Southern Response
Social Media Guidelines
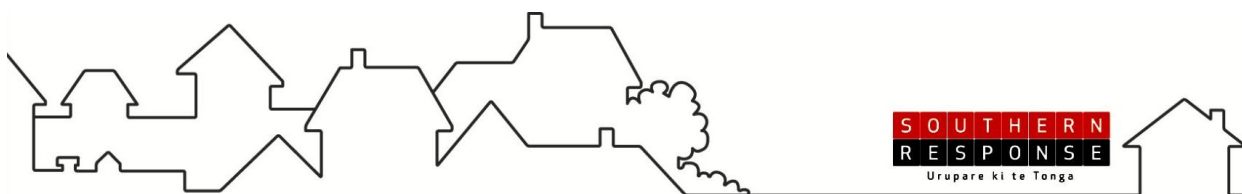**June 2016**
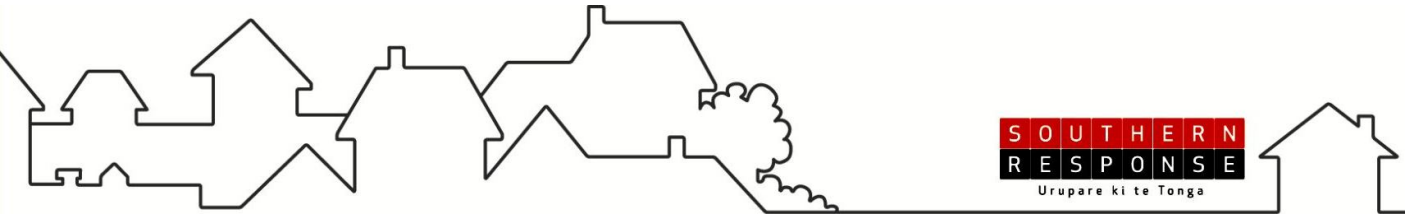
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Purpose and scope

These guidelines provide practical advice to help you deal with unwanted attention from customers via social media. It is aimed at all employees who work on our project.

We work in an emotionally charged environment. Customers are facing once in a lifetime problems. Some of them may be emotionally upset and it is possible that whilst working you may be exposed to abusive, aggressive or threatening behavior.

These guidelines do not cover other workplace problems such as bullying or harassment. Assistance in dealing with incidents of this nature should be obtained from the Human Resources team.

We ask you to take responsibility for your own wellbeing and ensure you are familiar with these tips and use them to protect yourself.

Practical steps to take when using social media

It is possible you may receive unwanted messages from customers via social media, such as on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other sites. These messages can arise from interactions with customers during your work on the Southern Response project.

Please be mindful that in the Internet age, your online identity and your offline identity are one and the same, whether you like it or not.

If you are considering posting something, first ask yourself if you would share it with everyone in your office. It's important to think about how your online reputation affects your professional career.

For example: If they are pictures of your baby niece's pumpkin Halloween costume, you're probably okay. If they're pictures of your naughty police officer Halloween costume, maybe you should keep them among your close friends.

If you are compelled to share something online, at least set up the appropriate barriers so that only the right people see it. Most social networking websites have ways of filtering friends into specific groups. Remember though that filters don't always work, and it's better to be safe than sorry. If you have doubts about appropriateness, leave it off the Internet.

Prevention

Facebook

The first thing to do is to check in your settings that your profile is private and doesn't state that you work for Southern Response. Choose profile and header photos that make it harder for you to be recognised.

This makes it less likely that customers or the general public will be able to identify you as an employee of Southern Response on Facebook.

Remember that you should only accept "friend requests" from people you know personally.

Twitter

It is harder to ensure your privacy on Twitter. Given the lower level of protection available on Twitter you may wish to reflect on whether this is a social media site you want to continue using. Twitter is a very public site and has the opportunity for people to "follow" others.

Like Facebook, choose profile and header photos that make it harder for you to be recognised. Choose Twitter names that make it less recognisable as you. For example, don't use @EmilyBoughton11 but maybe choose @EBght as a more appropriate name.

When sharing personal information about yourself, it may be wise not to share that you are an employee of Southern Response, or other easily identifiable aspects about yourself.

Instagram

Images on Instagram are easily copied and pasted for use by others. As this is an image based social media (though with a caption option) it is probably less likely that you will encounter problems or harassment from this site.

To ensure your privacy be careful about the photos and names you choose to ensure they are not easily recognisable. Ensure that the "photos are private" tab is marked "private".

Defamation

If you find yourself in one of the following situations or something similar then please seek advice from your Team Manager in the first instance.

Examples of defamation include some of the following.

- A false statement is made on social media about you that is discrediting you.
- A statement is published on social media that is calculated to injure your reputation by exposing you to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

What can you do?

To prove defamation, we need to establish that:

- A defamatory statement has been made
- The statement is about you and has the potential to lower your reputation
- The statement has been published, and
- We can establish who has done this

It is often extremely difficult to prove defamation, but there are some practical steps that can be taken to deal with this type of issue.

Removing comments from social media

- It is easy to remove comments on Facebook or Twitter. You can do this in Facebook by clicking the "X" at the top right hand corner of the comment. On iPhones these comments can be removed by swiping over the comment and tapping "remove'.

- On Twitter you 'hover' the mouse over the tweet you want to remove and a delete option (appearing as a trash can) appears. A tweet that has been sent or downloaded to an app will stay there regardless of whether it has been deleted or not.

- Comments are less likely on image-based Instagram, but images and captions are difficult to remove.

Blocking a user or reporting abuse

On Facebook you can block a user and report abuse. To block a user you need to go to;

- Privacy settings
- Blocked people and apps.
- In this section you can list the names of anyone you wish to "block", ensuring they can't comment on your Facebook page.

To report abuse, you can go to:

- Facebook help centre
- Report abuse

In this section of Facebook you can report spam, bullying, fake accounts or hacked accounts. Facebook is usually very prompt in responding to these queries. They will normally suggest you block the person that made the comments, but they may take action depending on the level of breach.

Facebook has on occasion deleted accounts of users found to be guilty of abuse.

On Twitter to report abuse you can go to;
- Settings
- Help
- Report abuse

On Instagram it is less likely to occur, but if it does then you can report the abuse to Instagram.

Blogs and other online comments

Staff may also find they are mentioned in blogs, in comments posted on news stories, or on online message boards. If these comments are offensive or defamatory, we can ask to have them removed. If they are not, we have little recourse.

Action points for managers

If an employee advises you that they believe defamatory remarks are being made, please discuss this matter with the Human Resources team.

Any remarks or abuse discovered on social media may be very distressing for our employees. As managers we need to be sensitive to this, but at the same time ensure the practical steps outlined above are taken as a first option.

If the Human Resources team and the employee's Team Manager believe a matter needs to be taken further, then we can investigate this and in cases may seek legal advice. There are cases (with successful outcomes) that have been taken against writers who have been abusive using social media as their medium.