



ONLINE BEHAVIOR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR ALL EDELMAN STAFF

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The evolution of Edelman's policies with regard to online media closely mirrors the dramatic pace of change that has occurred in such a small period of time. And we will continue to evolve them over time to keep pace with new changes.

In the summer of 2005, such rules took the form of a "blogging policy" – a focus on a particular platform for online communications. More recently, the explosion of social networks such as MySpace and Facebook, as well as micro-publishing platforms such as Twitter, have inspired their own sets of rules and policies.

The inevitable result was several sets of policies across the firm and, most disturbingly, a tendency to cite a lack of policy regarding a *particular site or type of site* as an excuse for less-than-acceptable behavior.

Social media – and anything "social," as a matter of fact – strongly resists being heavily policed. That said, Edelman cannot possibly craft a *new* policy for *every* online destination where its clients are likely to seek acceptance and employees are likely to gather.

These rules below – necessarily a living document – have been constructed to reflect the evolving norms of online community behavior, especially as pertains to how corporations and the agencies acting on their behalf comport themselves online. These threads of commonality – woven through common sense and your company handbook – will help.

The following represents firm policy. Edelman is committed to focusing online behavior through the lens of "doing the right thing", not "mitigating risk of getting caught."



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1. You are personally responsible for any of your online activity conducted with an Edelman email address, and/or which can be traced back to an Edelman domain, and/or which uses Edelman assets including the firm's PC's, smartphones (e.g., Blackberry) or our network. Even if you are logged into your own personal account (i.e. if you send an email from your personal gmail account from Edelman's network) please know it can be traced to Edelman.

The edelman.com address attached to your name implies that you are acting on the company's behalf. When using an Edelman email address or Edelman assets to engage in any social media activity, be aware that all actions are public and employees will be held fully responsible for any and all said activities.

2. Honor the terms of your employment agreement, as well as those of any contract we have with any client.

It is inappropriate to disclose or use Edelman's or a client's confidential or proprietary information in any form of online media. Sharing this type of information, even unintentionally, can result in you, Edelman and the client getting sued and, in some cases, may violate state or Federal regulations.

3. Proactively disclose your identity and affiliation with Edelman and the client you may be serving.

When participating in any online community, be completely transparent and disclose your true identity and affiliation with Edelman, your clients, and professional and/or personal interest in communicating.

4. Respect the privacy and opinions of others.

Before sharing a comment, post, picture or video of or about a client or colleague through any type of social media, his/her consent is not only a courtesy, it is a requirement.

5. Gain case-by-case or standing approval from your supervisor or GCRM before writing about a client, a known competitor of that client, or otherwise responding on Edelman's or a client's behalf.

If a blogger or any other online participant posts an inaccurate, accusatory or negative comment about Edelman or Edelman's clients, do not engage in the conversation without prior approval from a supervisor.

6. Avoid personal attacks, online fights, and hostile personalities.

If someone posts a statement or item you disagree with, you can voice your opinion, but do not escalate the conversation to a heated, personal argument. Speak reasonably, factually, and with good humor. Try to understand and credit the other person's point of view. Additionally, avoid communicating with hostile personalities in an effort to avoid personal, professional, or credibility attacks.

7. Identify any copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links.

When publishing any online material through social media that includes another's direct or paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos, or videos, always use citations and link to the original material where applicable.

8. Evaluate your contribution's accuracy and truthfulness before posting, and make sure any corrections are indicated as having occurred and are just as visible as the original error, if not more so.

Before posting any online material through social media, ensure that the material is accurate, truthful, and without factual error. It is always helpful to provide hyperlinks to credible sources that could support whatever argument you make.

If you find that you've made a mistake, admit it, apologize, correct it and move on.

It is considered proper etiquette to strike-through old or corrected materials, or at least conspicuously indicate that a change has been made.

9. Build a reputation of trust among your peers, clients, media and the public.

When you are reaching out to journalists, bloggers, clients or colleagues through social media, take every opportunity to build a reputation of trust and establish yourself as a credible and transparent public relations professional. This starts by demonstrating that you listen to what they have to say and can add value to a conversation.

10. Don't use the company's network or email lists to influence polls, rankings, or web traffic.

You are not to use the size and breadth of the company network to unduly influence polls, rankings, or web traffic where said traffic is a measure of success.

Examples include sending emails to the company network requesting that agency employees vote for clients in online polls.

11. Show good judgment when "friending" someone within a social network.

You should ask the permission of any client, journalist, blogger or other online influencer before "friending" them as through a social network. Additionally, any Edelman employee who has client, journalist, blogger, or other online influencer contacts should ask them if they want to receive communications via the social networking site. Social Networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace should not be compromised as a way to get the attention of busy clients, journalists, bloggers or other online influencers unless it's clear that such communication is welcome.

12. Always be respectful to Edelman, its employees, our clients and your audience. This applies to the type of information posted as well as the manner and context in which it is presented.

Tone, meaning, and context is everything. You know how some very pleasant people unintentionally come off as severe on email? This effect is often amplified in online communities.

13. Follow the established terms and conditions of use that have been published by the venue used for your social media activities (Web site, blog, discussion forum, etc.), in addition to observing user behaviors. You can usually the terms and conditions from a link off the home page of each site.

These terms and conditions not only govern how users are expected to behave on a particular site, but who retains ownership of the content that users share on that site.

14. Obey the law. Don't post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate applicable local, state, or federal laws and regulations.

Too often, people feel that the Internet excuses behaviors that are considered bad form in the so-called "real world". Nothing could be further from the truth.

15. Never use Edelman email (or your personal email on behalf of Edelman) to send pitches or press materials to online participants who have not opted-in to receive that correspondence.

Also note that the fact that such a person is listed in a purchased media database is not, in itself, considered the equivalent of opting in.

When reaching out to a blogger and/or Twitterer, it is expected that you will be doing so not because their name has shown up on a list, but because you've done your homework, and as a result, you know what their interests are and what they write about. Only after doing that are you prepared to engage.

Your first "outreach" should involve a personal communiqué that demonstrates your knowledge / shared interest and invites them to engage.

16. Ensure that you do not abuse the inbox of others by sending unsolicited attachments.

Not only are unsolicited attachments rude, but they are also virus characters. As much as possible, keep your email correspondence as text, with hyperlinks to items for download.

17. *Avoid sending mass emails to bloggers and journalists*

Do not send the same communiqué to mass amounts of online citizens or media via a blast email. You should use blast email during say, a crisis, or when you need to inform a wide variety of journalists/bloggers about say, a investor relations conference call that you know they would be interested in attending – and, even then, only when they've opted into such communication. Communicating with online citizens via an email blast is likely to result in their frustration and they might very likely post your communiqué on their blog.

18. It is never appropriate to directly edit a Wikipedia entry.

Always politely take any comments, grievances, or suggestions to the "Discussion" page of an entry. In extreme cases, consider authoring and publishing neutral copy under the GNU Free Documentation License and inform Wikipedia editors through the Discussion page.

19. Don't be afraid to be yourself. Being professional doesn't mean you can't also speak in a human voice.



20. When in doubt, always take the long way; there are no short cuts in social media.

21. Follow the rules in Edelman's Employee Handbook.

The rules in Edelman's Employee Handbook also apply to employee behavior within social media and in public online spaces.

Our policy is posted [here](#) on Fusion.

For any questions please do not hesitate to contact your local digital lead and/or either Rick Murray, Michael Wiley or Phil Gomes in the center.