

Effective October 20, 2011, the Postal Service™ is revising the *Administrative Support Manual* (ASM), by adding new Part 363 which delineates the Postal Service policy concerning social media.

For the purpose of this policy, “social media” is defined as any form of online publishing or discussion, including but not limited to: Blogs, Wikis, YouTube, Podcasts, Social Networking — Social sites (such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn), Twitter/Microblogs, and Web 2.0.

Administrative Support Manual (ASM)

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3 Communications

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36 Web-Based Communications

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[Insert new 363 as follows:]

363 Social Media

363.1 Policy

For the purpose of this policy, “social media” is defined as any form of online publishing or discussion, including but not limited to: Blogs, Wikis, YouTube, Podcasts, Social Networking – Social sites (such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn), Twitter/Microblogs, and Web 2.0.

Whether Postal Service employees choose to participate in social media on their own time is their decision. However, when using social media in a personal capacity, employees may not speak for or act on behalf of the Postal Service.

All uses of social media related to the conduct of official postal business require management consent.

Contractors and consultants are prohibited from representing the Postal Service in the use of any social media tool. While contractors may create content on behalf of the Postal Service, only Postal Service employees may identify themselves as Postal Service spokespersons and post information relating to the conduct of official postal business.

363.2 Responsible Use of Social Media

The following rules and regulations apply to Postal Service employees who use social media in their official capacity to communicate with the public or Postal Service employees.

- a. **The web is not anonymous.** Generally, everything that you post is accessible to anyone with a browser. Assume that everything you post can be traced back to the Postal Service and to you personally. While some web sites have a restricted content feature, keep in mind that external content is NOT as secure as content that resides on the Postal Service’s Intranet. Everything you publish will reflect on the Postal Service’s brand and reputation.
- b. **All proprietary information and information covered by the Privacy Act are off limits.** Do not post Postal Service information that has not already been made available publicly by the Postal Service. Posting material or online discussion of information related to Postal Service revenue forecasts, personnel matters, future products, unannounced pricing decisions, undisclosed financial results, or similar matters is prohibited and might result in legal action against you and/or the Postal Service. It is your responsibility to respect and protect the Postal Service’s confidential information by not commenting on these topics. When in doubt about what discussion topics or comments are appropriate, please contact your immediate supervisor, Corporate Communications, or the Office of the General Counsel for guidance.
- c. **Refer any media inquiries to Corporate Communications.** If your blog or other social media application receives a media inquiry about the Postal Service or its products, services, or employees, you must call Corporate Communications before responding at 202-268-2155.
- d. **Be respectful. Whether in the actual or virtual world, your interactions and discourse should be respectful.** The Postal Service Standard of Conduct states, “Employees are expected to maintain harmonious working relationships and not to do anything that would contribute to an unpleasant working environment.” Do not verbally attack other individuals or companies. This includes fellow employees, contractors, customers, vendors, and competitors.

e. **Legal requirements.** You must comply with brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, privacy, and financial disclosure laws. If you have questions about these, contact the Postal Service Law Department.

f. **Be responsible.** Abide by existing Postal Service privacy, information security, ethics, and copyright policies. No employee shall post content included in the below listed categories:

1. Information that infringes on another individual's privacy rights.
2. Personally identifiable or sensitive information, including sensitive business information (e.g., information on Postal Service contracting agreements, disciplinary actions, pending administrative hearings, and internal memos).
3. Personal attacks, accusations, threats, or discriminatory comments targeting specific individuals or groups.
4. Endorsements of political parties, candidates, or groups.
5. Discussions of topics unrelated to the Postal Service's mission.
6. Profanity — any content that is generally considered obscene, deceptive, or defamatory.
7. Content advocating unlawful action.
8. Material that violates copyright laws.

g. **Be transparent.** Use your real name, identify that you work for the Postal Service, and be clear about your role. It is never acceptable to hide your identity or try to plant statements that appear to be from an objective observer when they are really made by Postal Service employees in their official capacity.

363.3 Additional Conduct and Privacy Policies

Additional conduct and privacy policies that apply to Postal Service employees:

- a. *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*, 660 (Conduct).
- b. Postal Service Standards of Conduct, ELM 665.
- c. Handbook AS-353, *Guide to Privacy, the Freedom of Information Act, and Records Management*.
- d. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 CFR 2635.
- e. Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the United States Postal Service, 5 CFR 7001.
- f. Handbook AS-805, *Information Security*.
- g. *Administrative Support Manual*, 333.6, Endorsement of Nonpostal Products, Services, or Businesses.
- h. The Hatch Act, 5 USC §§ 7321–7326.
- i. The criminal conflict of interest laws, 18 USC §§ 201–203, 205, and 207–209.
- j. The Anti-Lobbying Act, 18 USC § 1913.

363.4 Breach of Policy

All Postal Service employees are responsible for complying with this policy. Failure to do so may result in corrective action up to, and including, removal from the Postal Service.

We will incorporate these revisions into the next printed version of the ASM and also into the online update, available on the Postal Service PolicyNet website:

- Go to <http://blue.usps.gov>.
- In the left hand column under “Essential Links,” click *PolicyNet*.
- On the PolicyNet page, click *Manuals*.

(The direct, URL for the Postal Service PolicyNet website is <http://blue.usps.gov/cpim>.)