



Small Business Development Centers
Helping businesses start, grow, and prosper.

Pennsylvania SBDC

Social Media Guidelines

These guidelines provides guidance for center use of social media, which should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.

PROCEDURES

The following principles apply to professional use of social media on behalf of the SBDC as well as personal use of social media when referencing the SBDC.

- SBDC staff need to know and adhere to the Pennsylvania SBDC Code of Professional Conduct (section 7A & 7C) when using social media in reference to the SBDC.
 - 7.A: Public Statements – SBDC employees and outside consultants, while representing the SBDC, are not authorized to make any public statements concerning political issues that purport to represent the position of the Pennsylvania SBDC program, the [] SBDC, the [university], or the funders of the SBDC program. This policy is not intended to interfere in any way with an individual’s right to freedom of expression, labor union organizing rights, or to influence his or her personal position on any issue. The Pennsylvania SBDC and the [] SBDC are strongly committed to the individual’s right to advocate personal opinions on issues.
 - 7.C: Social Media – Communications through these sites must adhere to standard 7-A above and any other policies, if any, that apply to you at the [university]. These sites should not be used to communicate with clients because that could violate client privacy policies. In the event that an SBDC employee or outside consultant’s online account is hacked or compromised, the issue should be brought to the director’s attention immediately and the employee or outside consultant should close the account immediately. Care should be given to information posted, including photos and links, so as to not discredit the [] SBDC’s professional reputation. Employees and outside consultants will not be held responsible for content generated by others that appear on these sites.
- SBDC staff should be aware of the effect their actions may have on their images, as well as the SBDC’s image. The information that employees post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- SBDC staff should be aware that their host institution, supervisor, or colleagues may observe content and information made available by employees through social media. Staff should use their best judgment in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to the SBDC, its staff, or clients.

- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of social media conduct that should be avoided include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- SBDC staff are not to publish, post or release any information that is considered confidential or not public, especially in regard to client information. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, please refer to section 5D in the Pennsylvania SBDC Policies and Procedures Manual.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees should refer these inquiries to authorized host institution or SBDC spokespersons.
- If SBDC staff encounter a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, SBDC staff should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of a supervisor.
- SBDC staff should get appropriate permission before they refer to or post images of current or former SBDC staff and clients.
- Social media use shouldn't interfere with a staff member's responsibilities at the SBDC. The SBDC's computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. Please refer to applicable host institution policy for further direction.
- It is highly recommended that employees keep SBDC related social media accounts separate from personal accounts, if practical.

PUBLICITY RELEASES & CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

- All clients mentioned in social media by the center must have a publicity release before the post goes live. If the client tags the center or mentions the center specifically, it is okay to like or comment since the post was initiated by the client. Similarly, when a client is mentioned in a news story where the center is also mentioned as providing assistance, this is okay to post since the client disclosed the relationship.
- If a potential client posts a question or needs business assistance, refer them to the appropriate center phone number or email to take the conversation offline.
- If a situation comes up where affiliation with the client could be damaging to the center or hurt the SBDC's reputation, it is advisable to delete all postings related to the client.

BRANDING

- The SBDC logo must be used as a consistent profile image, and should stay the same for brand awareness. Please refer to the Branding and Marketing Policies document in the Pennsylvania SBDC Policies and Procedures Manual for more direction.

COVER PHOTOS

- Cover pages on social media can be changed more frequently. Think about drafting a schedule of what cover page photos will be posted each month. Many cover photos can be re-used across multiple social media accounts.
- Potential items to feature on Cover Photos:
 - Client success stories – only post if you have a publicity release

- Upcoming events
- Center award/recognition
- SBDC Services
- Client testimonials
- Center staff (consultant of the month)

CONTENT IDEAS

- Focus on small business, inspirational messages about being a business owner or small business statistics.
- Re-post or share posts from other centers across the Pennsylvania network.
- Images are great content to share, they can be easily “liked” or shared quickly, source reputable infographics from the Census Bureau or other information gathering organizations.
- It is important to “tag” a client or center in any post about them so they can see it, which increases the likelihood of it being shared further.
- Commenting and liking other posts are a very important part of social media outreach. For every 1 post or tweet about your center, you should have 5 retweets or posts about others.
- Follow and like all of your center’s local and regional economic partners, and use their posts as your feed of good information to like or re-post.
- Follow national partners and supporters of small business (ASBDC, SBA, INC., Fast Company, Kauffman Foundation, etc.) That way, you will have relevant, trusted content to share and you can share existing content rather than creating your own all of the time, especially when time and resources are limited!
- When it comes to legislators, like and follow them, but refrain from reposting any of their information since it could be politically charged. Share grand openings or other client events that are located in their legislative districts.

POST COMPOSITION

- Avoid negativity, stay positive
- Avoid using “I” (use “we” instead)
- Shorten URLs to track clicks
- For more clicks, put the link in the first part of the post
- Use action words in the post: see, watch, check out, look
- Tweet later in the day and later in the week – experiment with timing (Ideally: Friday afternoon)
- Do not send more than one or two tweets an hour
- Consider adding “Please RT” (re-tweet) to see if you message spreads further
- Check grammar and punctuation (avoid ALL CAPS and always start with a capital letter)
- Avoid using txt spk

GOALS & MEASUREMENT

- It is important for your center to track the number of new likes and followers, but the real measurement should be on conversion rate. This means, your center should make efforts to track how many visitors are finding your center website through social media. Tracking how many people are driven to register for an event would be a similar metric to measure.
- To measure your center’s website traffic, use Google Analytics to show how many visitors are referred to your site through social media. Some social media platforms also have basic analytics built-in to show user engagement.
- Use a URL shortener like bit.ly or the one built-in to HootSuite to monitor clicks on your links and other activity on your social media accounts.

HASHTAGS

The official hashtag of the Pennsylvania SBDC network is **#PASBDC**, please use it!

These other hashtags are useful and should be included as appropriate depending on your message. This is only a sample, please feel free to search and find other useful hashtags for your postings.

Small Business	#Smallbiz, #Business, #EconomicGrowth, #Biz, #StartUp, #BusinessDevelopment, #LocalBiz
Pennsylvania	#StartUpinPA, #Jobs1stPA, #PA
SBDC	#SBDC, #ASBDC
ACA	#AffordableCareAct, #ACA, #HealthReform
Business Continuity	#BusinessContinuity, #Disaster, #DisasterRecovery, #Continuity, #Preparedness