

HRPA'S New Practice Guideline: Social Media Use

25 January 2023

Please note that the following answers do not constitute legal advice.

1. Is it better to have an online presence or not; does staying silent better protect you from potential backlash?

Having an online presence is a popular and efficient way to communicate with a wide range of people. It can be beneficial to have an online presence especially if you own your own company or brand to stay relevant and in touch with your customers. Even as an employee, it is an opportunity to showcase your skills and work experience across platforms that are used by employers.

With that said, having an online presence is not without its risks so be mindful to always act and communicate professionally when using social media. When posting content, clearly indicate that your opinions are your own and not that of your employer but remember that if you post on your personal social media pages, content can go public and even viral. Ensure that you do not breach professional and legal obligations by the content you are posting. Also note that even content that is private (such as direct messages) has the potential to become public if that information gets captured and shared online.

2. Can these social media pitfalls be applied to employees, not just HR professionals?

HR professionals are encouraged to refer to their organizations' social media policies when dealing with employees' social media use. If a social media policy does not exist, it would be a great idea for HR professionals to work with their executive leadership to develop one. In

general though, these pitfalls are fairly broad and can apply to employees.

3. If I have a complaint about an HRP A registrant's questionable use of social media, how do I submit a complaint?

If you wish to register a complaint about an HRP A Registrant, please download & complete the complaint form. All complaints must be received in writing (letter mail or email). Complaints are confidential but details will be shared with the registrant who is the subject of the allegations of professional misconduct.

For complete instructions on how to register a complaint, please visit:
<https://www.hrp a.ca/protecting-the-public/register-a-complaint/>

4. Can we review job applicants and/or employees' online activity especially at the time of hiring?

It is possible to review employee online activity at the time of hiring if the information is easily available in the public domain. Respect the privacy of potential and actual employees and clients by refraining from conducting online searches for information that is not relevant to work.

5. What, if any, are members' responsibilities to report violations from other HR members?

If you believe that an HRP A registrant has failed to meet their professional obligations under the Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct and/or any Practice Standards issued, you can file an official complaint with HRP A.

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how to register a complaint, please visit:

<https://www.hrpa.ca/protecting-the-public/register-a-complaint/>

6. Does the HRPA have a guideline on promotion of vaccines in the workplace?

The HRPA does not have a guideline regarding vaccine promotion in the workplace but registrants are encouraged to refer to their organizations' policies, or refer to provincial or federal guidelines on the matter.

7. Is it better to have multiple social media channels or to have only 1 or 2 dedicated channels?

Whether or not you have one or multiple social media channels depends on your individual circumstances and needs. Consider your audience and how you intend to communicate your message to them as some social media platforms have greater reach with different demographic groups. If you would like to have an account that is public, HRPA suggests having a separate private account as well. Social media platforms have different purposes, and you will need to identify which one best suits your needs.

8. Is this guideline meant for personal or professional social media accounts?

Although this guideline was created with the intent of personal social media use, the same principles apply when utilizing social media in a professional capacity or on behalf of an employer. Exercise good judgement and caution before posting or re-posting on social media and consider your legal, professional and regulatory obligations.

Always consider how your online presence reflects on your professionalism and on the HR profession. Also, be aware of and avoid any situations that could pose conflicts of interest.

9. What steps should a person take if they see false information on LinkedIn, such as someone misstating designations including CHRP/CHRL?

If you believe that an individual is falsely using an HRP designation, please notify HRP so that we can follow up accordingly. If the individual is an internal employee, it may also be a good idea to have a conversation with them to clear up any confusion.

Additionally, depending on how egregious the misrepresentation is, you may also file a complaint with the HRP ([link](#) above).

10. How do you handle making social media posts for some events but not others at the risk of offending your customers, clients, employees or followers? Is it better to not post at all?

At the beginning of the year, it is good practice to create a content calendar to identify what events/holidays/days of religious or cultural significance you/your organization intends to support. Creating a plan is necessary to ensure that you stay true to your/your organization's values and ethics and promote consistent messaging.

11. Do companies check applicants' social media profiles as part of their recruitment process?

Considering the widespread use of social media, it is possible that companies view an applicant's social media profiles during the recruitment process. This is why it helps to maintain a professional presence when using social media.

12. Have there been any *Charter* challenges for freedom of speech? and do professional associations hold designation holders to a higher standard?

Yes, there have been some legal cases such as one in Saskatchewan where a registered nurse made comments on her Facebook page about the quality of care her grandfather was receiving in a long-term care facility from other registered nurses. The regulator's Discipline

Committee found the nurse guilty of professional misconduct. While the Discipline Committee agreed that there was some infringement on her *Charter* right to freedom of expression, it decided that the infringement was justified. The matter proceeded all the way up to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, which decided that the discipline decision unjustifiably infringed on the nurse's *Charter* right to freedom of expression based on various factors.

Regulators typically hold registrants accountable to Rules of Professional Conduct and Code of Ethics by which they must abide in order to retain their registration/license/designations, which tend to set a higher standard than for those who are not part of a regulated profession.

13. What would be the consequence if someone else posted something unethical on your account without your knowledge?

Depending on the situation, an investigation may have to be conducted if a complaint was filed against a registrant. Depending on the results of the investigation, and the registrant's response to the situation, disciplinary action may or may not be taken. It is important to keep in mind that you are responsible for the content shared on your social media accounts, and as such you should act quickly to address any inaccuracies or misrepresentations. The fact that someone else may be managing your social media account does not release you from accountability because they are still your accounts.

14. What happens if an employee shares confidential information about an ongoing HR investigation on social media?

It is advisable to speak to the employee and inform them that they need to take down the content. As well, refer to your organization's information privacy policy and the employee's obligations, remind them that HR investigations are confidential and should not be

discussed in person or on social media. Take any disciplinary action as noted in your organization's policies.

15. Will HRP A consider including these and the other Practice Guidelines in the study and exam process of designations?

HRPA's Code of Ethics and Rules of Professional Conduct form the basis of all our Practice Guidelines, and the exams do include some questions related to the Code/Rules. In this sense, the practice guidelines will be addressed however, specific content related to individual guidelines will not be included in the exams.

16. How does HRP A propose to walk the fine line of perceptions and free speech if it's not related to ethics or HR practice?

This is indeed a grey area that HRP A has to straddle carefully. Even if your opinions are not related to ethics or HR practice, you have to be mindful of your social media activity and not inadvertently speak beyond your scope of practice or use your authority/power as a professional to post questionable content.

17. Does a recruiter/potential employer need to inform a candidate if their application was rejected due to something that they found on social media?

As far as HRP A is aware, there is no requirement for a recruiter/potential employer to disclose to an applicant that their application was rejected because of something they found on social media. That being said, we are currently working on a Practice Guideline on Recruitment and Selection in which we will provide more details on this topic.