Transcription - Does Your Organisation Need A Social Media Policy

Welcome back I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn, this is Inside Exec. Today, we're going to talk about a topic that was brought to us as a result of a passing comment that was made in one of our other podcasts about social media policy. And I think in that podcast we talked about how important it was to have one and that I had been working on a draft one for an organization and how overwhelmed I was by all of the different versions that I found in doing my research.

Today, when we talk about social media policy, the social media that we're referring to is not just facebook, it is any forum where people can comment or interact with you as an organization. It's platforms like Reddit linkedin instagram pinterest the areas where you as an organization are represented because you feel that it's important to be represented. And then we look at what's the policy around that representation.

The two questions that were forwarded on to us were what should the policy contain and how do you choose someone to manage it, to manage the interaction for what's happening on those platforms.
So, first of all, if I can talk about whether you need one or not. I think that is reflected in the fact that if you've got a presence on any of these platforms, then you need some way of managing it. It can't just be well, people told us that we need to have a presence there. Well, it was a bit like when websites were first introduced. Remember that time? Even though it's some long years ago now, organizations were told you need to

have a website and so they had a single page that did nothing. It was a brochure because yeah, we exist basically. It might have had some contact details, then as the internet progressed and we became more dependent on it as our information source a lot of the time or our contact for organizations or our research about organizations. Then websites developed to what we've seen perhaps in the last say five years in terms of websites.

And I see it today, probably every day, is that organizations are not quite keeping up with the way people are viewing their web sites. So we'll see a website that is not optimized for mobile viewing and the organization is not being informed that more than 50%, 60, 70% sometimes of the people who are visiting their website are looking at it on a mobile device. So they're not seeing the whole of their wonderful website. They've paid thousands and thousands of dollars to have it developed but they're seeing bits and pieces of information or it doesn't engage people the same way, doesn't doesn't give them the same impression of the organizations that a lovely, very expensive website might.

It's a constantly changing and evolving arena. And so organizations need to be aware of it and I'm sure that you would have a policy in your organization somewhere that covers electronic media. So it's about what your image is, what your presentation is, what information is given out on those sorts of platforms, the social media policy comes under that umbrella.

Whether you have an individual one or not is entirely up to you. But my feeling is if you have a presence for your

organization on any of these platforms, you need a social media policy because the interaction that happens on those is much faster, much more immediate and can be far more damaging to the organization's reputation than a website not working.

I agree. Usually it comes under areas such as corporate affairs, or communication, et cetera. And while you have policies about who can talk to the media and who can't and all of that, social media is a bit different in that you have those policies and where the organization as you just covered Kim chooses and where to be and how to be.

I think there's another angle to social media and that's the individual. As an individual in an organization you choose to be on social media, whether it's linked in or whether it is, it doesn't matter which one again, I think then in that sense there should be a fair bit of education of your employees about what do you expect them to to say.

Not police, not tell them what to say. But that if they are talking about the organization, they've got to respect the guidelines that the organization put in place. So if I'm talking about myself, fine, I went on holidays and had a great time, whatever, whatever that's one thing. But if I'm talking about something to do with my work, then I really have got other responsibility and that responsibility is to be consistent with the organization guidelines that I work with.

So we trust them, we give them freedom, but we also give them guidance and that's where we'll come in. So you can't talk about anything commercial in confidence, for example, etcetera, the usual ones that applied before, except it's much

more immediate now and it could be inadvertently put out there and can't be brought back. So again that reminder and giving them examples and where would that lead if you inadvertently said something that you wouldn't have normally, That's it.

And it's simple things, it's like in the individual's profile, where they are on these platforms say linked in and they'll put where they're working currently, which they might be very proud of the fact they're working there and then they go in and they talk about the christmas party or they talk about something else that's happening that is not necessarily work related.

But you can go into linkedin and you can search by organizations, who are the people who had this in their organizational profile. And so that becomes a way that the searcher finds information about your organization and develops a profile themselves about what your organization is and who they are and what they allow to happen. Quite apart from the organization's actual page they might have on that sort of a platform.

There does need to be, I think a policy that is both at the organizational level and as it relates to the individuals in what you will be comfortable with an individual doing on their individual profile.

There are a wealth of, as I found in our research, there are a wealth of examples out there. People, organizations who are prepared to go public with what their social policy is and that's a great help because you can pick and choose the things that relate to your organization or that you haven't thought about

that now have become something that you need to think about.

It's also very important when you might have individuals who are trolling either the organization or people who work for you and who want to create havoc in some way. And so will leave particularly negative comments. These situations were incorporated into the social policies that I saw and the idea of where you have the policy because these are platforms that are so readily available to everyone all of the time. It needs to be in a really obvious place. It can't be buried away inside of the corporate policy inside of the public relations and the media and all of those things.

It needs to have a place that is very clear and very easy to find. So that people can't say they didn't know. Ignorance is no defense and that they are clear and aware of what the pitfalls are, what the ramifications are and what the organization's concerns are about them individually being responsible for defending the organization.

So we have a situation where someone puts up an article on Reddit which is very popular platform at the moment for people, for people of a certain demographic to get their information and it says, you know this organization, I had this problem and no one got back to me from customer service and so I don't ever deal with them again. You know, don't buy anything from them, don't go to them, don't expect them to do anything and it's simply someone reflecting their experience. So because they tagged the organization, you get someone who works for you, he is very proud of the organization, very happy with the way you work and can't understand why this

happened. And he has an immediate personal reaction because it is an affront to him that his wonderful organization has been criticized and so he wants to defend you, which is a wonderful thing. How fortunate are you as an organization to have people who are ready to stand up for you in a public arena and say that's not the case, can't understand it. But what they say and how they say, it needs to be measured in organizational terms.

Yes, you appreciate that. They want to do it. But there's a way to do it or there's someone who will address it from the organization. That then leads us down to the path of how do you choose someone who is going to respond to that? Because you've got to have someone who's across all of these platforms all the time looking for whenever you're mentioned all of the time. It's not just looking at your particular presence, but any time that your organization is mentioned so that they can address any issues that happened and they have to be addressed in a certain way. So that it doesn't recreate the fire that's beginning to burn about what's happening.

And I guess the best example of that that I've seen most recently is from the rural fire service in New South Wales back at the beginning of 2020 when we were going through horrendous season of fires and they had, I would have thought a team of people who were responding to comments and all sorts of mentions about what was happening with fires locally. The communication, all those sorts of things and they were very measured. They were very, it was a conversation. So they obviously looked at the comment and rather than react knowing all of the other things that were happening around them, they had a conversation with that person and I didn't see

anything in that time that escalated beyond the conversation. Look, I'm sorry that this has happened to you. We can't get to that issue at the moment. These are the things that you could try. They're just having a conversation rather than taking a stand and having a confrontation. They had the conversation. So yes, I think that if you've got a presence or your employees or your people mentioning your organization as part of their presence on any of the platforms that you should have a policy of some description.

As I said, there's a wealth of publicly available ones out there that you can pick and choose and that will tell you what it should contain in terms of your organization. As with all policies, it's something that you need to review and review and review because platforms change and personnel change so that you might not have the same people looking at things that you did in the past.

You really do have to find a team of people who are looking at it and rotate it through them because it's a mind numbing exercise to have to answer all of these things continuously. So you've got to have someone who's comfortable with those platforms and that wouldn't be me in any organization because I don't like any of them. But that's just an aside. But find people who are comfortable with those platforms, who are prepared to speak their organizations speak in terms of having the conversation with those that are out there. But give them some guidelines. Let them know what they can say, what they can't say and how they should say it. Yeah, I think we've covered that for ourselves today.

I hope that has helped you for the person that sent that

question in to us. But for now I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn, this is Inside Exec.