Speech Pathology Australia

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Social Media and Speech Pathology

Social media has become one of the most used communication platforms of the 21st century and with it comes certain professional considerations. It has revolutionised the way we communicate, share information and socialise. The Assocation recognises social media's importance as a communication tool.

The ease with which personal and at times, private, information can be made available leads to the question of how to maintain a social media presence without compromising your professional standards.

Below are a few tips to help you navigate the world of social media while maintaining your professionalism, as well as keeping your public and private lives separate.

Confidentiality

Speech pathologists have a legal and ethical responsibility to maintain their clients' confidentiality. This applies online, regardless of whether you are communicating with other health professionals, friends or the general public (i.e. through a blog).

Before posting any information about a client, be sure that there isn't any way that they can be identified – either directly or indirectly. Consider who will be able to access the information you are posting and whether this will allow the identity of your client to be deciphered.

Breaching confidentiality can result in complaints to Speech Pathology Australia, involvement of the Privacy Commissioner or even legal action (including civil claims for damages).

Defamation

Defamation law is a minefield.

Landmark cases in Australia and the USA have set precedents for online defamation. Where previously it had been difficult to prosecute for electronic defamatory comments, this is no longer the case.

If a situation arises in which a third party seriously angers or frustrates you, online is not the best place to vent your spleen, as it will reach a greater number of people more quickly than you can imagine.

Client and professional boundaries

The maintenance of clear professional boundaries can be difficult when using social media. Speech pathologists have private lives that they do not necessarily want to share with their clients. It is generally wise to avoid an online relationship with current or former clients to ensure professionalism is maintained at all times.

Some health practitioners who work privately create an online profile that is maintained as their professional page only. Clients can become "friends" with or "like" the professional page, which only provides information relevant to the professional practice of the speech pathologist.

Similarly, you should be aware of the information you are posting and who will see it. Any personal comments could be read by a colleague, client or member of the public and lead to professional issues.

Accessibility of Information

Many people are unaware of how easily accessible and durable their online information is. Even if using the most stringent privacy settings, information on social networking sites may still be widely available, including

to companies and search engines. Deleting information does not ensure you are protected, as it is almost certainly still stored somewhere in cyberspace. If there is something that you really do not want some people to know about you, avoid putting it online at all. It is much harder to prevent other people posting information about you online (e.g. photos, videos). However, you can report inappropriate content to site administrators and request that it be removed.

Due to the relative accessibility of information via social media, organisations are increasingly using them as part of employee checks when recruiting to positions. Any information that appears unprofessional or controversial could lead to your application for a position or grant being refused.

Copyright

Copyright is a legal right given to the authors or creators of works.

Under copyright law, the copyright owner has a number of exclusive rights including the right to publish the work, control copying, prepare derivative works and perform of their work as well as the right to make the material available online.

If you're going to publish content at a member community from external sources you need to check its copywrite status.This applies to text, documents and photos.

Just because a photo is available on a Google search doesn't mean it can be legally used.

Facebook Privacy settings

Most social networking sites or blogs will have privacy settings enabling you to control how accessible your material is, at least to some extent. The following information regarding Facebook, while specific to that particular site, highlights many of the issues you need to be aware of:

- Facebook updated its Privacy Policy and Settings and automatically defaulted a large number of people back to far more public settings. Facebook changes its privacy settings frequently, so be alert for these sorts of changes in the future. Privacy settings can be accessed by clicking 'Account' in the top right and selecting 'Privacy Settings.' This section also allows you to see what your profile looks like to someone who is not a Facebook friend;

- Your name, profile photo, friends list, gender, geographic location and pages and networks to which you belong are considered 'publicly available' and do not have privacy settings;

- Even after you remove content from your profile, copies of that information may remain viewable elsewhere if it has been shared with others;

- The default setting for who can access many types of information on Facebook is 'everyone'. The 'everyone' setting makes information publicly available to any Facebook user and to search engines for indexing purposes;

- Adding an application to your Facebook profile shares all your profile information with that application and its parent company;

• The Privacy Policy allows for 'Social Advertisement Serving': this means that a Facebook activity you undertake, such as becoming a fan of a page, may be served to one of your Facebook friends, coupled with an advertisement for that page; and

• It is stipulated that Facebook 'cannot ensure that information you share on Facebook will not become publicly available'.

If you want to know more about how secure your information will be when using online forums, make sure you read their privacy policies. If you still have questions or concerns, you can contact the site operator.

Additionally, Australia's Privacy Commissioner also deal with concerns of this nature (see www.privacy.gov.au).

Summing up: guidelines for using social media

The Association is engaging online to:

- Contribute to the speech pathology and general community by sharing knowledge.

- Be visible and accessible/engaged with our audiences (members, prospective members, the media, government, other related organizations and the general public).

- Create a positive image and reputation for the organization.

- Be informed and educated about what is going on in the speech pathology, health and wider community.

Things to keep in mind when using social media

- Think like a spokesperson for the profession. While the Association's Communications and Marketing Manager manages the Association's official online presence, all members represent the speech pathology profession to the world.

- Be transparent. Don't post anonymously. Clearly identify yourself and your role with the organisation. Even if off duty or posting personally, you are still representing the speech pathology profession by association. If offering your personal opinion on a subject, be clear that these are your personal views.

- When applicable, links to sources and/or acknowledgment must be given to external sources.

- Exercise good judgment. Take responsibility and act professionally. Do not cause offence and ensure you reflect positively on the Association. Don't write something that you wouldn't say face to face to someone or that you wouldn't want everyone to know. Admit your mistakes and correct your errors.

- Add value. Share/provide worthwhile information and perspective. Use clear language and avoid jargon.

- Know the limits. Some topics or information are strictly confidential. Do not disclose personal/private member or staff details or sensitive/propriety corporate information such as financial reports, studies, survey results etc. unless they have been made public.

- Weigh up the risk. Responding to straightforward problems, issues, misconceptions or constructive criticism is an opportunity to correct misperceptions, however it is pointless to engage in controversial, extremely negative or destructive discussions or respond to malicious attacks. Sometimes no response is the best course of action. If you are already involved, politely excuse yourself from the conversation. If you absolutely must respond to something sensitive, don't do it immediately as your tone is likely to sound angry or defensive. Take time to reflect and provide a well thought out response. Run it by a colleague if in doubt.

- Be positive, respectful and civil in your tone and language. Do not post, or be associated with, libellous, offensive, obscene or risqué content or comments.

- Be responsive. If someone responds to something you've said or asks a question, follow-up with a response quickly (within 24 hours if possible).

- Always give proper credit. It is fine to quote or re-tweet other people's posts but never attempt to pass off someone else's language, ideas, images or other information as your own. All the copyright, privacy and

other laws that apply offline apply online. Be sure to credit your sources when posting a link or information gathered from another source.

- Be mindful of the time. Online activity during work hours may be permitted or encouraged in some workplaces, however keep it work related and don't let it take focus from your primary responsibilities. It's easy to get overwhelmed and distracted with so much information, so be aware of your workload and how much time you can and should devote to such activity.

- Seek approval or pass it on. If you see content that is questionable, erroneous or that requires a response that is beyond your expertise or comfort level, pass it along to the Association for action.

- Forward think. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time so consider the content carefully before you post. Google never forgets.

Social Media and Speech Pathology Australia

Speech Pathology Australia offers the opportunity for members and the public to contact and interact with the Association via social media. As with more traditional forms of contact, the Association has policies in place with which to deal with all queries, as outlined below.

Responding to messages and posts

Speech Pathology Australia endeavours to respond to all enquiries (telephone, email, social media post) within 48 hours. However, if expert response is required, this time can be extended.

Posts, comments and enquiries will be responded to in the form in which they were made (i.e. post, comment or message enquiry), while sensitive enquiries will be responded to via email or private message.

Should expert assistance be required (e.g. National Advisor Private Practice, Senior

Advisor Professional Issues), enquiries will be referred to the relevant expert. Enquirers will be notified via email or message that their query has been referred for expert response.

No clinical information will be provided through any of the Association's social media sites and enquirers will be referred to Speech Pathology Australia's 'Find a Speech Pathologist' search at www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Advertment, inappropriate and/or unprofessional posts, comments or enquiries from members and the public will be removed from the Association's social media sites.

In the event of a complaint or suspicious comment referring to a member of Speech Pathology Australia, the Association will endeavour to establish the credibility of an online source before referring the matter to the normal complaint channels if required.

1/114 William Street
Melbourne, Vic, Australia
1300 368 835

www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au