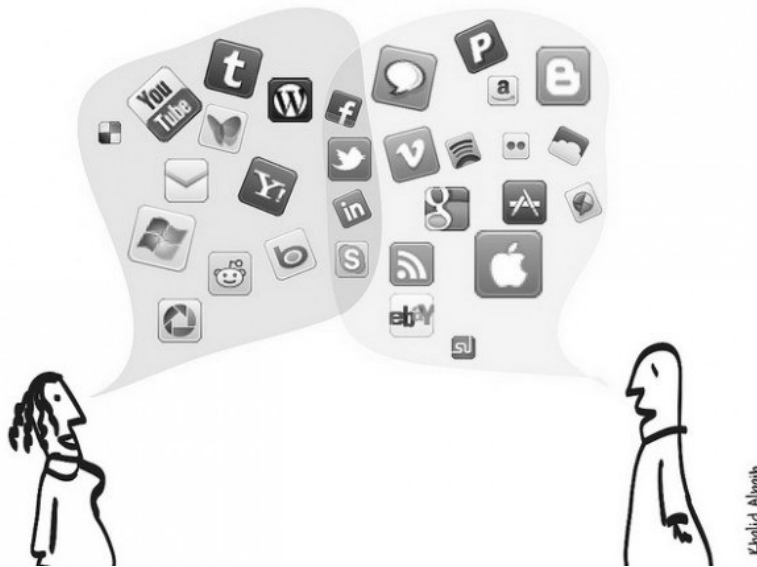
8

How-To Create a Social Media Policy for Your Church

Posted By Eric Dye on August 19, 2011

When I raised the question earlier this month as to whether or not you should be Facebook friends with your pastor, the overall consensus was that a Church (or organization) should certainly consider a social media policy.

There are two different approaches you can take.

1. Create a Social Media Policy
2. Create Social Media Guidelines

Basically, a policy is something you require staff members to read, sign and adhere to. Guidelines are simple rules that everyone is ask to follow.

Essentially they are the same, except your policy can have more teeth (cause for termination, probation, etc …).

Here is a great tool for creating a social media policy and a basic social media guideline to help you craft and deploy your own!

How-To Create a Social Media Policy

PolicyTool for Social Media is an excellent resource.

Via their website, PolicyTool guides you through 11 questions:

1. Enter your organizations name.
2. Enter what your organization is commonly know as.
3. Who can use social media in your company? Everybody or Specific individuals?
4. Must employees obtain permission to use social media?
5. May employee login ID's or user names include the organization's name without approval?
6. Are there well know employees who must follow these rules, even for personal social media?
7. Are there any ethical standards that your employees must normally follow for publishing or commentary?
8. Is there internal assistance in setting up social media accounts and settings?
9. Must the user's social media profiles be consistent with the organizations website or publications?
10. Must official photos be used for profile photos?
11. Should the employee include a disclaimer stating that they are not speaking on behalf of the organizaion?
12. Add tips for successful use of social media that are helpful, but not strictly speaking required for this policy.

As you can see, this is very exhaustive!

After you create your policy, you can deploy it as you see fit. Set-up a form that staff must sign and date, create an online form, or integrate it however you see fit.

Check-out PolicyTool. It's free and easy to use!

[HT: Alexandra]

How-To Create Social Media Guidelines

Take a look at these guidelines. It should certainly get you moving in the right direction.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth:

Social Networking Sites-Relationships

1. Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth.
2. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with their community of faith, other adult leaders must have full access to all aspects of that adult's profile and correspondence.
3. Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to "friend" an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult's personal profile account. The purpose of these two separate

accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.

4. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the (Person In Authority Here). If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with (Person In Authority Here) and/or police. The (Person In Authority Here) Phone is (PHONE Number Here).

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults:

Social Networking Sites-Relationship

1. Ministers are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
2. Ministers who want to connect via a social networking website with church members are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all congregation members may join. (ie Church Fan Page or Facebook Group) The purpose of having a personal profile is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with church members and real family, friends and colleagues.
3. Ministers should consider the impact of declining a "friend" request from church members. These encounters may create a tension in "real world" relationships. Ministers can direct "friend" requests from church members to the church's group page. (Please refer to the tutorial on how to send church members to your fan page)
4. Minister's who work directly with youth are encouraged to establish church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members. (ie church email)
5. When a Minister leaves his ministry at the church, it is recommended the minister remove church members as "friends" or contacts in all forms of digital communications.

[Guidelines via Get Your Church Fan Page]

Ready?

If you have any helpful resources, links, or suggestions, please drop us a link in the comments!

Are you ready to create and deploy a social media policy or set of social media guidelines for your Church or organization?

[Image via Khalid Albaih]

About Eric Dye: I believe in media that matters. I have produced radio for over 15 years, including Promise Keepers Radio Highlights, Christianbook.com & Jay Sekulow LIVE! I've also been brewing websites for over 10 years. My wife and I, with our four kids, live in Italy, where we are missionary digital tentmakers and aspiring tentbloggers who passionately want to reach the lost in Italy.

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