

Acceptance and implementation of social media-guidelines in small and middle-sized enterprises

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Social media-guidelines are an indispensable, practical guide as they raise the necessary awareness for both private and professional handling of company-relevant topics in the social web. The guidelines regulate clearly and comprehensibly what is desired or not desired in dealing with internal and external target groups. At the same time, the aim is to take the employees' uncertainties about their behavior in the social media and to motivate them to a higher commitment in the sense of their employer. Whether or not a company integrates social media into its communication strategy, rules for use should be made. Social media-guidelines protect business and employees. They help to ensure successful communication, they define the framework for private and professional communication in social media and serve as a guide help to employees. This essay provides an overview of the risks of social media marketing and how companies can develop and implement social media-guidelines. The following study provides an overview of how small and medium-sized enterprises of the middle class use social media-guidelines.

1 Risks of social media marketing

Web 2.0 describes the phenomenon that content and pages on the internet can no longer only be created and changed by selected specialists or companies, but by the community of internet users themselves (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 60). Thus content is no longer only issued and distributed centralized by major media companies over the internet, but also by a large number of individuals (Lammenett 2012, p. 239). The biggest change is social, because the Web 2.0 platforms are characterized by the fact that they encourage users to participate, get networked and generate user-generated content. These are all forms of content created by users themselves and published and exchanged in the Web 2.0 (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p. 61). The internet user, who has only been able to consume passive content on the internet in the past, is able to act as a producer of content in Web 2.0 and to communicate with the companies on the same level (Schiele, Hähner and Becker 2007, p. 6). He becomes an active participant, who actively participates in the internet and creates and distributes content himself (Kreutzer and Merkle 2008, p. 149). Information and exchange platforms become more attractive as more people join in (Langkamp and Köplin 2014, p. 68). The use of social media marketing can contribute to the long-term success of the company, but it also goes with risks. If a company plans to use social media it should be aware of these risks.

1.1 Loss of control

Many companies are still rejecting the use of social media because they are afraid of a loss of control over their communication and performance. It is fair to say that companies have already lost this control due to the many possibilities of Web 2.0 (Kreutzer 2014, p. 27). Both the messages of the sender and the reactions of the receivers can't be controlled at all or only in a limited extent (Bruhn 2014, p. 1041). The loss of control is new and unfamiliar to companies, since the medium of social media differentiates from the previously used controllable advertising channels (Neumann 2010, p. 28).

1.2 Criticism

By stepping into the social web a company becomes vulnerable as it opens up to its customers and, as a consequence, invites them to a dialogue. However, this is intended to make the brand a topic of conversation. This will not only produce praise and positive expressions. The responsible persons should be aware of this beforehand and develop a plan to appropriately respond to criticism. Eventually, any business comes into the situation that users write critically about the company, its products or services. In this case it is important to deal with the criticism correctly, in terms of time, style and content. In general, if negative feedback is given, it is necessary to decide which reaction is required. The reaction to criticism, even if unjustified, must be positive and constructive in order not to lead a public dispute (Kreutzer 2014, p. 24).

1.3 Ownership and copyright

In the social media, where the users massively upload texts and multimedia content, there is the danger that this is also copyright protected (Ebersbach, Glaser and Heigl 2011, p. 250). While texts are only protected if they have sufficient creative content, photos, as well as audio and video contents, are regularly protected by copyright law (Ulbricht 2014, p. 765). This results in a stress ratio with regard to the intellectual property which is the result of mental work (Ebersbach, Glaser and Heigl 2011, p. 247). This means that these works can be published in the social media only with the appropriate consent of the author or legal owner for specific use. When publishing content, companies should always ensure that the necessary rights of use are available for the respective content (Ulbricht 2014, p. 765).

2 Social media-guidelines in companies

A company that decides on a strict ban on social media in the workplace must be aware that while it is avoiding the risks mentioned above, at the same time it takes the chances the social media offer. It excludes its employees - at least theoretically - during the working hours from valuable information on the Internet and prevents them from networking with like-minded people. In reality, some employees are likely to go beyond this ban.

Whether a company is using social media on a business or not - a general social media-guideline is definitely recommended, since the employees are likely to use social media and can also name their employer there. The more accurate the guidelines, the better the risk can be minimized. If a company does not have social media-guidelines, uncoordinated social media activities may develop. Social media-guidelines are concrete recommendations for action by a company how to deal with and behave in social media. Social media-guidelines enable companies to pinpoint the use of social media for employees. They define in detail how and what content to communicate and communicate in the social media on behalf of the company.

Using social media-guidelines, companies should pinpoint the use of social media for employees.. In addition, every employee is a valuable ambassador for the company and its products. In external communications, even when he speaks privately, he is often perceived as a member of the company's staff. Thus, a statement can quickly be misunderstood as an official company position (BITKOM 2010, p. 3).

The social media-guidelines are therefore an indispensable, practical guide as they create the necessary awareness for the private as well as professional dealings with company-relevant topics in the social web. The guidelines regulate clearly and comprehensibly what is desired or not desired in dealing with internal and external target groups. At the same time, however, the aim is to take the employees' uncertainties about the behavior in the social media and to motivate them to a higher level of commitment in the sense of their employer. As a rule, they use a company's culture, goals and structures. Compliance with the social media-guidelines is of great importance for low-impact communication in the social web and therefore binding for all employees (Schach 2015, p. 218).

3 Development and adaptation of social media-guideline

Social media-guidelines are primarily concerned with who is allowed to communicate with which message at which place in the company. They not only want to provide employees with guidance on their official corporate communications on blogs, Facebook and other media, but also give them recommendations for their private engagement in the networks. The development of social media-guidelines is usually a complex process, especially since different departments must be involved.

3.1 Analysis and goal setting

Social networks can be easily and quickly used for company communication. At least theoretically. Practically, however, this network diversity also entails the risk of arbitrariness and overburdening. Companies should therefore choose the individual meaningful and relevant networks deliberately and strategically. For this purpose, the company's goals and target group are primarily important. Only when these are fixed the appropriate networks can be selected on this basis. If the preparatory work is done, it is necessary to form a project team at the beginning of the process to create the guideline. Since the guidelines apply to the entire company, employees from different departments and hierarchical levels should participate in the development process.

3.2 Creation and adaptation

When creating the product, it is recommended not to implement a "top down" approach, but to integrate the representatives of the workforce. If the guidelines are developed in a joint workshop and all voices are heard, the later acceptance increases significantly. The phase of creating and adapting the guidelines usually begins with a first draft of the guidelines by the communication department. In order to promote the acceptance of the directives, these should be designed as easily as possible and visually appealing. Particular attention should be paid to the content of the guidelines. In the first place, they should explain what social media are, why the right way of dealing with them is important and what the goal of the guidelines is. After the guidelines are formulated, a classic approval process takes place in the reconciliation phase. At this stage, as many internal stakeholders as possible should be involved in order to ensure the consideration of all interests and, subsequently, the acceptance of the guidelines (Rauschnabel, Mrkwicka, Koch and Ivens 2013, p. 41).

3.3 Implementation

In this step, the created and released guidelines must be implemented in the company. The goal should be that 100% of employees know the guidelines and their content, even if this is difficult in practice. In order to ensure the acceptance of the guidelines in the company, a certain sensitiveness should be taken. Internal events and accompanying training courses are suitable to point employees towards the guidelines and their relevance. The implementation does not end with the introduction. Employees must be able to easily access the guidelines at any time, for example on the intranet, to be informed about changes. It is particularly important that new employees are also referred to the guidelines (Rauschnabel, Mrkwicka, Koch and Ivens 2013, p. 42).

3.4 Control

Once the guidelines have been implemented, the effectiveness of the guidelines must be checked. Implementing guidelines makes sense, when monitoring is implemented. Due to data protection aspects, however, a systematic monitoring of the social media activities of employees is difficult or nearly not possible. In order to monitor compliance with social media-guidelines or company-specific communication of employees in social media channels, the experts propose monitoring the brand. The (partially) automated analysis of user content in the network can also be used to draw conclusions about the authors. However, sanctions remain difficult. In the end, the guidelines have to be revised regularly. In addition to the technical developments and changes in the usage behavior, new legislation also requires revision cycles (Rauschnabel, Mrkwicka, Koch and Ivens 2013, p. 43).

4 The right medium for social media guidelines

Insofar as the use of social media by the employee does not have a specific relationship with his or her area of responsibility, or is not suitable for the promotion of the work of the employee and also does not constitute an officially motivated private use, the use as private use must be assessed. The employer can decide whether his employees are allowed to access social media at the workplace, as well as the type and scope of such permitted private use. Unless an explicit regulation exists in the company, private internet use is generally prohibited during working hours. An employer's private use of social media at the workplace by employees is in principle not objectionable in so far as the limits of the permitted use are not exceeded (Schneider 2011, p. 318).

There are different ways to communicate social media guidelines. Policies restrict the employee's freedom to do certain things. The consequences of an infringement can be very far-reaching for the employee: from a warning to dismissal. For this reason, this regulation should be clearly written confirmed. Thus, the company gives its employees clear guidelines, what they are allowed and not allowed to do. The regulations on the use of social media during working hours should also be recorded in writing (Alkan and Ulbricht 2009, p. 11).

The legally binding version of the directives should be communicated in writing or by electronic means. Depending on the importance and legally binding nature of the directives, it may also be an advantage to adopt the directives as a supplement to the employment contract, or at least to require confirmation of the knowledge. The following options are generally available to regulate the use of social media during working hours:

4.1 Regulation in the employment contract

A company can make concrete arrangements in the employment contract. However, this is neither contemporary nor meaningful since the employment contract is relatively rigid and the rules of conduct in the network are subject to regular changes. For the sake of practicality alone, one should consider whether the employment contract refers to the company's social media-guidelines, which are drafted separately. Social media-guidelines, which regulate how employees are to comply with the obligations arising from the employment contract, can be defined within the framework of the employer's management right. It is important that the company can demonstrate that and with what concrete content this management right was exercised. At best, a copy of the social media-guidelines is signed and taken to the personal file.

If the introduction of regulations for the use of social media policies outside the employment contract is considered, the question is whether they should be introduced by means of non-determinate directives or by means of a company agreement.

4.2 Regulation by company agreement

In the case of larger companies, the question is which role the works council plays. In the course of a company agreement by the works council, it is quite easy to create general rules without having to deal with each employee individually. The question arises when and whether the works council must agree - but since the acceptance of the stakeholders in guidelines plays an enormously high role, the involvement of the works council must therefore be striven for.

Since the boundaries between non-controllable and purely private use are fluid, it is advisable to align the material scope of the service agreements with certain types of use. For example, the professional participation in business-oriented networks, such as XING or LinkedIn, is just as much for a business purpose as the use of multi-functional devices such as smartphones or laptops provided by the employer.

4.3 Co-determination-free guidelines

Directions may include both co-determination-free and determinative conditions. In the case of directives, these regulations are unencumbered if they merely reflect the company's philosophy, general programs and self-commitments, repeat laws, or contain specific rules that relate exclusively to the work behavior. Co-determination rights of the works council are affected by directives whenever the organizational behavior of the employees is affected.

Social media policies do not have the same liability as a company agreement. Nevertheless, compliance with and the responsible handling of data is very important to all employees. For it can lead to communicative crises in case of disregard. In contrast to classic business agreements, the development of social media guidelines has been used to the extent that these are often specifically visualized. Presumably, the origin of the optical embellishment of the rules is simply due to the fact that they are often accessible online and should fit visibly into the company's online presence (Greve and Wedde 2014, p. 110).

4.4 Usage permit by company practice

If no express regulation exists in the company, the private internet usage during the working hours is generally prohibited or restricted to a limited extent. Of course, all unlawful or punishable uses are strictly prohibited. Beyond the operational regulations, a permit may result from a so-called operational exercise. This is the case if the employer repeatedly and regularly behaves in such a way that the employee is entitled to derive a corresponding authorization from the employer from this.

The term “company practice” refers to the fact that an employee can reasonably derive from the regular repetition of certain practices of the employer that the employer will continue to behave in the future or permanently in this way – for example in the granting of benefits and benefits – And thus legal claims on such services are justified. Through the exercise, voluntary contributions by the employer are obligated, which the employer can no longer unilaterally avoid.

5 Case study

The social media-guide of Creativ-Bad is a static framework that is filled with life by its own employees. It is they who can best represent the company and its diversity in public. With their expert knowledge, they can enrich discussions on the Internet and respond to criticism. Therefore, the company has developed the following guidelines:

1. It's always about conversation. Anyone actively seeking the interview, speaking up in discussions and answering questions is taken seriously in the community. A company is best represented by its employees. What you publish can influence the public perception of CREATIVBAD. The content posted by you should bring our target audience further.
 2. Pay attention to quality. It's easy to get lots of attention on the internet. Long-term, intensive and valuable conversations can only be enriched with high-quality content.
 3. Be honest. Information is immediately verifiable on the internet. False statements are promptly revealed and harm your and thus our credibility.
 4. Stay polite. A conversation can only be valuable if everyone involved is respectful. Avoid provocations and insults and break off conversations when the other person becomes offensive. Always show respect for others' views – even if they do not care.
 5. Heed the law. Do not post defamatory, offensive or otherwise unlawful content. Do not post any content or related copyright references to the web and respects the copyrights.
 6. Corrects own mistakes. To err is human. If you make a mistake while posting a post, correct it and stand by it. Comments should not be changed uncommented or deleted without comment. Comment actively and constructively and mark your changes so that everyone can understand them.
 7. Be professional even as a private person. Even if you use social media only privately, you may encounter professional contacts or be confronted with questions from the profession. Then it's good if you do not have to be embarrassed by private things.
 8. Separates opinions from facts. To avoid misunderstandings, you should make it clear which parts of your statement represent opinions and what hard facts. In addition, you should indicate whether you represent your personal or company opinion.
 9. Use of social media during working hours. The social media engagement thrives on the support of the employees. The extent to which social media is used during working hours must be appropriate and must not prevent you from performing your work-related activities in a timely and professional manner. The permission to use social media during working hours can be revoked at any time.
- The guidelines were presented and discussed to the employees in a workshop. The result of the discussion is available on the intranet.

6 Survey

As described above, the study is based on the question how small and medium-sized enterprises use social media-guidelines. The studies were conducted in July 2017 by means of an online questionnaire. The target group was owners and employees of small and medium-sized enterprises who were asked to participate, both via a questionnaire, as well as via the social media and e-mail.

Interview participants (n): 65

Survey: Online questionnaire
Period of investigation: July 2017



Figure 1: Does your company use the Internet? Which facets do you use (multiple entries possible)?
Source: Author

The company's own website is still the preferred medium when it comes to presenting the own company on the Internet. As expected, 93.85% of companies have their own website. Only 47.69% of the interviewees run their own website in social media. Own videos are only 16.92% available. The remaining portals are negligible as they are hardly used.



Figure 2: Are you sufficiently informed about the opportunities and risks of a presence in the social networks?
Source: Author

The chances, as well as the risks of a presence in the Internet are manifold. 53.85% of companies surveyed feel sufficiently informed. 40% admit that they do not feel sufficiently informed. Under 'Other' it was stated above all that the chances are known, but the risks are not. The interviewees are also not willing to spend more time in order to keep informed.



Figure 3: Has your company already designed and implemented social media-guidelines?
Source: Author

Only 12.31% of companies surveyed have designed and implemented social media-guidelines. A further 9.23% have an introduction in planning. 75.39% have not introduced any guidelines, of which 21.54% implicitly say that this is not foreseen. Under 'other', the IT department is called.



Figure 4: How are the social media-guidelines anchored in your company (multiple entries possible)?
Source: Author

In 72.31% of companies surveyed, no social media-guidelines were written or verbally agreed. Most of the information in 'Other' is also 'not available', which should be over 80%. A further mention under 'other' was that the IT department takes over. The most common is the oral agreement with 10.77% and the documentation on the intranet with 6.15%. Two companies adhere to the guidelines in the employment contract.

7 Outlook

Whether a company is using social media in a company or not - a general social media-guideline is definitely recommended, since the employees are likely to use social media and can also name their employer there. An accurate set of rules minimizes the risks and is of great importance for low-impact communication in the social web and therefore binding for all employees.

93.85% of the respondents use their own website for their appearance on the Internet. 47.69% use social media services to present themselves and make contact with potential and existing customers. This shows how little is the topic of marketing on the internet. And so with the chances and risks. 53.85% of companies surveyed feel adequately informed about the opportunities and risks of a presence in the social networks. This means that only every second company knows the rules of communication in the social media. In 84.62% of companies, no social media-guidelines are designed or implemented. At only 9.23% of these companies, however, they are currently being planned. The companies, which have already introduced the guidelines, are significantly lower at 12.31%. Of these companies, 10.77% have only verbally anchored the guidelines. This leads to the fact that they are not available in crisis situations and that they lack a clear instruction. 6.15% have recorded the guidelines on the intranet, 1.54% have printed a brochure. After all, 3.08% of companies have kept the guideline in the employment contract.

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Résumé

Prijímanie a implementácia smerníc na využívanie sociálnych médií v malých a stredných podnikoch

Smernice na využívanie sociálnych médií sú nepostrádateľným a zároveň praktickým sprievodcom,

pretože zvyšujú potrebné vedomie pre súkromné i profesionálne zaobchádzanie s témami relevantnými pre spoločnosť na sociálnej sieti. Smernice jasne a komplexne upravujú, čo sa vyžaduje alebo, naopak, čo nie je žiaduce u interných a externých cieľových skupín. Zároveň je ich cieľom odstránenie neistoty v správaní zamestnancov v sociálnych médiách a motivácia k vyššej miere zaangažovanosti u svojho zamestnávateľa. Bez ohľadu na to, či spoločnosť integruje sociálne médiá do svojej komunikačnej stratégie, mali by sa vytvoriť pravidlá používania. Smernice na využívanie sociálnych médií chránia firmu i zamestnancov. Pomáhajú zabezpečiť úspešnú komunikáciu, definujú rámec pre súkromnú a profesionálnu komunikáciu v sociálnych médiách a slúžia ako pomôcka pre zamestnancov. Tento príspevok poskytuje prehľad o rizikách marketingu v sociálnych médiách a o tom, ako môžu spoločnosti rozvíjať a implementovať smernice pre využívanie sociálnych médií. Táto štúdia poskytuje prehľad o tom ako malé a stredne veľké podniky používajú smernice na využívanie sociálnych sietí.

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