



Government of Samoa

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

Social Media Policy for Government 2017

*“If it is online - it can be found.
If you delete it - it can still be found.
Even if you secure it - it can still be accessed.”*

Tim Scully

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Definitions

Social Media - Refers to social networks, video and photo file sharing, social bookmarking, blogs, micro-blogs, podcasting, wikis and other similar tools. It refers to freely accessible online social media tools used to produce, post and interact using text, images, video, and audio to communicate, share, collaborate, or network.

Government Organisations – Refers to all Government Ministries, Constitutional Authorities, Government Corporations and State Owned Enterprises under the umbrella of the Government.

Over-The-Top (OTT) - Refers to applications and services, which are accessible over the internet and ride on Operators' networks offering internet access services e.g. social networks, search engines, amateur video aggregation sites, etc.

Public Servants – Refers to all Government officials or employees, contractors or others acting on behalf of the Government.

Authorised Content Provider – Refers to an employee designated by an organisational executive to contribute to the Government's presence on social media sites.

Security Measures - Consists of the practices adopted to prevent and monitor unauthorised access, misuse, modification, or denial of a computer network and network-accessible resources.

Introduction

The Government of Samoa is the primary provider of social, environmental, legal and economical services in Samoa. And because of its all-encompassing role in the day-to-day lives of Samoans, the computing infrastructure that the Government relies on needs to be up to date, therefore the search for better ways to maximise the benefit of ICT for development has to go on.

Broadband technologies have been progressing rapidly. In particular, high speed data communications enabled by emerging cellular technologies, namely mobile broadband, with their e-applications are changing the way we live our lives and how we do businesses. The usage of Over the Top (OTT) communications applications such as WhatsApp, Skype, etc., is driven by the improvements in the availability as well as speed of the mobile networks, the expanding power as well as affordability of wireless devices such as smartphones and tablets, and continued dominance of social communication over the Internet. Rising smartphone and mobile internet penetration has put the equivalent of a sophisticated and powerful yet personal communication system in the pocket of every individual. Consumers of communication services have increasingly put a premium on a more personalised customer experience and more customisable access to services of their choice.

Since most people spend a large amount of their time interacting with their smartphones, they want their experience to be unique and one-of-a-kind. Social media are powerful communication tools that have a significant impact on institutional and professional reputations, because they blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice. We are convinced that the potential benefits of using selected social media tools far outweigh any risks, and these benefits will continue to grow as more and more Samoans bridge the digital divide. The mission of the Government and all those involved in the telecommunication sector is to ensure such change will happen smoothly and efficiently.

As public servants, we have a unique opportunity to step out and be part of the digital revolution, joining a historical transition that allows conversations with the public, rather than simply communicating to them. As public servants however, Government employees have some additional obligations when it comes to sustaining, building and defending the reputation of Government through social media.

This policy supports to achieve an “improved quality of life for all” as envisioned in the Strategy for the Development of Samoa. The Government of Samoa (GoS) supports the use of Social Media to provide an opportunity for two-way communication; Government to citizens, Government to Businesses, Government to Government, thereby increasing the frequency and speed of engagement at low costs.

While there can be challenges, there are also undeniable benefits of using social media for Government outreach and citizen engagement.

Advantages of using Social Media

1. Enhanced Outreach

Social media have emerged as a powerful platform for forming an opinion as well as generating mass support.

2. Real Time Engagement

Social Media releases the shackles of time and place for engagement. They can connect policy makers to stakeholders in real time.

3. Individual Interaction

In traditional forms of media, interaction with individual user is either not possible or is very limited. Social Media platform offers the ability to connect with each and every individual. Such an interaction also enables the marginalised to participate in discussions and present their point of view, thereby improving the political position of marginalised or vulnerable groups. It is specifically useful when seeking feedback on services rendered.

4. Managing Perceptions

One of the biggest challenges for Government is to avoid propagation of unverified facts and frivolous misleading rumours with respect to Government policies. Leveraging these platforms can help counter such perceptions and present the facts to enable informed opinion making.

Challenges of using Social Media

1. Why use social media?

Organisations sometimes find it difficult to define the need or objective to use social media. Is it for providing information, seeking feedback, generic interaction, etc.? Due to this lack of clarity, organisations often either choose not to use social media or attempt to be present on all platforms at once.

2. Which Platforms to use?

Given the plethora of platforms and even types of social media, it is very difficult to choose the type and number of platform on which to engage and how to create inter-linkages between these platforms.

3. Who will engage?

Most organisations have limited capacity to engage with traditional media itself and since social media demands a deeper and constant interaction, availability of such resources is even more limited. A closely associated question is that of authority i.e. who is authorised to respond on behalf of the organisation, whether such a response will be made in personal or official capacity and from personal or official account, etc.

4. How to engage?

Use of social media is an ongoing process and requires long term commitment. Many have questions around rules of engagement – how to create and manage an account, what should be response time, what are the legal implications, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES

Category	Examples	Description
Blogs	blogger.com Wordprocess	A blog is a “web log”. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. Usually, viewers can comment, ask questions, share information and subscribe. A typical blog combines text, images, and links.
Forums / boards		An internet forum, or message board, is an online discussion site. Users can post messages and comment on other messages. Other types of social media often incorporate forums, sometimes with their own social conventions and etiquette (or ‘netiquette’).
Micro-blogs	Twitter™.	A micro-blog has a similar purpose to a blog, except that entries are smaller - usually limited to a certain number of characters (e.g. 140). It allows users to ‘follow’ one another so that they are notified when a new update is posted. Users can connect quickly and through many different tools such as their mobile phone.
Photo sharing sites	Flickr® Picasa	A photo sharing site allows users to upload images and is useful for categorising and organising pictures. They allow other users to comment on them, or re-use them with permission.
Social bookmarking	Delicious™ Digg™ Reddit	Social bookmarking is used for saving the address of a website or item of content and adding a tag to allow other users to easily find your research. It is useful for organising and sharing links, and for keeping track of links recommended by others.
Social networking websites	MySpace™ Facebook® LinkedIn® Plaxo	Social networking websites focus on building online communities of people who share interests. Users can build their own profile page, join groups, share photos and videos, post messages, and run other applications.
Video sharing sites	YouTube™ Google Video	A video sharing site allows users to upload video clips to be stored on the server, allowing other users to view them.
Virtual worlds	Second Life®	Virtual worlds are online places where users can create representations of themselves (avatars) and socialise with other residents.
Wikis	Wikipedia®	A wiki is a website using ‘wiki software’ that allows web pages to be created, interlinked, and edited by any user.
Podcasts		A podcast is a digital audio file that is made available via Web syndication technologies such as Really simple syndication or reach site summary (RSS). You can use podcasts to share information with your audiences. People who like your podcasts and want to

		share them and be alerted when you've created more content can be informed every time you publish a new podcast.
Productivity tools	Google Docs SlideShare SurveyMonkey Google Alerts	Tools to enhance business and organisational productivity – whether it be through increased collaboration and content sharing in private or public networks, online research templates and tools, online keyword monitoring services, off-site storage of content that can be accessed from any computer by registered users, etc.

Policy

Purpose

The Social Media Policy for Government aims to:

- Provide a framework for the use of social media services in Government;
- Support social media use in communicating overall Government matters, providing citizens with better access to Government programs and services and more choice on how, when and where to access those services;
- Enable Government to be more active in its relationships with citizens, partners and stakeholders;
- Encourage the appropriate, creative and effective official and professional use of social media by Government employees for Government purposes;
- Encourage the appropriate personal use of social media by Government employees;
- Ensure the use of social media by Government employees complies with all applicable laws, policies and procedures.

Legislation Framework

Organisations can refer to the following exiting laws relevant to the governance of Social Media in Government:

- Telecommunication Act 2005
- Crimes Act 2013
- Copyright Act 1998
- Public Service Act 2004
- Media Council Act 2015
- Government Internet and Electronic Mail Policy 2016
- National ICT Policy 2012 – 2017

Scope

This policy applies to all Government Organisations, including all Government employees and others acting on behalf of the Government of Samoa, such as project contractors, etc.

Policy Statement

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has produced the following policy guidelines to help clarify how best to enhance and protect institutional and personal reputations when participating in social media.

Government Organisations differ when it comes to communication objectives, audience profiles, availability of human and technical resources, Internet use policies and other factors that will dictate if, what, when and how social media is used. This reality presents a challenge for these guidelines to specify a common organisational approval and permission process for social media applications across whole-of-Government.

We have accordingly used the term ‘obtain the necessary approvals from the designated authority’ as the standard reference in this guideline, and Government employees should consult with their line managers to establish the relevant authority within their organisation.

Policy Guidelines

Considerations before implementing Social Media Platforms

Planning to use social media platforms should be done as part of a wider effort to develop the organisation’s communications strategy. Once an organisation understands the objectives of its communications strategy, it can then determine which social media tools will meet its needs:

- 1. Set clear, achievable and measurable goals for your Organisation at the beginning.**

Clearly defined objectives for the use of social media platforms will allow for the planning of appropriate strategies and enable accurate measurement of success. Are you trying to raise awareness and understanding for a new service or campaign, generally promote your organisation, communicate with the public, correct misperceptions fuelled by media coverage, etc.?

- 2. Identify your target audiences.**

Identifying your clients by segments will help you tailor your content and also choose the right social media tool. Some audiences will be poorly reached or remain unreached by social media tools, while others may be prime targets for new technologies.

- 3. Use the right channels.**

Consider which social media channels are most suitable both for the organisational needs and resources as well as the needs of the target audience. Different groups of people use different types of social media and have different kinds of online behaviour.

- 4. Develop an internal Risk Management Strategy.**

Consult with the organisation’s risk management team to develop an appropriate risk management strategy.

5. Assign a Social Media Communications Team.

Obtain the appropriate level of authority and approval for setting up the structure for using social media platforms. Identify authorised content providers who will have primary responsibility for populating, maintaining and monitoring your social media platforms. Ensure they have the time and enthusiasm to devote to this project.

6. Determine success criteria and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Ensure the KPIs directly measure the goals and objectives you set out to achieve. Different metrics measure different things, for example:

- The number of page views and mentions are good indicators of awareness;
- The number of comments could be a good gauge of participation in initiatives to gather feedback;
- The number of social networking fans and positive comments are possible signs of strong support.

7. Evaluation

Set a timeline for when you will conduct an evaluation of your social media success. At that time, be prepared to realign your site's content. Ongoing evaluation should also be part of your strategy.

Guiding Principles

There are some principles that can be applied across all forms of social media. Knowing these basic principles of engagement will help you; whether you are fully responsible for establishing and hosting an online community or if you are just a contributor in an existing community.

- **Be credible** - Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
- **Be respectful** - Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Be cordial, honest and professional at all times.
- **Listen before you talk.** - Before entering into any conversation, understand the context. Who are you speaking to? Is there a good reason for you to join the conversation?
- **Write what you know** - Know your facts and cite your sources.
- **If you make a mistake, admit it** - Be upfront and be quick with your correction.
- **Be responsive** - When you gain insight, share it where appropriate.

Guidelines for Official Government Communications

Government employees making comments or contributions on behalf of Government and/or Government organisations should only do so with express approval or authority and should consider the following before making use of social media tools:

1. Keep postings legal, ethical and respectful

Before engaging with a specific social media channel, ensure you understand its terms of reference, conventions and etiquette. Employees may not engage in online communication activities which could bring the Government into disrepute. Personal details of yourself or other Government employees should not be given out – only the official contact details (office telephone, e-mail or fax) for reference purposes.

2. Respect copyright laws

An official may not post any material that is protected by copyright. When posting text and/or images, you must respect the corporate identity of your organisation and Government as a whole. If you are unsure about the use of the Samoan Coat of Arms, please consult with your organisational line manager or with the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC).

3. Ensure that information published on-line are accurate and approved

In official social media online postings, all reasonable efforts must be made to publish only facts and statements that can be verified - not personal opinions or speculations. You should identify and correct any incorrect information relating to Government policy and services. People should be referred to Government websites, where appropriate, for more detailed information.

Where users ask questions about policy or published information with which you are familiar with, ensure that any comment or response you make on matters of Government policy is accurate, appropriate to the Government/Organisational role you hold, and remains politically neutral.

4. Keep Government-confidential information confidential

Government employees may not use personal social media platforms to post any confidential or proprietary information of their organisation or the Government as a whole.

Government employees may only use personal social media platforms to share Government news if that information has already been officially published in the public domain.

Government employees must familiarise themselves with the content of any non-disclosure agreement they signed when joining the Government, and ensure that all personal social media activities are in alignment and compliance with this policy and all other applicable regulations, acts and policies.

5. Keep personal social media activities distinct from Government communication

Government logos and other Government branding symbols may not be used in personal social media posts without explicit permission in writing from the designated authority.

Government employees can be held legally responsible for all comments that they post on their personal social media platforms.

6. Respect Government time and property

Government computers, other resources (including stationery and computer consumables) and time at work are reserved for Government-related business.

Government employees must ensure that their personal online activities do not interfere with their work duties and performance.

Government owns any employee communication sent using Government computers or that is stored on Government equipment. As stipulated in your organisation's

internal policies and related regulations, acts and other legislation, authorised officials have the right to access any material on your official computer at any time.

Failure to control when and how social media sites are being created and used on behalf of the Government sets the stage for losses. Staff should always think before they post, and they should use their common sense!

Guidelines for Organisations

Responsible Organisational Policy Executives and or Information Technology Executives are responsible for:

- Ensuring employees are advised of the Social Media Policy for Government 2017;
- Ensuring requirements of the policy have been met;
- Designating authorised content providers and consider the investment of their time and other resources involved in moderation, creating content and responding to comments;
- Develop a risk management strategy or include as part of the organisations social media policy and guidelines;
- Ensure the decision to implement a social media communication strategy is adequately scoped and resourced;
- Have processes in place to ensure complaints and other feedback are correctly defined, triaged and addressed.

Guidelines for Authorised Content Provider

The protocols that apply when you are acting as an official representative of your organisation are the same whether you are talking to the media, speaking at a conference or using social media.

Authorised content providers should consider the following;

- Before engaging with a specific social media channel, ensure you understand its conventions and etiquette.
- Ensure you understand how social media fits into the overall goals and objectives of your organisation.
- When you are speaking on behalf of your organisation, identify yourself as such.
- Correct any factual inaccuracies you find relating to Government policy.
- Where users ask questions about policy or published information with which you are familiar with, provide answers to the queries.
- If you make personal comments about the character or ability of other people you immediately raise the risk and opening the door to those people taking legal action against you.
- Refer people to Government sites, where appropriate.
- Do not give out personal details of yourself or other staff.
- Do not post any material that is protected by copyright.
- Think about the language you use when making public comments about sensitive issues. Is it consistent with the kind of language that people would expect public servants to use? Is it nuanced and thoughtful, or blunt and inflammatory? Does it recognise that there may be alternative points of view?
- Collaborate closely across all sections and teams within your organisation to provide complete solutions for clients.

- If you become the point of contact for a customer or employee complaint, stay with it until it is resolved.

Guidelines for Personal Use by Government Officials

When using social media for personal use, public servants should also consider the following;

- Could what you are doing harm the reputation of your organisation and the Government of Samoa?
- Are you disclosing organisational material that you are not specifically authorised to disclose?
- Have you made it clear to others when your contribution is as a private individual and not as a representative of your organisation?
- Are you willing to defend what you post to your manager?
- Are you using Government owned infrastructure? Do you have permission to use it in this way?
- Are you behaving with integrity, respect and accountability?
- Government employees must use a private e-mail address rather than their Government e-mail address when engaging in social media activities for personal use.
- Personal use of social media must never interfere with work duties.

Managing associated risks

Risk	Management
Security High traffic sites may pose a greater risk for 'malware' and 'spyware'.	Government organisations can implement security measures to mitigate these risks, just as they do for other high traffic sites such as Google™ and Yahoo!®.
Time Wasting Staff may waste time.	The same risk exists in the use of telephones and email. Time wasting should be addressed by managers as a management issue, not a technology issue.
Bandwidth Some social media requires higher levels of bandwidth.	Government organisations need to budget for this as they do for other infrastructure needs. A genuine assessment of the likely costs (with a real understanding of the benefits) should be undertaken.
Privacy There is no guarantee that social media users' privacy will be protected to a sufficient degree.	Wherever possible, organisations should issue a disclaimer alerting users when they are no longer on a Government site and that the site's own privacy policy applies.
Accessibility Some multimedia sites do not currently provide content in accessible formats.	Organisations should maintain official copies of materials in accessible formats on their own websites.

Checklist

Government Organisations will make arrangements for the implementation of their internal social media policy or guidelines, giving consideration to:

- Governance, including staff education and training, monitoring, risk assessment, evaluation and policy review;
- Operating conditions and associated policies and programs;
- Privacy, intellectual property and records management;
- Resourcing for all activities and at all levels of the organisation.

Monitoring and Review

The Social Media Policy for Government 2017 is subject to be regularly monitored and reviewed by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) through its Policy Division every twelve month cycle.

Annex 1: Frequently Asked Questions

	Question	Answer
1	Can I post anything I like if I make it clear that I am posting only in a private capacity?	It's a good idea to include a statement on your social media platforms, or in individual posts if necessary, to the effect that your views don't represent those of your employer. However, this won't always protect you from a finding that you have breached the policy.
2	Why can't I say what I want if I post anonymously?	<p><i>Are you sure you're anonymous?</i></p> <p>Posting material anonymously or using a pseudonym doesn't guarantee your identity will stay hidden. Even if you don't identify yourself you can still be identified by someone else.</p> <p>It is simply common sense to assume that anything you write or post can be linked to you and your employer - whether you intend it or not.</p>
3	What if I've posted after hours?	Your capacity to affect the reputation of your organisation and the Government does not stop when you leave the office. The comments you make after hours can make people question your ability to be impartial, respectful and professional when you are at work.
4	But what if I posted material from my private computer/tablet/phone?	<p>Posting material from your private equipment means that you don't have to worry about whether you've used Government ICT resources properly. However, it doesn't affect whether what you've said is OK or not. In the same way that posting material after hours won't always protect you, neither will using your own equipment.</p> <p>If you do post material from a work computer, remember that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your employer has access to everything you post and every email you send, and ▪ You will be immediately identifiable as an employee of your organisation. <p>Any use that you make of your organisation's ICT equipment must be in line with your organisation's own policies.</p>

5	But I know that I'm impartial at work...	<p>An important thing to remember is that your obligation under the Public Service Code of Conduct is to act at all times in a way that upholds the SPS Value of impartiality and maintains your capacity to serve the Government of the day impartially.</p> <p>It doesn't matter, ultimately, whether you think that you are still impartial at work. The question is whether the people you work with, the Government you serve, and the clients you assist—from the Minister's Office to the people on the other side of the counter—are just as confident that you will treat them professionally and impartially. What you say in your own time on social media can affect that confidence and the reputation of your organisation and of the Government of Samoa.</p>
6	Why can't I rely on privacy settings on my social media platforms?	<p>It's prudent to restrict the publication of your comments to those people who you actually want to see the comments. You can set the privacy settings as high as you like. But it's not a complete protection, and it's a bad idea to rely on it. It won't stop a friend of yours deciding that something you wrote is particularly funny or insightful, taking a screenshot, and making it available for everyone to see.</p>
7	What about "liking", "sharing" and "reposting"?	<p>If you 'like' something on a social media platform, it will generally be taken to be an endorsement of that material as though you'd created that material yourself.</p> <p>'Sharing' a post has much the same effect. However, if you're sharing something because you disagree with it and want to draw it someone else's attention, make sure that you make that clear at the time in a way that doesn't breach the policy itself. It may not be enough to select the 'angry face' icon, especially if you're one of thousands that have done so.</p>
8	If my social media pages are locked to friends only but one of my friends reposts one of my posts, could this be a breach?	<p>The fact that one of your friends chose to repost it doesn't create the breach - it just makes it easier to identify and investigate.</p> <p>Public comment includes anything that you say in public or which ends up in public. This can include something you've said or written to one person. If your comment has an audience, or a recipient, it's a public comment.</p>

9	Can I breach the Policy through material in a private email that I send to a friend?	Yes. There's nothing to stop your friend taking a screenshot of that email, including your personal details, and sending it to other people or posting it all over the internet. In fact, there's nothing to stop your friend from forwarding your email directly to your employer and reporting your behaviour.
10	Am I responsible for nasty comments made by someone else on my social media pages?	<p>Doing nothing about objectionable material that someone else has posted on your page can reasonably be seen in some circumstances as your endorsement of that material. If someone does post material of this kind, it may be sensible to delete it or make it plain that you don't agree with it or support it.</p> <p>Any breach of the Policy would not come from the person making the post. It would come from how you reacted to it.</p>
11	Is posting to a closed mailing list making a public comment?	Yes. The same principles apply in this case as posting to locked social media pages or sending private emails.
12	Can an employee post about how the way they have been dealt with within their organisation?	<p>This will always be a matter for very careful consideration, and the principles set out in this guidance will be helpful.</p> <p>It may be important to remember that if an employee is not happy with the way that they have been dealt with. They have a number of options available to them. If they can't resolve the issue within their organisation, they could seek help from the Ombudsman, or to the Public Service Commission.</p>
13	Can I post comments about politics, issues and events in other countries?	Usually, yes, but the same concerns still apply. For example, some public servants work in roles that involve them in day-to-day relations between Samoa and other countries and need to think carefully about whether it's appropriate for them to comment on international affairs. Other public servants, senior employees especially, may be seen to be commenting on behalf of the Government and need to exercise sensible care in their comments.

Annex 2: Government Organisations

The Social Media Policy for Government 2017 applies to all the following Government Organisations:

ACC	Accident Compensation Corporation
CBS	Central Bank of Samoa
DBS	Development Bank of Samoa
EPC	Electric Power Corporation
LA	The Department of the Legislative Assembly
LTA	Land Transport Authority
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
MCIL	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour
MCIT	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
MESC	Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MJCA	Ministry of Justice, Courts and Administration
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOP	Ministry of Police
MOR	Ministry of Revenue
MPE	Ministry of Public Enterprises
MPMC	Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet
MWCSD	Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development
MWTI	Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure
NHS	National Health Services
NUS	National University of Samoa
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
OEC	Office of the Electoral Commission
OMBD	Ombudsman Office
OOTR	Office of the Regulator
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTO	Public Trust Office
SAA	Samoa Airports Authority
SAMPOS	Samoa Post Office
SAO	Samoa Audit Office
SBS	Samoa Bureau of Statistics
SFESA	Samoa Fire Emergency Services Agency
SHC	Samoa Housing Corporation
SIFA	Samoa International Finance Authority
SLAC	Samoa Life Assurance Corporation
SLC	Samoa Land Corporation
SLRC	Samoa Law Reform Commission
SNKF	Samoa National Kidney Foundation
SNPF	Samoa National Provident Fund
SPA	Samoa Ports Authority
SPCS	Samoa Prisons and Corrections Services
SQA	Samoa Qualifications Authority
SROS	Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa

SSC	Samoa Shipping Corporation
SSFA	Samoa Sports Facilities Authority
SSS	Samoa Shipping Services
STA	Samoa Tourism Authority
STEC	Samoa Trust Estate Corporation
SWA	Samoa Water Authority
UTOS	Unit Trust of Samoa

