Operational Instruction Ref. OI.CG.2019.02
Use of Social Media

Authority:

This Operational Instruction (OI) is promulgated by the Head of Communications, Communications Group (CG), on the basis of a delegation of authority from the Executive Director under OD.ED.2018.03: Communications.

Purpose:

The purpose of this OI to provide instructions regarding the use of social media at a corporate level, as well as by UNOPS personnel.

Effective Date:

This OI shall become effective **immediately.**

Promulgation Date:

20 Dec 2019

Consequential changes:

This OI shall supersede and replace OI.CG.2018.03 - Media Relations. The purpose of this revision is to revise section 2.1.and add examples of UNOPS institutional accounts.

[signature redacted]

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Director, Communications Group

1. Introduction

1.1 UNOPS and its personnel may have accounts on social media. Institutional and personal accounts each play a role in UNOPS global social media strategy.

1.2 The purpose of this OI is to (i) provide instructions regarding the use of institutional social media accounts and (ii) highlight to UNOPS personnel that their use of personal accounts must be consistent with UN standards of conduct.

1.3 The instructions provided in this OI are general in nature, and are not meant to be practical advice about using specific platforms or for higher-level strategic advice on community engagement. For support with these issues, consult the online communications team at socialmedia@unops.org[1].

2. Definitions

2.1 Institutional accounts – Institutional (corporate) social media accounts are owned by UNOPS and provide information solely about topics related to UNOPS. Institutional accounts are used to promote UNOPS activities and expertise and to engage with key audiences in real time (see section 4). UNOPS institutional accounts are managed and/or overseen by the CG at HQ. Institutional social media accounts include UNOPS corporate accounts (such as @UNOPS, @UNOPS_es and @UNOPS_fr on Twitter), as well as approved Country Office accounts.

2.2 Personal accounts – Personal social media accounts are owned by individual personnel, who take them with them after leaving UNOPS. Many personnel use their social media accounts to stay connected with friends, family and peers as they move about the world. Some share reflections about their work, helping to build awareness of UNOPS (see section 5).

3. Principles

3.1 In keeping with best practices for various platforms, UNOPS shall seek to minimize the number of institutional accounts in order to avoid fragmentation of content and to maximize engagement with key audiences.

3.2 UNOPS personnel are encouraged to use their personal accounts to talk about their work to the degree they feel comfortable, within their area of competence and responsibility, and bearing in mind UNOPS instructions on speaking to the media (OI.CG.2018.01: Media Relations), as the same principles apply to social media.

3.3 In particular, all posts to social media, whether from institutional or personal accounts, must uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. As with all public communications, UN standards of conduct provide essential guidance in this area.

3.4 In addition, personnel shall adhere to the following principles:

1. mailto:socialmedia@unops.org

a. Think before you post. One of the best pieces of social media advice is this: "Don't say anything online that you wouldn't be comfortable seeing quoted on CNN, being asked about by your mother or having to justify to your boss."

b. Be honest. Do not mislead or invite misinterpretation. If you did not witness an event, do not imply that you did. UNOPS credibility is at stake.

c. Be accurate. Outdated figures and erroneous information can spread rapidly on social media. Always double-check your facts before posting.

d. Be clear. If your post is open to misinterpretation, find a better way to phrase your message to avoid confusion.

e. Exercise discretion. Leave sensitive issues to personnel specifically authorized to speak on them. When in doubt, consult your supervisor.

f. Respect confidentiality. Do not share information that is not meant for external audiences, such as details that could jeopardize relationships with stakeholders.

g. Ensure safety and protection. Bear in mind that information you post, especially locations or personal details, could put you or others at risk.

h. Show respect and ask for permission. When you talk about, photograph or video record the people (beneficiaries) our projects seek to help, strive to respect their dignity.

i. Avoid taking sides. To be as effective as possible, personnel must honour humanitarian principles, including impartiality, neutrality and independence.

j. Stick with what you know. When talking about UNOPS work, focus on your own experiences and areas of expertise to avoid spreading dated or wrong information.

k. Show integrity. You are responsible for your online reputation. Be aware of your digital footprint and act online just as you would offline.

l. Be transparent. Don't use a pseudonym or post anonymous comments or content about UNOPS, the UN or our areas of work. Being clear about your identity and affiliation helps build trust and prevent misperceptions.

m. Be authentic. When you speak from a personal perspective and mean what you say, your posts will gain more traction and visibility.

n. Be generous. Credit others and avoid negativity. Acting superior or patronizing reflects poorly on you and UNOPS and invites criticism.

o. Listen and engage in conversations. Do not simply broadcast. If people are misreading your posts or twisting your words, try to clarify.

p. Don't feed the trolls. It's often best to ignore hateful, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments. Answering may only encourage more of the same.

q. Always use common sense. Be aware that sharing content can be seen as an endorsement of the facts and opinions it presents.

r. Seek advice. If you are unsure whether something is appropriate to post, seek advice and guidance from your colleagues or ask socialmedia@unops.org[2]

2. mailto:socialmedia@unops.org

4. Institutional accounts

4.1 All institutional accounts require authorization from the CG at Headquarters. UNOPS personnel seeking to establish a new institutional account (such as a project-based account) should contact the CG at socialmedia@unops.org[3] to discuss their needs and/or seek prior authorization (see 4.4 for more details).

4.2 Requests to establish institutional accounts will be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine whether such accounts are part of a coherent and sustainable communications strategy.

4.3 Institutional accounts must use official UNOPS branding in accordance with OI.CG.2018.02: Use of UNOPS Name and Emblem.

4.4 Project-specific social media accounts shall comply with the following:

a. be clearly branded as a UNOPS project account with the project name clearly displayed on the page,

b. convey factual information only (i.e. no opinions shared etc.),

c. focus exclusively on conveying information that relates to the project(s), and,

d. be established using an e-mail account accessible to other personnel in the relevant UNOPS team.

4.5 Information shared on institutional accounts will be interpreted by audiences as a source of official statements, so utmost care must be taken when making decisions on sharing content.

4.6. Institutional accounts must be closed if they are no longer updated regularly or if they fail to engage their intended audience consistently and sufficiently.

5. Personal accounts

5.1 UNOPS personnel are encouraged to talk about their work on personal social media accounts, but they may choose not to mention their work at all. Many personal accounts might reflect a mixture of personal and professional activities.

5.2 The following points offer some general advice for managing your personal and professional presence online:

a. Do not use UNOPS in your username. Omitting UNOPS helps makes it clear that your account is a personal one.

b. If you use a social network for work purposes, describe your job role in your bio to ensure transparency.

c. You may add a disclaimer (e.g., “these are my personal views”), but be aware that your behaviour online is still covered by UN standards of conduct.

3. mailto:socialmedia@unops.org

d. Take responsibility for your privacy settings. These can be complicated, and vary from platform to platform, but can help keep your content from spreading more widely than you intended.

e. When you post to social media, you are publishing—making something public—and should consider the possible ramifications.

f. Be aware that everything you post online, even in a private group or network, can become public. Even content you delete may already have been copied and can still be shared.