Social Media Policy

Countrywide

Contents

Introduction

This policy covers all forms of social media, including (but not limited to) Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Wikipedia, other social networking sites, and other internet postings, including blogs. It applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, during working hours and in your own time to the extent that it may affect the business of the Company. The policy applies both when the social media is accessed using our Information Systems and also when using equipment or software belonging to employees or others.

Whilst we recognise the benefits which may be gained from appropriate use of social media, it is also important to be aware that it poses significant risks to our business. These risks include disclosure of

confidential information and intellectual property, damage to our reputation and the risk of legal claims. To minimise these risks this policy sets out the rules applying to the use of social media.

Colleagues should be aware that Countrywide may randomly monitor your use of our systems and equipment as well as monitor content and information made available by colleagues through social media. Colleagues should use their best judgement in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to Countrywide, its employees, or customers.

Who does this apply to?

This policy applies to all colleagues across the Countrywide Group, including contractors and self -employed individuals in relation to service they provide the Company.

Personal use of social media

All Countrywide equipment is provided for business use only. Use of social media sites for personal use is only allowed on devices owned by colleagues and on the condition that it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and does not adversely affect your productivity or otherwise interfere with your duties to us. Any use must comply with this policy and the other IT usage policies.

Business use of social media

If you are required or permitted to use social media sites in the course of performing your duties for or on behalf of us you should ensure that such use has appropriate authorisation and that it complies with the standards set out in this policy.

If, in the course of your role you are blocked from a website you believe should be available to you then a Website Access Request Form must be completed, approved by your line manager and sent to the Service Desk for consideration. The form can be located by contacting the Service Desk on 03330 142482.

The Website Access Request Form should also be used for those colleagues who are granted special permissions to access Social Media sites. Only those whose role determines the need for such access will be accepted and the colleagues name will be added to the Social Media Users Group. Direct approval from your line manager to the Service Desk will be required before privileges are granted.

Creation of new accounts or brand pages

All new pages, accounts or groups that represent any brands, companies or any associated Countrywide businesses should be approved by Digital@countrywide.co.uk in the first instance.

What are my responsibilities?

You must not use social media in a way that may breach our policies; any expressed or implied contractual obligations, legislation, or regulatory requirements. In particular, use of social media must comply with:

- the Dignity at Work and Diversity and Inclusion Policies;
- rules and standards of relevant regulatory bodies;
- contractual confidentiality requirements;
- Data Protection regulation, including privacy rights;
- The principle of distinguishing personal opinion and beliefs to that of the company

In your use of social media you must not:

- make disparaging or defamatory statements about us, our colleagues, clients, customers, or suppliers;
- harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate in any way;
- use company equipment to create or update blogs, online diaries or social networking sites without the express permission of line management. This includes all office, branch and site computers and laptops
- use data obtained in the course of your employment with us in any way which breaches the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018
- breach copyright belonging to us;
- disclose any intellectual property, confidential or commercially sensitive information relating to our business;
- make statements which cause, or may cause, harm to our reputation or otherwise be prejudicial to our interests;
- comment in response to posts or articles regarding or relating to the business without obtaining prior permission

In order to remain compliant you should:

- Avoid using social media communications that may be misconstrued in a way that could damage our business reputation.
- Make it clear in personal postings that you are speaking on your own behalf, in particular write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address. If you disclose that you are an employee of us, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer. For example, you could state, *"the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer".*
- Remember that you are personally responsible for what you communicate in social media. Often materials published will be widely accessible by the public and will remain accessible for a long time.

If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, you should discuss it with your manager before making the post.

It is important to remember that any information sourced, or business contact made, during the course of your employment is regarded as confidential information and remains the property of Countrywide. Further information regarding the handling and classification and use of data can be located within the Information Classification Policy.

If any part of this policy is breached this may result in disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

Change history

Version no	Date	Change made by	Brief details of change
1.0	02/03/2020	Claire Raines	Launch of New Policy
1.1	22/01/2021	Claire Raines	Annual Review

Policy sign off

Name	Role	Date
Dan Thompson	Group HR Director	02/03/2020

Need more info?

If there are any queries relating to this document or any of the local supporting polices or standards please contact the HR Support Team (hrsupport@countrywide.co.uk or 01908 961200)

Ownership and Confidentiality

This document should not be shared with any other third party without the written consent of Countrywide PLC. This policy and any associated documentation remains the property of Countrywide PLC and should be returned if requested.