

Are you prepared to avoid Netflix-like corporate social media snafus?

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The use of social media by companies for public recognition isn't a new concept. As social media platforms expand, so do the number of companies using them to promote their brands and reach new or potential customers. But those companies have to rely on their (fallible) employees to come up with new or creative ways to attract followers and garner attention using their corporate social media accounts.

Has an example come to mind? Available examples are fairly limitless. Search "corporate social media fails," and you will be inundated with stories of blunders caused by (well-meaning) employees. One of the more recent and notable examples was a tweet by [@Netflix](#) that went viral in December 2017: "To the 53 people who watched A Christmas Prince every day for the past 18 days: Who hurt you?" Although Netflix remained relatively unscathed by this tweet, the example highlights concerns that employers should always have in mind when using social media to market their brand.

Who manages your social media accounts? Don't leave social media accounts within the sole purview of the technology department. While security maintenance requires the involvement of the technology department, many issues involving social media use—confidentiality, conduct, and privacy—require HR involvement. Both teams should work together to ensure that proper security and content are maintained.

Do you have a social media policy for corporate accounts? Maintaining corporate social media accounts requires thorough social media policies on developing ideas, using proper content, and setting the appropriate tone for the communication. Employees should also be trained on managing social media accounts. Caution employees on attempts to be personal and provocative. Otherwise, be prepared to respond to public relations headaches. When in doubt, content should require multiple levels of review and approval.

Is your company using surveillance capitalism? In the Netflix example, the employee tweeted about usage data gathered from its paying customers in an effort to evoke a bit of humor. (I, for one, laughed out loud when reading this tweet, wondering if my daughter was a guilty culprit.) This tweet didn't violate Netflix's privacy policy that all its customers agree to and quickly forget and ignore. Just the same, take heed that paying customers don't want to see their mined data splayed for the world to see in 280 characters.

Take care to limit employee access to user/customer data to avoid the appearance of having a cavalier attitude regarding privacy. Digital data open up temptation and risk, so you should strictly enforce policies protecting customer privacy.

Be proactive

In case we haven't learned anything from Netflix or other corporate social media snafus, here are a few additional pointers:

Read—then read it again. It's a good practice to review your social media posts for typos, accurate content, or hidden implications before it goes out (e.g., U.S. Education Department's misspelled tweets). Have a coworker proofread everything and discuss potential customer reaction before posting. Catching just one bad mistake is worth the effort.

Know your audience. Avoid politics and controversial stances. Ending up on the "wrong" side could result in a costly backlash (e.g., Uber during the NYC cab strike). Even if you're on the "right" side, a social media post can be taken as insensitive or inaccurate, and often people are just as unforgiving.

Secure corporate accounts. Take extra security measures to avoid a compromised account (e.g., McDonald's hacked twitter account). Invest in training for your employees so they'll know how to maintain secure accounts.

Be prepared to apologize for a mistake. An errant tweet is inevitable. Your recovery from a social media blunder is easier when you immediately and humbly admit to your mistakes and try to make up for them.

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