

Social Media Policy

Purpose

This policy is intended to foster positive and productive engagement between State Bar members, the organization, and the public.

Scope

The vast majority of adults today use at least one social media platform, often checking it daily or even multiple times per day. This makes social media a crucial tool for our association to interact with its members and the public and facilitate member-to-member dialog. Social networks (such as, but not limited to, social media, blogging, online communities, and other networking sites offer opportunities for outreach, information sharing, and interaction.

The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the use of these communication technologies to increase member engagement, build community, and improve access to knowledge, resulting in greater value to our members.

Policy Applicability

The following social media policy applies to all State Bar of Wisconsin volunteers, divisions, sections, and committee members and related programs or groups (“Entities”) wishing to use the State Bar’s name, brand or graphic identity (logo) in conjunction with the creation or maintenance of a social media presence that identifies the entity as being sponsored by or affiliated with the State Bar.

Administering a Social Media Site

Each State Bar Entity desiring a social media presence will designate at least one representative to serve as its administrator. Site administration, including set up, content development and management, and administration of these policies, is the responsibility of the sponsoring Entity, which shall appoint an individual to administer the social media site (“Site Administrator”). The Site Administrator will provide the State Bar staff liaison with administrative access to the social media platform in the event emergency assistance is needed. Entities are responsible -- in conjunction with their respective Site Administrators and all those individuals participating in a social media presence established under this policy -- for complying with these guidelines.

The State Bar reserves the right to inactivate an Entity’s social media account for inactivity or abandonment, or for violating the Guidelines for Social Media Conduct.

Guidelines for Social Media Conduct

In sum, be professional, respectful, and discreet in your online dialog. Represent the State Bar and your profession well. Exercise good judgment. State Bar members or staff who fail to do so, or who fail to comply with these guidelines, may not only forfeit the right to participate in social media activities connected with the State Bar, but may also be subject to penalties and discipline for failing to adhere to applicable Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as civil or criminal liability and penalties, as warranted.

1. Be responsible. You are personally responsible for the material you post. All statements must be true and not misleading. Carefully consider content; what you publish will be widely accessible, and, in some cases, indefinitely. Protect your privacy and the privacy of others and adhere to all statutory prescriptions and Professional Rules of Conduct governing the privacy of individuals and confidential information of your clients.

2. Be upfront, identify yourself. Your honesty – or dishonesty – will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. Use your real name, and, if relevant, your role or interest in the topic discussed. When appropriate, make it clear you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the State Bar.
3. Be civil and respectful. It's okay to disagree with others, but do not use defamatory, abusive, threatening, offensive, or obscene language or post illegal material.
4. Be quick to correct an error. If you make a mistake, admit it. Quickly provide the correct information. If appropriate, modify an earlier post to make it clear that you have corrected an error.
5. Keep it relevant, add value. Write about what you know. Information can add value if it contributes to the legal community's knowledge or skills, improves the legal system or public understanding of the legal system, or builds a sense of community.
6. Follow copyright and fair use laws. Always provide proper credit for their published work. Make sure you have the right to use material with attribution before publishing. It's a good practice to link to others' work rather than reproducing it on your site. When in doubt, as to the proprietary nature of material, don't use it. Recognize the potential professional and legal consequences of any failure to follow applicable laws governing the use of others' material.
7. Protect proprietary and client information. Do not discuss or misuse proprietary or confidential information and follow all professional and ethical rules governing the disclosure of information shared with you by clients. When in doubt, leave it out.
8. Refrain from endorsements of political candidates. The activities of the State Bar are defined by Wisconsin Supreme Court rules, and those rules apply to social media activity. As a membership organization, the State Bar works to avoid even the appearance that it directly or indirectly endorses or financially supports candidates for political office.
9. Comply with Wisconsin rules governing lawyer advertising. Comply with all restrictions governing legal advertising when posting content to any social network, including one being administered by an Entity.
10. Do not violate antitrust laws. Antitrust laws prohibit postings that encourage or facilitate agreements between State Bar members concerning the following, as they pertain to legal services: prices, discounts, or terms or conditions of sale; salaries; profits, profit margins or cost data; market shares, sales territories, or markets; allocation of customers or suppliers; or any other term or condition related to competition.
11. Abide by the social media platform's rules. By joining a particular social network, you agree to abide by that community's terms of use, so review those terms carefully.

Using the State Bar's Name and Logo

State Bar entities may incorporate the State Bar's name, brand, or logo into their social media identity with prior approval from the State Bar. To create consistency and community on the Web, the State Bar has established standard brand and logo templates, disclaimers, and naming conventions. The Site

Administrator for an Entity must work with its assigned staff liaison from the State Bar to coordinate approval, the development of the social media graphic, and other site requirements.

Enforcing this policy

The State Bar does not actively monitor these sites for inappropriate postings. If an inappropriate posting is brought to the attention of the State Bar, however, the State Bar will take appropriate action to enforce this policy.

(Approved by the Board of Governors, September 2009, Revised and approved by the Board of Governors June 2023)