

Social Media Guidelines

The Georgia Institute of Technology strives to be on the forefront of electronic communication and we recognize that social media platforms are beneficial tools that can be used to connect with current and potential students, alumni, and staff, as well as with key industry players, academic colleagues, government officials, and media representatives. Utilizing social media platforms in successful and strategic ways can advance the best interests of the Institute. When representing Georgia Tech in the social media space, we recommend following some basic practices and procedures.

First, become familiar with **Georgia Tech’s Code of Ethics** and the **Computer Network Usage and Security Policy**. When representing Georgia Tech or communicating about Institute matters, students, or staff you are expected to adhere to those guidelines and behave in a manner consistent with our institutional values.

If you are embarking on a social media endeavor on behalf of a university department or organization, discuss it with supervisors first to determine if it is the best logistical and strategic option. Contact Institute Communications and our staff can help determine what social media platforms may be the best use of your time and effort. Also allow Institute Communications to help guide you in building a proper username and imaging that is consistent with the Georgia Institute of Technology brand efforts and maintains a sense of cohesiveness across the spectrum.

Consider these 4 E’s of social media that will need to be ever-present in your social media strategy before you launch:

Explore. If part of your plan includes launching a new effort on a social media platform, learn about that specific platform prior to start up. Build a personal page on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Pinterest for example before building your organizational page. Check the administrative policies for usage on each specific page. Consider why you want to launch the new effort and seek out similar groups or entities that might have a similar social media presence to the one you would like to launch. This can help you decide whether or not social media may be right for your effort, or seeking out platforms or pages already in place might be better options for accomplishing your goals. If you are going to launch an effort on any social media outlet, make sure you have the time and commitment to do it well. Make it a priority to stay up to date on any changes to specific social media platforms and technologies and look for new ways to use those advancements.

Engage. Participate in conversations on your own page and across other Georgia Tech social media, be that through personal pages or the Institute pages you are developing. Use social media as an opportunity to network and collaborate with other entities through commenting on posts, “liking” or “retweeting” other departments’ or organizations’ status updates. Engage with

other entities of value, including Atlanta community groups and industry blogs or forums that relate to your own group. When someone asks a question, look to respond in a friendly, and informative way.

Educate. If you have expertise or information to offer, provide it. If you have the details of events that your audience would want to be involved in, share it. Pass along job opportunities or topical current events that relate to the people who follow you. Inform your audience about the resources you can provide to them. Social media also offers an opportunity to correct misinformation. Much of the social media space is about sharing knowledge, but looking for interesting ways of providing those details to your audience is the key to gaining social media momentum rather than posting numbers, dates, times, and text without any sense of interest or appeal.

Entertain. Remember to have fun. Social media by definition is about relationships, and interaction. Well-written, witty, clever, and creative posts rise above the clutter of thousands - even millions - of messages being sent out minute by minute. Look for opportunities to showcase unique individuals, exciting and emotional stories, and exhibit Georgia Tech Pride. Look for opportunities to take creative pictures and video and work them into your social media effort as well.

As you get started on social media:

Secure approval. If you wish to create an official social media page or profile for your unit, secure the approval of your senior manager.

Identify a coordinator. Determine who will be the primary person responsible for updating and monitoring your social media presence. Ensure they have time to check in on the site at least once a day. Successful social media initiatives are updated frequently and respond quickly to timely events and problems. Assign and train a backup for this person. The primary social media coordinator for your unit should be responsible for collaborating with other campus units to help improve the consistency of messages, avoid duplicated efforts, and identify new opportunities. Some units may choose to have students involved in their social media effort. As a best practice, students should coordinate efforts with staff members, and messaging should be approved by staff before posting.

Define your goals. Before jumping in to social media, spend time determining what you want to accomplish. What do you want to achieve from your social media presence and what do you hope to gain from your involvement in each type of social media channel? How would you like your audience to perceive you, your unit, or the Institute? Understanding this will help you choose the appropriate tool or tools, create relevant content, understand the best way to reach your target audience, and ensure your social media presence is aligned with your goals and the goals of the Institute.

Create a strategy. The more work you do in preparation, the more likely you are to create a successful social media presence. Define what you hope to accomplish, with whom you wish to engage, and what content you wish to share first, and then begin exploring social media tools.

Measure and adjust. Once your site is up and running, you will find some content is popular, some is ignored, and some is just plain cumbersome. All social media tools come with easy-to-use tracking and analytics tools so you can see which posts are viewed and shared most, which generate comments, etc. Be prepared to re-align your strategy in response to who is viewing your site and how they are doing so. Institute Communications and our social media team can help advise you on some tools that can help you measure and monitor your social media effort.

How to avoid conflict and problems on social media:

Respect copyright. Do not post any images or content from another source unless you are certain the content is in the public domain or the owner has granted permission. Never plagiarize and properly cite all sources.

Be professional. You represent Georgia Tech at all times and the rules for employee conduct apply to you in the social world too. Do not post material that is harassing, obscene, defamatory, libelous, threatening, or embarrassing to any person or entity. Do not post jokes or comments based on an individual's gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, or religion.

Be truthful. Creditability is critical, avoid sharing unverified information as people may assume the information is representative of the Institute or your unit. Provide informed, well-supported opinions and cite sources.

Use licensed trademarks correctly. You must obtain prior approval before using any of Georgia Tech's licensed trademarks as a part of your blog or social media profile.

Endorsements. Be careful what you post, tweet or retweet about another product, company, or individual. Sharing info on commercial products, vendors and other third parties may appear to show favoritism to that entity - something that we must avoid as a tax-funded organization. Stick to factual information about a product or relationship only.

Stay in your lane. Do not comment on or convey information that is outside your area of expertise.

How to achieve better results on social media:

Be a good brand ambassador. Be aware of the image you present and be mindful that you are representing Georgia Tech and your behavior and opinions reflect on the Institute. Share the passion you feel for your work and talk about the successes you have been a part of here at Georgia Tech.

Be transparent and authentic. Be open about your affiliation with Georgia Tech and the role or position you hold at the Institute. If you have made a mistake, be upfront about it and correct the mistake. Don't be afraid to show people the personal sides of your staff and team or daily experiences.

Add value. There are millions of posts and images being shared. The best way to rise above the clutter is to provide value. Communicate what makes your unit unique, and give individual perspective on what is going on in your area at Georgia Tech. Your communications should be thought-provoking and should build a sense of community. If your social media efforts help people improve their knowledge, skills, solve problems, or better understand Georgia Tech, then you are adding value. Think about what you can provide that no one else can.

Think of CNN, your mother, and your boss. Don't say anything online you wouldn't be comfortable seeing quoted on CNN, being asked about by your mother, or having to justify to your boss. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you remove or delete it later.

Be active. Social media presences require diligent care, regular updates, and timely responses. If you do not have the time or resources to check in on social media efforts for at least a few minutes each day and cannot post fresh content several times a week, reconsider jumping in to social media at this time.

Most importantly, have fun! Contact Institute Communications or email socialmedia@gatech.edu if you have any questions or concerns. We are happy to advise and assist your team with your social media effort.