

Linguaviva is introducing a new training platform

Social Media for professionals

The article below describes the importance of Social Media for business.

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Social Media Training Is Now Mandatory: Five ways to make sure your company does it right

When I wrote my book, *The 2020 Workplace*, in 2010, I made a prediction some considered bold: I said that by the year 2020, social media training in the workplace would be as common as ethics and diversity training. Thanks to a turbocharged boom in social over the past two years, developments have outpaced even my own expectations. Eight years early, we are already there.

Social media training is quickly becoming mandatory for an ever-growing range of companies, far surpassing the first wave of IT firms that rolled it out two years ago, like Dell, Intel and IBM. While it began as an added 'bonus' in the arsenal of the marketing spokesperson, now companies ranging from Unisys, PepsiCo, Adidas, HP and Sprint are making social not only part of the company's core training curriculum, but also a key element in their recruiting message, stressing the employee benefit of receiving social media literacy training.

One obvious motivation for formalizing a company's social media programs and policies is to avoid a social media disaster. If you remember a video entitled "Dirty Domino's Pizza," you know just how dangerous the combination of social media and the workplace can be. The two Domino's Pizza employees who joke in this video while tampering with food – claimed afterward that they were just having fun when they posted this footage to YouTube.

The result? Both were fired and sent to jail on charges of food tampering. And three years later, when you conduct a Google search on Domino's Pizza, this awful video is still the fifth result!

Companies like Unisys, Sprint and HP are creating social media training programs to avoid these types of social media crises, but also, just as importantly, to show employees how using social media can be a valuable business tool which can increase their performance and productivity.

As Sara Folkerts, social media manager at Sprint told me, employees are often confused about how to properly use the company's internal social network. In some of her experiences with Sprint Space, Sprint's internal social networking tool, Sara noticed employees seemed to lose sight of the standard rules of engagement once they got online.

Some Sprint employees revealed their social-media blind spot when called out for inappropriate online behavior. They immediately asked whether they were in trouble with Sprint Space or Sprint HR, not realizing they were one and the same. Because of this disconnect, Sprint realized it was important to establish specific social media guidelines, even if a thorough policy of employee conduct already exists.

But companies have found that guidelines are only the first step. What they really need is a formal social media literacy program, which offers a certification so that employees can share their progress and practices both on their employee directory as well as on LinkedIn, Facebook and even their Twitter profile.

Taking the right steps in this arena can produce dramatic benefits on the business side. As Gloria Burke, Director of Knowledge & Collaboration at Unisys told me, offering social media training creates a team of advocates who are equipped to represent their employer online. "When you give them that training, you're empowering them to be more confident and effective in what they're sharing," Burke said. That means they will not only share news about your company but also feel confident they know how to do this in a safe and responsible manner while building their personal brand.

But implementing social media training isn't a simple process, so here are five guidelines for doing it right:

1. **Start early**

At Unisys, new hires are briefed on social media policies practically before the ink on their contracts is even dry. It is literally one of the steps necessary to activate new hires' employment. "We start at the very day of hire with our social media policies and will soon be incorporating a new video on how to engage with social media into the new hire process," said Gloria Burke. Creating this training for new hires sends a message to



employees that the company's emphasis on social media is not just lip service; it's such a legitimate focus that it needs to start on the first day.

2. Create a branded program for social media training

Employees will aspire to amazing things when they feel aligned to a brand. This includes the company brand as well as the brand associated with employee training.

At Sprint, the social media-training brand is called Sprint Ninja, named after the type of warrior that originated in feudal Japan and specialized in unorthodox warfare. For its program, Sprint adopted many of the principles traditionally used to train Ninjas, like self-control, moderation, and courtesy.

Sprint employees who complete for the Sprint Social Media Ninjas program (thus far, 2,400 volunteers have done so) complete a two-hour workshop to receive their Ninja certificate, but the training doesn't end there. They then become part of a community that is continuously engaged in discussion about how best to use social media to advocate for the company. What's next? Sprint is working to develop an online version of this training and offer it within Sprint University of Excellence.

3. Be specific and explicit about what you want

For many people, the thought of fusing "social" with "work" conjures a hazy gray area intimidating in its impreciseness. Sprint found that to be true; even after creating the Ninjas, some of its employees still wondered what exactly to say. So help out employees by guiding them through their first few experiences.

Sprint posts suggested tweets and status updates regularly through its internal site's blog, which the Ninjas and other employees access throughout the day. The example tweets ensure that employees new to social feel supported in their attempts to break that seal.

Also helpful: when employees tweet on behalf of the company, they are encouraged to use the disclaimer "**donating my status to sprint**" ahead of the tweet. Employees find this reassuring, Folkerts said, as it helps them mix social with work while keeping them distinct. In an example of this, below, Sara Folkerts links to a Sprint press release and tweets that customers in Wichita, KS and neighboring areas now have access to the Sprint new 4G LTE network. This formula may seem restrictive, but according to Folkerts it helps employees feel secure that they are doing the right thing when they pass along information to friends and family.



4. Include game mechanics to engage and reward employees

At the end of the day, companies must recognize that even though social media engagement is fun, it does represent an added responsibility for employees. So they must consider how gamification – the addition of game-like mechanics – can be used to engage, recognize, and reward the achievements of those who complete – and then use – their social media training. Badge-Ville and Bunch Ball are two examples of firms that help companies achieve that end by applying gamification to learning & development. Badge Ville’s client Deloitte, profiled in my post on Gamification earlier this year, believes the ability to have employees sharing their badges on LinkedIn and in their company directory is a huge motivator to engagement and a personal brand builder for them as well.

Alex Flagg, Social Media & Digital Content Lead at HP, believes the success of HP’s social media training is owed in large part to its use of gamification. The addictive nature of gamification, with badges, points, a leaderboard and ways to share all of this inside and outside the company, is highly motivating and quite honestly needed to encourage our employees to complete this type of mandatory social media training.”

At Unisys, a planned “Recognition and Rewards” program will give ‘spotlights’ and ‘badges’ to employees who contribute their knowledge to the company’s internal social media platform. This platform is where colleagues can ask each other for advice, leads, or contacts, and can seek out experts in particular fields (who are identified as such by hashtags in their profiles.)

Employees who consistently contribute will earn various icons and badges, Gloria Burke says, and if their contribution is leveraged into a larger-scale achievement, that fact will be noted as well. Then, in performance reviews, supervisors can consider those contributions as part of their evaluation, because “we want our employees to be contributors of knowledge, not just consumers.” says Burke

5. Create a vehicle for continuous improvement

Make sure there is a way for employees who are “trained” to easily connect to celebrate successes, ask questions and share best practices with others.

And precisely because it is *social*, managers must allow for – and encourage – conversation and feedback in the training process. Management must listen to employees’



experiences with what is and isn't working in the social realm and what customers are saying about the product or service. And they must be willing to adapt based on that feedback.

This is why it's so important that companies to expand social media training into a social media community, which engages continuously through an online platform. That way, the training doesn't end when the workshop does, but continues organically as a collaborative process.

If the success stories coming out of companies like Unisys, Sprint and HP don't convince you of the importance of social media training, consider this; your future employees will demand it. Millennials are already accustomed to the ease that social media brings to collaborative work; they do group projects via Google Plus, share documents in Google Drive, discuss and debate topics via closed Facebook groups, and search for ways to improve their projects by using relevant hashtags on Twitter. In other words, Millennials are using these social tools anyway, and forward-looking companies must recognize this and stay ahead of that trend.

As Gloria Burke told me, "there's been a big shift in the market." Whereas employers once scoped out applicants' social profiles as part of the recruiting process, today prospective employees have their own set of expectations regarding what their employer should deliver in that department. "Now you've got Millennials coming in and interviewing the company, saying, what type of social platform do you have that's going to help me connect, succeed at your company, and advance my career?" Burke said.

So, how are you going to answer that for your company?

