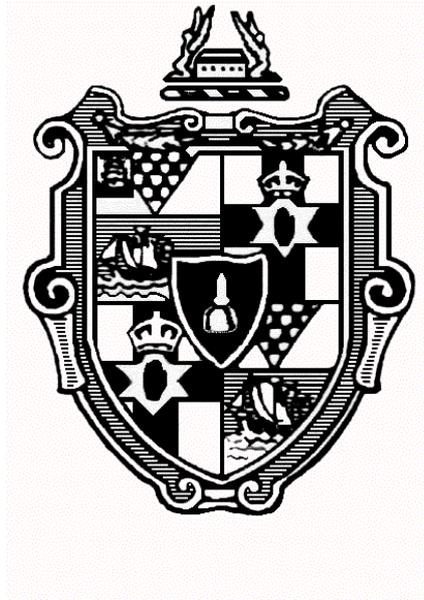


Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim



Guidelines

for

Lodges regarding the use
of Social Media

September 2015

Guidelines for the General use of Social Media

Risks

Modern social media has many positive advantages, but also has a potential for mischief that takes it beyond un-Masonic conduct and into areas such as defamatory, discriminatory, racist, sexist, sectarian and homophobic offences.

In addition there is the risk of reputational damage to Masonic Lodges and the Order in general.

A Social Media Policy should set out the responsibility of each Brother to adhere to a Social Media Policy and any guidelines when using Masonic Lodge sites and affiliated sites.

There is often an easy conversational style to Social Media which unfortunately can lull Brethren into lowering their guard. Brethren should be aware that postings can affect other Brethren and bring unwelcome attention on the Lodge and the Order

Brethren should also be aware that (whilst they may mean no harm in their comments) postings can be interpreted by recipients as being defamatory, discriminatory, racist, sexist, sectarian and homophobic and that once they post an item on Social Media they lose control of what happens thereafter. This is what happens when postings go viral.

This whole area is fraught with difficulty; therefore Brethren should presume that everything they post online will be available to Brethren and others, regardless of the privacy settings they assume are applied. In short post only what you would not mind appearing in the local or national press or news media.

Postings to Social Media sites can be withdrawn but this does not mean that they disappear. **They are in fact permanently available.**

The following guidelines are usually considered when posting content to any social media site for any purpose, whether the content is text, images, video, audio or links to other sources.

1. Brethren should respect the dignity and privacy of others and should always consider how their online behaviour may affect other users and reflect on themselves and their Lodge.
2. Brethren may discuss their Lodge and their experiences online, however, when using social media, Brethren must not engage in misconduct or malicious, salacious chit chat, which brings or may bring their Lodge or the Order in general into disrepute.
3. Photographs, Brethren must ensure that permission is granted from those photographed before posting photographs of Brethren on a social site. Never post photographs of children on a social media site without the express permission of the parents, preferably in writing.
4. Special care must always be taken when dealing with any content related to children and vulnerable adults.
5. Brethren should conduct themselves in a professional manner.
6. Brethren should not bully, harass or intimidate others. .
7. Brethren should not post threatening, obscene or profane comments
8. Brethren should not express or support sexist, racist, sectarian or homophobic views
9. Brethren should not express support for illegal activities or organizations
10. Brethren should not disseminate misleading information
11. Brethren should not share confidential or sensitive information
12. Brethren should not view or distribute sexually explicit or offensive content

13. Brethren should not infringe or violate someone else's rights.
14. Brethren should be aware that posting photographs or comments of a Brother's comical or embarrassing moments may seem funny, but may be considered Un-Masonic.
15. On a less obvious level posting personally identifiable information that could be used to locate any individual without that person's permission can create a security risk for that person.

Affiliated Social Media sites

A Masonic Lodge affiliated social media site is defined as any site that could reasonably be perceived to be associated with or representative of that Lodge

These are sites such as wine groups, sporting groups, photography groups, card playing groups etc.

For instance;

A bus is going to Dublin and there are spaces on the bus. These can be circulated on Social Media.

If for instance Brethren organize a visit to Rosslyn Chapel and want expressions of interest, then the itinerary can be circulated to all those going. If someone drops out their place can be re-advertised. All this can be done by one person without the use of phones or post.

This is all internal marketing and it is beneficial because it facilitates interaction within the group therefore the risk of obnoxious material appearing here is slight.

Website and promotional material to outsiders also falls under Social Media. Marketing to the public opens the Order to scrutiny by the Equality Commission. However the Order in England and Wales is open to such scrutiny already and the risk of such scrutiny is probably worthwhile if it increases membership of the Order.

Affiliated sites can be set up and controlled by an individual (an administrator). If Brethren set up an affiliated Social Media site they effectively become the administrator for that affiliated site and are responsible for maintaining the site and moderating (censoring) content.

Brethren have to familiarize themselves with the individual terms and conditions of any Social Media site that they use.

The site administrators must maintain the security of account passwords and are fully responsible for any actions that take place using the account.

If a site is no longer required, administrators must deactivate or permanently delete the account as appropriate.

Care should be taken when naming accounts to maintain consistency and to ensure accounts can be easily identified as Lodge or Order affiliated accounts.

The administrator follows the guidelines from PGLA on Social Media sites.

Summary

Modern Social Media has many positive advantages and is with us for the foreseeable future, the positive advantages far outweigh the negative; however there should be awareness amongst the Brethren of the risks of Social Media.