

Social media policy

November 2013

Introduction

There are many benefits to using social media. Alongside other communications it can help the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to communicate with citizens in the places they already are; to consult and engage; and be more transparent and accountable. This document describes how and why the ICO will establish and manage a corporate social media presence across various social media platforms.

1. Objectives

- 1.1** Raise public awareness of information rights and promote good practice in data handling across all organisations.
- 1.2** Extend reach of existing corporate messages by building relationships with relevant audiences, including stakeholders, and key influencers such as journalists and bloggers.
- 1.3** Provide additional channels for audiences to interact with the ICO, provide feedback, seek help and suggest ways we can improve our service.
- 1.4** Monitor online mentions of the ICO, the Information Commissioner and flagship policy initiatives, engaging with our critics and key influencers to resolve problems/dissatisfaction.
- 1.5** Provide live coverage of events (such as policy launches or promotions) for those who cannot attend.
- 1.6** Leverage existing ICO web content such as news releases, blogs and statements, encouraging traffic to www.ICO.org.uk or other ICO maintained social media channels.
- 1.7** Act as a communication channel to use if other channels become unavailable, and as a medium for crisis communications.

2. Content principles

- 2.1** Social media posts will be clear and use language accessible and suitable for the platform on which they appear.
- 2.2** Language will be informal in tone, but reflect the ICO's position as an authoritative and credible public body.
- 2.3** Updates will be timely, addressing current topics of interest and contributing to the public discussion on information rights.
- 2.4** Updates will be informative to both organisations and members of the public, promoting guidance and advice with links to the ICO website.

- 2.5** In keeping with the knowledge-sharing culture of social media, the ICO will pursue opportunities to signpost relevant content elsewhere.
- 2.6** Where possible and appropriate, the ICO will post media such as photos or videos.

3. Impartiality

In order to remain an effective independent public body, it is important that the ICO remains impartial in all respects. This will be a consideration in the management of all social media channels.

- 3.1** Depending on the platform, the ICO may connect with or follow other professionally relevant parties via social networks. This should not be viewed as an endorsement of any kind – political, commercial, or otherwise.
- 3.2** For purposes of engagement, openness and sharing relevant information, the ICO may repost the communications of other parties. This should not be viewed as an endorsement of the other party.
- 3.3** When posting messages to microblogging sites such as Twitter, the ICO may use hashtags (#) to improve search visibility. These hashtags should be viewed in context of the message and wider discussion and are not an endorsement of any persons, products or services mentioned therein.
- 3.4** During the pre-election period of purdah, the ICO will be particularly sensitive to the release of any updates that could potentially affect political bias. This may lead to a decline in social media activity during this period.

4. Engaging and responding

- 4.1** The ICO will not to respond to all comments posted on its various social media platforms. However, the ICO will always aim to provide a response in the following circumstances:
 - There is an opportunity to raise public awareness of information rights or influence the information rights practices of organisations;
 - When maintaining or protecting the reputation of the ICO;
 - When addressing the topic or theme of multiple comments.
- 4.2** Social media accounts will be monitored during weekday office hours. The ICO cannot ensure comments will be viewed during evenings, weekends or during public holidays.

5. Operation of social media accounts

- 5.1** All social media posts must be first cleared by a relevant staff member within the ICO Communications department.
- 5.2** The views expressed by ICO staff members on personal social media accounts should not be interpreted as those of the ICO or the Information Commissioner. Opinions expressed on personal social media accounts should be clearly indicated as such.
- 5.3** The ICO asks its staff to be mindful when using social media, particularly when commenting on contentious issues, and reminds all staff of its [code of conduct](#).

6. Social media platforms and resources

6.1 The following is a list of the social media platforms in use by the ICO:

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ICOnews>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ICOnews>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/information-commissioner's-office>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/icocomms>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/iconews>
- SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/iconews>
- Storify: <http://storify.com/iconews>

6.2 Campaign specific accounts.

To avoid diluting the regular corporate social media channels, the ICO may on occasion create campaign specific accounts.

The ICO will consider creating a campaign specific social media account when the subject matter is niche or specialist (ie of limited interest to the bulk of our followers; or with a specific target audience such as young people/women/vulnerable workers).

When additional accounts are used the ICO will cross-reference and repost any content of relevance to the different sets of followers.

6.3 Social media resources.

The resource impact of maintaining and monitoring of the ICO's social media accounts is low relative to other communications channels. The following tools

and software packages are used to more effectively engage with and monitor the social media space:

- Twitter account management: TweetDeck
- Social media analytics: Klout, Sysomos
- Social media monitoring: Precise, Yatterbox

The lists in this section are not exhaustive and are subject to change.