

# COLLEGE OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS OF ONTARIO



Title: **CRTO Social Media Terms of Use Policy**

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## POLICY

### Social Media Terms of Use Guidelines

College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO) staff, designated spokespersons, Council and Committee Members use the Internet in the course of their work as well as during their private time. Social media – blogs, Twitter™, public wikis and social networking sites such as Facebook™ and LinkedIn™ – provide a useful means of communication with each other, Members, stakeholders and the public.

The following policy is meant to assist staff, designated spokespersons, Council and Committee Members in making appropriate, use of social media at home and at work.

#### What is social media?

Social media refers to online technologies and practices that are used to share information and opinions, host conversation and build relationships. It can involve a variety of formats, including text, pictures, video, audio and “live”, real-time dialogues of a few, or thousands of participants.

Examples of social media include discussion forums, blogs, social networks, webinars, wikis, podcasts, Google Wave and vlogs (video blogs).

#### Benefits of social media

Social media can help the CRTO to better understand, respond to and attract the attention of specific audiences. It enables interactive communication – the exchange of information, perspective and opinion – among multiple audiences, effectively, efficiently, and in places where those conversations are already taking place. Social media can:

- increase the CRTO’s access to audiences and improve the accessibility of communication and engagement efforts;
- enable the CRTO to be more active in its communications with Members, stakeholders and the public;
- offer greater scope to adjust or refocus communications quickly, when necessary;
- enhance the credibility of the CRTO’s initiatives or proposals through non-traditional channels;
- increase the speed of public feedback and input;
- reach specific audiences on specific issues; and
- reduce the CRTO’s dependence on traditional media channels and counter any inaccurate press coverage, in a more timely manner.

## **Official Use of Social Media**

The CRTO can make use of social media in two ways:

- by contributing to existing platforms operated by outside organizations or individuals, or
- by setting up its own discussion forums or other online communication platforms. These may be ongoing or may be established for a specific time-limited proposal or initiative. They may be open to the public or access may be confined to a particular group of stakeholders.

When considering launching a social media initiative, the CRTO will be clear about the purpose and the resource implications required to maintain and monitor the effort.

## **Guiding Principles for Use of Social Media**

The CRTOs Confidentiality, Privacy, Employee and Conflict of Interest policies ([K:\Policy Procedures\](#)) apply to on-line communication as fully as they do to activities in any other circumstance or venue.

### **Professionalism**

Social media is chatty and informal so, it is acceptable to be chatty and informal online. However, when participating as a CRTO employee or representative of the CRTO, professionalism should never be compromised. CRTO staff, designated spokespersons, Council and Committee Members who engage in social media must:

- maintain a respectful, constructive, professional tone that maintains the brand consistency of the CRTO;
- stick to the facts and refrain from debates over matters of strict opinion;
- never launch personal attacks or make defamatory or offensive (racist, sexist, lewd etc.) statements;
- refrain from making partisan or political comments while speaking as a CRTO employee;
- not criticize policies of the CRTO; and
- maintain the integrity and values of the CRTO.

### **Confidentiality**

Please review the [CRTOs Confidentiality policy](#). Many staff, designated spokespersons, Council and Committee Members are privy to confidential and sensitive information. It is very important to protect this type of information when posting comments online. If something would not be said to a reporter, it should not be said in a blog or any social media discussion thread.

### **Authorization**

Before granting an interview to a reporter or agreeing to appear on the evening television news, etc., individuals are required to make contact with the Registrar or President to discuss the request. Unless otherwise authorized, the Registrar and president are the only personnel authorized to talk to media on behalf of the CRTO. The same authorization applies to online communications. Any person posting to a social media site on a work-related matter must, have a discussion with the Registrar or Manager of Communications first. The public is not well served if communication from different sources within the CRTO is inconsistent.

All work-related, external social media initiative must be approved by the Registrar who is responsible for ensuring appropriate awareness and agreement with the initiative.

For further details please see the CRTOs [Communication Policy](#).

### **Self-Identification**

CRTO staff that wish to speak or write online about something connected with their role or department, even simple comments, require identification as a CRTO employee. This applies whether posting from a desk during office hours or from a cell phone on the weekend. Doing so will add a little more weight to what is being said in posts; more importantly, it will prevent situations from developing where an individual or the CRTO, could be accused of covertly attempting to influence free discussion.

### **Personal Use of Social Media During Work Hours**

CRTO staff have legitimate, business-related reasons to make use of social media in the course of doing their jobs; others do not. However, it is not appropriate for CRTO staff to be regularly updating their Facebook status, or otherwise spending significant amounts of time with social activity while at work.

### **Personal Use of Social Media Outside of Work Hours**

#### **All Employees**

As a member of the public, as well as an employee, it is acceptable to use social media in all the same ways as others outside of work hours. It is important to recognize however, that anything published on the Internet may reflect on the CRTO. Employees who use social media for personal purposes should:

- use a disclaimer anywhere there may be uncertainty about the capacity in which they are acting. A disclaimer, such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the views or opinions of my employer" can help protect you;
- recognize that anything posted on the Internet is there for good. Despite attempts to delete posts, photos, comments, etc., it is likely that this information has been stored in a number of other places. Content posted to the Internet should be thought of as permanent;
- avoid sharing CRTO material in a personal space. Try and keep a personal online presence and a work online presence separate;
- respect copyright and fair use;
- recognize that published inappropriate comments that reflect badly on the CRTO may result in disciplinary action; and
- use common sense.

For individuals who work in sensitive areas, a disclaimer by itself does not exempt the special responsibility when posting online. By virtue of the position, these individuals should consider whether personal thoughts published may be misunderstood as expressing the positions or opinions of the CRTO. Consultation with the Registrar is advised prior to posting.