

# **E-PROFESSIONALISM AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Do not copy

## **INTRODUCTION**

The social media is undoubtedly now an indispensable phenomenon to be reckoned with as well as totally respected. The second reason being that social media has become part and parcel of our lives in a digitally comfortable way to connect with millions of people to share ideas, keep in touch, learn new cultures or have a glimpse of the other parts of the world we are yet to travel to, interact with foreigners, make tons of friends, and very importantly make financial transactions with other people whether they are home or abroad. Making money or means of livelihood has always been a critical aspect of human lives since the ancient trading activity of barter system. But things have definitely become much easier with the advent of social media. The leverage of being able to easily connect with someone very far away within seconds or minutes has been more of a Midas touch for many business-minded individuals who have been eagerly latching on the huge monetary benefits social media has effortlessly been bringing. However, social media interaction is not as totally simple or direct as it may sound. It is much more than just communicating with known people or strangers to either converse or do business. This is because, at some point, there would definitely be a certain and needed level of decency, decorum and professionalism a person using a social media platform must apply when getting active for whatever reason on social media. This is what is known as e-professionalism.

Do not copy

## WHAT E-PROFESSIONALISM IS ALL ABOUT

According to [www.ed.ac.uk](http://www.ed.ac.uk), e-professionalism is e-Professionalism is the way you engage yourself online in relation to your profession, including your attitudes, actions and your adherence to relevant professional codes of conduct.

([www.ed.ac.uk](http://www.ed.ac.uk)).

Do not copy

E-professionalism is all about the overall positive, competent and decent behavior being readily displayed by a person interacting with another person. This can also be labelled as the rightful kind of etiquette a person applies in communicating with a person who might as well be a potential client, an old customer, a workplace colleague, a boss, an employee, etc. Even though being polite and competent is always needed in every form of social interaction, the professional aspect of it, in this case, is focused on the corporate or formal settings of social media usage.

The modern human age which is also known as the digital or computer age has really developed in such a speed that many people seemed to be finding it difficult to keep up. Keeping up in this instance refers to the rate at which new and faster communicating gadgets like mobile phones, PCs, wireless communicators, interactive consoles, etc., are being manufactured for public usage. Chatting up an old friend, saying hello to a family member or loved one, speedily connecting with a business partner or colleague are all available with an easy tap of our fingers. This monumental advancement in communication has made so many people

Do not copy

better financially and otherwise in many aspects of their lives. So many business deals worth millions or billions are now confidently sealed on the internet from the comfort of one's house. The digital means of doing business, attending corporate meetings, remotely doing corporate jobs and interacting with customers are now in vogue and individuals who can't cope are left behind. But despite the ease with which we can talk to someone unknown or very important behind a digital keyboard and screen, it is still very important to maintain communicative etiquette. In fact, the same rules that are used in corporate and professional interactions are still very much encouraged and applied on many social media platforms.

Do not copy

## **WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN E-PROFESSIONALISM**

Alongside the speedy innovation of human communication technology, there is also the constant formulation and readjustments of societal constitutions that are aimed towards regulating social media interactions whether they are professional or not. And from the close observations personally made of majority of social media platforms and their topics, decorum and basic politeness etiquette are all expected from whomever is using any social media platform regardless of the purpose. An example of this is the recent suspension of Donald Trump's, who was the former president of the United States, respective Twitter and Facebook accounts on the allegations of spreading hate speech, election misinformation and the incitement of violence. Even though there are already speculations of the probability of those

Do not copy

## Do not copy

platforms to allow him back, but that still doesn't detract from the fact that the former president wasn't being professional with the status of his office even with his right to so-called free speech. It is a hard fact that most ordinary or far less recognized individuals have been considered to be given a second chance either by critics or social media administrators. Several companies or sole business owners have lost deals worth millions due to the stark incompetence of a customer care employee, human resource staff, or the personal lack of emotional intelligence to sustain a client's communicative nastiness. There is also the case of displaying professional ignorance while dealing with a deeply intelligent or curious client or service buyer. An employee who isn't emotionally intelligent or capable to handle social media communication challenges would likely snap under such pressure, thereby costing the company a valuable and potential client. This in turn would probably cost the person involved in such his or her job.

“Customer service now plays a crucial front-line role in shaping reputation. In fact customer care has always been important, it's just that complaints used to be handled over the phone, by email, or in person and rarely made it into the public domain. But nowadays anyone can whinge publicly through social media and if they are sufficiently angry, well connected, or imaginative, a delicate situation can quickly escalate into a serious incident and even a crisis. **Do not copy**

There are all sorts of reasons why organizations are tripping up in this area. One problem is that many people believe that large firms are huge, faceless, and self-interested entities more

concerned about the performance of their stock price than in dealing with people complaining about their products. There's also the fact that Twitter and Facebook are widely seen as convenient and effective ways of getting the attention of even the biggest and most faceless mono-lith, not least when someone has spent the last 20 minutes waiting for someone at your call center to pick up the phone. And the longer you take to respond – people expect an answer to their questions and complaints through social media immediately, and preferably within an hour – the more incompetent, uncaring, or evasive you appear, and the more likely they are to complain about you in public.

**Do not copy**

Typically online complaints are posted to a company's official social media profile or on Yelp, TripAdvisor, or one of the other top consumer review sites. But with many firms responding only to a small percentage of queries, even on their own profiles, customers are finding increasingly sophisticated ways of making them take notice.

Escalating a complaint to Twitter is now a favorite ploy, partly as people have come to realize that journalists, bloggers, and other opinion-formers use it regularly and may pick up on their case.”

(Pownall, C. Pg. 71).

**Do not copy**

The above citation further shows how important e-professionalism is when dealing with people online. Also, people are individually needed to maintain their intelligence and professional competence through polite and if possible short interactions at all times whether they are working or not.

This is because whatever negative stuffs they type will always be stored on the internet, and these might later be used against them by vindictive people or internet police at a very crucial point of their lives in the future. Take for instance the funny but related picture below:

**Do not copy**

Interviewer: Do you remember tweeting "No job is better than a blow job"



**Do not copy**

The illustrated picture above is a typical example of how careful and decent one should always use the social media. There is a reason why the popular this popular statement “the internet never forgets” is full of wisdom. Reasons for always maintaining e-professionalism include business reputation, career management, personal reputation, and moral decency.



Do not copy

## **APPLICABLE STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE E-PROFESSIONALISM (TWITTER)**

As much as Facebook was the first in terms of the next level kind of social media interaction, Twitter has however taken the spotlight of both an interactive social media platform and trending events. While it is not as business-driven as Facebook or Instagram, the sheer amount of publicity its algorithm gives to tweets that are especially about a famous person, an attention catching issue, a public relatable information, a company or business, etc., has always been overwhelming. A single tweet can become really viral within minutes to hours, thereby making the owner or the focus of the tweet infamous or popular forever. Therefore, tweeted complaints about a company's personnel, services or products can quickly fall into a deep state of disrepute if care is not taken. Also from personal observations, people tend to be more biting, nasty and critical when on Twitter than any other social media platform. Therefore, it is very important for anyone, be it a sole business owner, or the employee or boss of a company to be highly capable in replying any form of tweets. Any grievous mistake might definitely go viral within the click of a keyboard. So for this reason, here are viable strategies to use in achieving a true digital professionalism either online or offline.

1. Good communication skills: To master good communication skills on social media is to have a good level of emotional intelligence. There is an abundance of annoying and nasty people on social media platforms, also known as trolls, on the internet. Always avoid unprofessional or unethical discussions when working

Do not copy

with a client. One can politely decline a lewd client or ignore an abusive person when making corporate interactions. Keep in diverting the topic back to the main business and if he or she insists in discussions outside your professional work, then calmly refer such person to the necessary higher authorities of your company. But if you're in charge of the business or interaction, you can as well totally avoid the person and forget about him or her.

**Do not copy**

2. Being well-trained and knowledgeable in your craft: As earlier stated, the social media world is full of all sorts of people who are as nasty, challenging or troublesome as they are in the real world, if not much worse online. People these days usually find it very easy to wreak any kind of havoc they want on social media simply because of their anonymity, so it is always good to be prepared for such. This can also happen when the person you're interacting with senses that you don't know your onions or lack the necessary knowledge of the service you're trying to sell to him or her. However, those who are into one profession or the other should always endeavor to give themselves and their workers adequate digital training in properly learning their craft's terminologies, necessary technical knowledge. This can include seminars and practical workshops on digital commerce, online customer care services and exposure to social media slangs and mannerisms across projected ages of internet users.
3. Always being consistent in rendering your services to other people regardless of their status: Social media world is not that different from the outside world, except

**Do not copy**



for its lack of actual physicality. However, the construction of a response or the timing of it can really go a long way in preserving a reputation or deal in an online interaction. Many so-called professionals have deliberately thrown their caution to the winds by ignoring the etiquette of communication online. This can be out of personal arrogance and biased preference for individuals depending on their perceived social status. A person who is a true professional in his or her trade must always be ready to communicate with everyone as properly as possible without prejudice. The means of achieving this by trying to see every person as equally important. Always realize that it is much easier for anyone regardless of their status to affect your profession on the social media.

**Do not copy**

4. Always try to be at pace with the constantly changing dynamics and regulations of the platform your are using. As stated earlier, social media keeps changing alongside the constitutional rules of engagement. It is equally the same on most of the popular social media platforms where there are rules of advertisement, customer engagement, language and used of words in communication, and the use of any form of multimedia contents. Imagine paying good money for a business advertisement on Facebook and later getting flagged due to trying to sell a product there which the administrators don't allow. Then it'd be late and painful when you are just getting to know such kind of valuable information about the rules of business engagements.

**Do not copy**

## REFERENCES

Do not copy

Pownall, C. *Managing Online Reputation: How to Protect Your Company on Social Media*; 2015. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/about-us/projects/digital-footprint/eprofessionalism>

Do not copy