**SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE ACTIVITIES – Extracted from our Company Handbook**

The advent of Social Media and Blogging websites/forums has rapidly created a vast topic in its own right, and one that the company takes seriously in terms of its correct and appropriate usage and the development and maintenance of online responsibility, in terms of the businesses themselves and the individuals within them.

**The Running of Company Social Networking Profiles**

The set up and running of any social networking site or similar (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace etc) is a Marketing Department function, and will be performed by the Marketing Department on behalf of the branch/branches to whom it relates.

In the expanding area of social networking, it is vitally important that the company retains control of its image and what it says in the public domain. There can be no unofficial versions of this purporting to broadcast company viewpoints and messages.

**The Wider Use of Social Media & other Online Activities**

As the boundaries between organisations and their employees have been somewhat blurred with the advent of Social Media and Blogging websites/forums, the company has deemed it necessary to provide an overall guidance on the sensible and appropriate use of these outlets of expression and information disclosure and dissemination.

For convenience, we divide it into two areas – **Use of Company Social Media Profiles by Authorised Staff and Use of Personal Social Media Profiles and Other Online Activities.**

**Use of Company Social Media Profiles by Authorised Staff**

Know and follow the company’s wider operating standards, which apply to Social Media and related use.

Authorised staff are personally responsible for the content they publish on-line, whether in a blog, social media site or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will probably be in the public domain for a long time and take care to understand a site's terms of service.

Identify yourself - name and, when relevant, role within the company when you discuss company or company-related matters, such as products or services. Only agreed content/offers and/or the company position can be stated on an authorised company social networking profiles or Blogs, not a personal viewpoint.

Respect copyright, fair use and data/financial disclosure policy/laws.

Don't provide the company’s or another's confidential or other proprietary information and never discuss company business performance or other sensitive matters publicly.

Don't cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers without their approval. When you do make a reference, link back to the source. Don't publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn which could embarrass or damage a client. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture in a social network or publishing in a blog a conversation that was meant to be private. Externally, never identify a client, partner or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a client engagement. Internal social computing platforms permit suppliers and business partners to participate so be sensitive as to who will see your content. If a client hasn't given explicit permission for their name to be used, think carefully about the content you're going to publish on any internal social media and get the appropriate permission where necessary.

Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the company’s workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics and religion.

Some topics relating to the company are sensitive and should never be discussed, even if you're expressing your own opinion and using a disclaimer. For example, you must not comment on, or speculate about, the company’s future business performance (including upcoming quarters or future periods), business plans, unannounced strategies or prospects (including information about alliances), potential acquisitions, similar matters involving  competitors, legal or regulatory matters affecting the company and other similar subjects that could negatively affect the company. This applies to anyone including conversations with the press or other third parties (including friends). If you're unsure of the sensitivity of a particular subject, seek advice from a Director before talking about it or simply refrain from the conversation. Company policy is not to comment on rumors in any way except in unusual circumstances. You should merely say, "no comment" to rumors. Do not deny or affirm them (or suggest the same in subtle ways), speculate about them or propagate them by participating in "what if"-type conversations.

Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes. If you speak about a competitor, you must make sure that what you say is factual and that it does not disparage the competitor. Avoid unnecessary or unproductive arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end and you may negatively affect your own, and the company’s reputation in the process. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Here and in other areas of public discussion, make sure that what you are saying is factually correct.

Adopt a warm, open and approachable tone and remember that much of the company’s image is developed by the public's interaction with company people. It is important that image is a positive one online. Your tone, your openness and your approachability can help with that, just as they can with your own personal "brand".

Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. The company’s brand image is best represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on that brand/s.

Don't use any company or franchise logos/trademarks unless approved to do so.

Review the quality of the text before posting it (i.e. correct punctuation and spelling etc).

Address customers in a friendly and respectful way.

If it is brought to the company’s attention that any employee is using any social networking site which results bringing the company’s name and reputation into disrepute, the company reserves the right to rely on such evidence as part of any disciplinary procedures or legal procedure.

**Use of Personal Social Media Profiles and Other Online Activities**

As most Social Media profiles contain information about the persons profession including who that individual works for, it is clearly important that its employees behave in a responsible way online, as it can reflect on the company in a number of ways, such as company image/credibility and confidentiality of company information.

Know and follow the company’s wider operating standards, which apply to Social Media and related use.

Individuals are personally responsible for the content they publish on-line, whether in a blog, social media site or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will probably be in the public domain for a long time — protect your privacy and take care to understand a site's terms of service.

Avoid discussing company matters, products or services in a personal capacity.

If you publish any content online relevant to the company in your personal capacity use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the company’s positions, strategies or opinions."

Respect copyright, fair use and data/financial disclosure policy/laws.

Don't provide the company’s or another's confidential or other proprietary information and never discuss company business performance or other sensitive matters publicly.

Don't cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers with.

Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the company’s workplace, or any social situation. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics and religion.

Be aware of your association with the company in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a company employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and clients. Be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be judicious in disclosing personal details.

Managers should also be aware that by virtue of their position, they must consider whether personal thoughts they publish may be misunderstood as expressing company positions. And a manager should assume that his or her team will read what is written. Public forums are not the place to communicate company policies to company employees.

Topics relating to the company are sensitive and should never be discussed, even if you're expressing your own opinion and using a disclaimer. For example, you must not comment on, or speculate about, the company’s future business performance (including upcoming quarters or future periods), business plans, unannounced strategies or prospects (including information about alliances), potential acquisitions, similar matters involving  competitors, legal or regulatory matters affecting the company and other similar subjects that could negatively affect the company. This applies to anyone including conversations with the press or other third parties (including friends). Company policy is not to comment on rumours in any way except in unusual circumstances. You should merely say, "no comment" to rumours. Do not deny or affirm them (or suggest the same in subtle ways), speculate about them or propagate them by participating in "what if"-type conversations.

Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes. Nobody wins in the end and you may negatively affect your own, and the company’s reputation in the process. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Here and in other areas of public discussion, make sure that what you are saying is factually correct.

Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. The company’s brand image is best represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on that brand/s.

Use your best judgment and remember that there are always consequences to what you publish. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review the policy above and think about why that is. If it is related to company business, refrain from discussing it online. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you post to your blog or publish in any form of online social media.

Adopt a warm, open and approachable tone and remember that much of the company’s image is developed by the public's interaction with company people. It is important that image is a positive one. Your tone, your openness and your approachability can help with that, just as they can with your own personal "brand".
Don't use any company or franchise logos/trademarks in any personal capacity.

Don't forget your day job and ensure that your online activities do not interfere with your job and/or commitments to the company and its customers and suppliers.

If it is brought to the company’s attention that any employee is using any social networking site which results bringing the company’s name and reputation into disrepute, the company reserves the right to rely on such evidence as part of any disciplinary procedures or legal procedure.

**Other Relevant Areas on the Intranet are as follows:**

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY
COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE AND SECURITY
CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY
MOBILE PHONE POLICY (PRIVATE)
MOBILE PHONE POLICY (BUSINESS)
CONFIDENTIALITY
ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR
MEDIA CONTACT
USE OF COMPUTER FACILITIES