Digital Media Policy

# How To Use This Worksheet

Vape shop owners and employees rely on social and digital media now more than ever to get customers into their vape shops. They also face regulations that control what can and cannot be said on social media.

This worksheet should be used as a guide to produce your own digital media policy that you use in your business to prevent a frustrating situation. Have your employees the policy this upon hiring, and always refer back to it during your periodic training sessions.

## **Possible legal and operational risks to digital media (why you need this!)**

Outside of government regulations, each social media platform also has their own individual rules regarding advertising and posting about vaping.

Social media posts could violate a federal, state or local law, which could result in legal penalties. A post could also violate the terms of service of the social media site where it is published, resulting in the temporary or permanent suspension of that social media account. Either scenario is not desirable.

Here’s a quick summary of what a digital media policy can help with:

1. Many social media sites restrict what tobacco retailers can do on their platforms. Violating these terms could get your account temporarily or permanently suspended. A DMP can ensure you are staying within these guidelines.
2. Refraining from attacks either personally or towards another brand/business. Regardless of freedom of speech, slander and libel laws still apply.
3. Health claims and modified risk statements can sneak through on social media, opening you up to lawsuits and fines.
4. IP infringement can happen from even the simplest post.
5. The FDA may, at any time, create a rule that changes how you can market your business online

## **Creating consistent messages for your brand**

***Employees come and go, but your systems should remain in place for the next person to take over.***

If you want to have a consistent brand and image online, you need to make sure all posts adhere to your desired brand message and aesthetic.

By creating a digital media policy that also includes style guidelines, you can help your public image remain consistent, making your brand appear more professional and trustworthy.

## **Determine who has authority to post**

Publishing responsibilities should be laid out clearly and adhered to consistently. All posts should go through a review process to ensure adherence to the brand image and to the guidelines in this doc.

Proper admin and editing permissions should be given to protect your account but also to adhere to this policy doc. Here is an example of a digital media team for illustration purposes.

## Business Owner

Admin permissions on social media accounts

## Shop manager

Authorship permissions on social media accounts

1. Digital media manager

Authorship permissions on social media account

Sets brand guidelines

Reviews and approves all posts

Determines posting schedule

Manages digital media day-to-day tasks

1. Graphic designer

Creates graphic assets for social posting.

Takes photographs

**Reasons To Have A Digital Media Policy**

## **You might need to fire someone over what they post.**

Imagine you learned your General Manager posted on Facebook that they thought people from a particular race were all stupid. While that is deplorable alone, you also know that that same class of persons is a major customer base for your business. You want to [fire them](https://fitsmallbusiness.com/how-to-fire-an-employee/), even though he posted as a private citizen, not tagging the company.

Unless you have a social media policy, you might not be able to. If your General Manager posted as a private citizen, not on company time and from his computer, and you happened to see it because you are “friends” through the site with them, you are treading in murky waters of freedom of speech and potentially a [wrongful termination](https://fitsmallbusiness.com/wrongful-termination/).

However, this leads into our next point:

### **You need to protect your brand image and business reputation.**

Many small businesses rely on their online and in-person reputations for business. Personally, as a small consulting firm owner, referrals are the ONLY way I’ve ever gotten business, which means I know I need to be absolutely sure of what people are posting about myself and my team online and in social media forums.

If your small business is the same way, you need a social media policy. We also might recommend some [reputation management software](https://fitsmallbusiness.com/best-reputation-management-software/) to monitor it for you, especially if you have a lot of employees or a lot of repeat business like a fitness studio, restaurant, or hair salon.

### **You want to control who, what and when things are posted**

A former client of mine had an online business that offered subscription deals where every month, they delivered some products and some new samples to try. As their business grew, so did their social media presence, especially since viral videos were a huge part of their success.

Somehow in all of this excitement, every person at the company wanted to post on social media about the company and what they were up to, as opposed to leaving this up to the videography and marketing teams, which were being paid to do so and to drive traffic (as well as utilizing paid campaigns). Moreover, some of the employees were posting things not in alignment with the brand, like about hobnobbing with celebrities and drinking at clubs and bars (while still tagging the business).

This is a perfect example of good intentions gone awry, and also a perfect example of a business that needs a social media policy to draw boundaries with employees and to let their marketing team do what they are paid to do, as well as to protect the brand’s reputation.

### **You simply want to prevent issues, period.**

As a small business owner, you need to pick your battles and mitigate potential issues as much as possible. Having a social media policy helps to prevent any “gray” areas and gives you the right to make decisions as you see fit in alignment with your social media policy. Remember, one of the keys to managing people is to create boundaries and set expectations of them, be it from a [paid time off policy](https://fitsmallbusiness.com/paid-time-off-pto-policy/) to a [performance review](https://fitsmallbusiness.com/performance-reviews-template-examples/). A social media policy is a modern boundary that businesses need to have.

**Tips To Keep Your Team Focused On Your Digital Media Goals**

### **Tip 1: Stay present (and gave your managers be present too)**

If you hide in your office, your employees will most likely notice that and start to take advantage of the free reign you are giving them. Especially if you have a young employee base, you will want to make sure you keep your eyes and ears on the floor and on your managers to make sure that they are focused on their work and not on posting selfies or messaging on a dating app.

### **Tip 2: Consider blocking certain websites**

If you feel like certain sites are distracting your employees, you can consider blocking some like Facebook or the ability to Gchat. Beware though; don’t let one bad egg ruin it for the many. Instead, we recommend using [progressive discipline](https://fitsmallbusiness.com/progressive-discipline-policy/) for violations of your social media or computer usage policies.

### **Tip 3: Consider monitoring software**

If you want an extra level of protection consider internet and computer monitoring software, but you will need to use it wisely. Spying on your employees is not a best practice in HR land. It can hurt company morale, and even affect your reputation as an employer. If you decide to implement monitoring software, you should tell your employees, even though you do not have to by law.

Remember, your employees will never be perfect— and neither will you— but monitoring software can come in handy for repeat offenders or if you end up in a sticky situation where you need proof of something (i.e. someone posts something and then takes it down).

## **How to implement a social media policy**

## **(courtesy of Keller and Heckman, LLP partner, Tracy Marshall**

**Seek input.** This policy should be crafted with employee participation. This will help ensure all your bases are covered and that everyone buys into the program. It should be an ongoing process.

**Focus on the big picture.** Social media changes all the time, including which networks are the most popular and how they’re being used. Don’t get too caught up on providing specifics for each channel. Instead, provide guidelines that are as universal as possible.

**Don’t discourage use.** The language and content of your policy should be designed to encourage employees to be active on social media and champion your brand. They’ll be on there anyway. Two thirds of Canadians and Americans are on at least one social network. Avoid creating a document of DON’Ts. Instead, give your employees the tools they need to keep out of trouble and harness the potential of social media.

* Who must approve social media posts
* When are contracts required
* Timing, scope of legal review of posts
* Prohibit
  + Disclosing sensitive company information
  + Comments about competitors
  + Inappropriate, offensive, obscene content
* Require truthful, non-misleading statements
  + Address FTC Endorsement, TCPA, CAN-SPAM Act compliance
  + Require employees to disclose their affiliation
  + Adhere to National Labor Relations Board standards regarding protected employee activity

**Example language:**

Date

Your Company

123 Your Street

Your City, ST 12345

*ABC Company recognizes blogs, networking sites, and other social media (collectively referred to as “social media”, defined below) as possible tools to support the Company’s operational goals. This policy applies to employees when they participate in social media as part of their job duties. It also applies to staff employees’ participation in social media at any time that they give the appearance of speaking on behalf of the Company or its affiliates; identify themselves as Company employees or as affiliated with the Company; or discuss the Company or its affiliates. Employees are responsible for the content they publish on social media and should use good judgment. Employees should be mindful that the things they say or do on social media are publically available and searchable and may be* ***forever accessible****, which can be then associated to ABC Company. Comments, expressions, and other postings on social media must be honest and respectful of others; respect confidential, personal, and proprietary information; and comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws and ABC Company policies.*

*Social media definition: Online, electronic, or Internet media, tools, communities, and spaces for social interaction, sharing user generated content, or public or semi-public communication. Social media typically uses web-based technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogues. Social media can take many different forms, including internet forums, blogs & microblogs, online profiles, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video, email, text, instant messaging, music- sharing, and chat, to name just a few. Examples of social media include but are not limited to the following:* [*Linkedin*](https://app.fitsmallbusiness.com/goto/linkedin/)*,* [*Facebook*](https://app.fitsmallbusiness.com/goto/facebook/)*,* [*Instagram*](https://app.fitsmallbusiness.com/goto/instagram-2/)*, Wikipedia, YouTube,* [*Twitter*](https://app.fitsmallbusiness.com/goto/twitter-2/)*,* [*Pinterest*](https://app.fitsmallbusiness.com/goto/pinterest-2/)*, and blogs.*

*Being on social media on your cell phone or computer while on company time, including but not limited to Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, or Pinterest, is also akin to being on a personal call while at work. Please do your best to focus during your work hours and check these applications during personal time like lunch breaks or at the end of the day.*

*Violation(s) of the social media policy will be subjective to progressive discipline, up to and including termination.*

# The Following Code of Conduct and Ethics is courtesy of Palm Beach Vapors, John Avey, Council Bluffs IA

All Employees shall follow and up hold these conducts and ethics as written out below. Fail to do so will result in disciplinary or possible termination.

Standard Employee Code of Conducts and Ethics

· All opening and closing task will be completed on daily bases

· Store will be spot cleaned at all times

· Inventory will be organized daily to provide for easier count

· Base and concentrates will be checked daily and filled as needed

· Display cases interior will be cleaned and organized on weekly basis

· All customers will be treated with respect and helped to the best of employees ability

· All employees will be treated with respect among each other

· Employee time off will be required to be placed 2 weeks prior to the date needed

· Each employee will be expected to work the days they are scheduled, Any time trading will need to be approved by management first

· All employees will be expected to be at work on time

· In no circumstance will any employee be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs of any kind

· **All Employees will I.D. all customers who look 30 years old or younger in guidance with training done by management.**

Additional Conducts for Management

· Inventory list will made every Sunday

· Management will be required to help enforce Standard Employee Code of Conduct and Ethics

· Management will help and delegate all daily tasks as assigned

· Management will stay up to date on new products for store

· All employee time scheduling will be handled by management

· Management will up hold the best interest in the store when dealing with employees and customers

Employee Signature Date

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