

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BLOG GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are meant for all MHS staff interested in how social media can help us deliver our message and support the over all strategic goals of the organization.

This information will familiarize you with our blogging philosophy, invite you to find, join, and participate in our own blogs and outside blogs, and guide you in creating your own department's blogging presence.

SETTING UP A BLOG

- If you want to propose a blog then submit a **Blog/Podcast Project Charter**
- Blog proposals will be examined by your department manager and Marketing & Communications and will determine the blog's need and/or the best delivery format.
- All blogs for the Minnesota Historical Society and it's historic sites and museums (MHS) whether internally or externally hosted must be set up and established by Enterprise Technology. Staff may not set up a MHS blog without the permission and direction of Web Services/Marketing since it may not support the over all strategic goals of the organization.
- Any externally hosted MHS blogs (such as blogger.com, Wordpress.com, gather.com, etc...) need to have a username and password on file with Enterprise Technology.
- Personal blogs identifying the blogger as a MHS employee and are covering MHS issues/products/services should seek approval of Marketing & Communications otherwise please make it clear to your readers that the views you express are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the MHS' views.
- Most blogs are ongoing with no end date, while they are cheap to set up they are expensive in the form of staff time to maintain and keep audience interest.

WHEN BLOGGING...

- You are blogging as an employee or volunteer of the Minnesota Historical Society. These blogs are a voice for MHS as seen through the eyes of its staff.
- A blog is a very publicly visible piece of content that is widely accessible instantaneously. Keep this in mind when presenting your personal opinions.
- Be yourself. A personal voice is very important in this format.
- Being critical of an opinion or idea is acceptable, when it is done in a professional manner.
- Include visuals with your text.
- The blog post should not come across as a scholarly tome or as a carefully crafted press release.

- Do not post material that is unlawful, abusive, defamatory, invasive of another's privacy, or obscene to a reasonable person.
- ****Staff monitoring Museum blogs should remain aware of the MHS' Guidelines for Presenting Controversy. (can we develop guidelines?)**

COPYRIGHT, PERMISSIONS AND CITATIONS

- When quoting any other blog or publication, be sure to provide a web link to the original (if possible) and use quotation marks or block quotes (for longer texts). If you can't link to a publication, cite the title, author, publisher and year of publication.
- When using a photograph found elsewhere on the web, you must do one of the following:
 - Get permission from the original copyright holder (which may not always be same as the site displaying the image)
 - Use an image that is not encumbered by copyright, such as an image that is available under a creative commons license.
- Make sure images other than your own are properly credited, citing the source and photographer's name.

COMMENTS

- When responding to comments, remember that you are representing MHS in your blog conversations. Be respectful in your responses, even to comments that appear unreasonable and confrontational.
- All comments are moderated.
- Enterprise Technology will ensure that all MHS blogs are protected by technologies to eliminate blog spam.
- Despite spam filters, sometimes spam or offensive comments can get through. If a comment is obviously spam, delete it.
- Use your discretion with non-spam comments with objectionable content. Anything deemed to be unlawful, abusive, defamatory, invasive of another's privacy, or obscene to a reasonable person should be rejected.
- The following is from Intel's Social Media Guidelines:

"Follow these three principles: the Good, the Bad, but not the Ugly. If the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then we approve the content, regardless of whether it's favorable or unfavorable to us. But if the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, then we reject the content."

6 TIPS FOR HANDLING HATERS, TROLLS AND NEGATIVITY

One of the biggest concerns organizations have over starting a blog is how to deal with negative comments, especially those from Trolls (a troll is generally someone who tries to get attention by posting things everyone will disagree, like going to a City of St. Paul fan page and writing "Minneapolis is better than St. Paul" on the wall.) If your blog/sites accepts comments, then you have several alternatives when you receive a negative comment to your blog or post.

The Air Force Public Affairs Agency (not surprisingly) has come up with a flow chart that [aids in deciding how to access and deal with comments](#).

1. Ignoring them or delete them.

This usually isn't the best course of action. If you consistently ignore negative comments on your company's blog, that will likely generate more as your community begins to question whether or not you actually want to interact with them. If you delete them, that will make matters worse, because the bloggers whose comments you deleted will then go back to their blog and post about how you are censoring comments to your company's blog. This should always be a last resort.

- a. Don't Engage: If there is a troll making comments on your blog/post, kindly ask that person to refrain from unkind remarks. Don't engage and request your community not engage. Feel free to delete comments and lock or delete threads if things get out of control. Trolls want you to volley. They want to make things uncomfortable for the rest of your community. Instead, ignore the troll. Hang up if on the phone. Hopefully when he finds out he has no one to push around, he'll leave.

2. Attempting to pacify them.

This might include giving the commenter an incentive such as a coupon/discount to 'make up' for the complaint they have raised. This might stop the negative comments, but really doesn't help your issue, since you are simply trying to make the problem go away.

3. Addressing them.

This is always the best course of action. You can't please all your customers all the time, but you CAN listen to them. Let them speak their peace, and see if they are trying to bring to your attention problems in your business processes that can be addressed and corrected. If so, a negative comment becomes a powerful opportunity for your company to not only improve its processes, but likely convert a complainer into an evangelist for your company.

- a. Don't Antagonize them.

This is probably the worst thing you can do. Your community won't remember the person that slammed MHS but they will remember how you shot your mouth off at the person that left a comment on your blog. As with ignoring comments, this will draw even more fire from your community.

4. Contacting the "Powers that Be"

If you are in doubt what to do or would like advice contact your department supervisor, or contact

Marjorie Nugent, at 651-259-3145 / marjorie.nugent@mnhs.org or Jessica Kohen 651-259-3148 / jessica.kohen@mnhs.org in Marketing and Communications.

5. Have a firm policy in place on the site

Have a comment or anti-negativity policy in place. Offer a warning or a reminder if it's needed, and anyone not following the rules should be asked to leave if they keep it up.

6. Banning the offending party

Don't be afraid to ban someone who constantly creates a negative environment. It's not the troll's community, it's yours. Many moderators feel that by diffusing a negative situation, they're only going to make things worse because the troll will get angry. The troll is not in charge, why put them in a position to call the shots?