

MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR GOVERNMENT

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 24, Article II of the 1987 Constitution, the State recognizes the vital role of communication and information in nation-building;

WHEREAS, Section 28, Article II of the 1987 Constitution, the State adopts and implements a policy of full public disclosure of all its transactions involving public interest, subject to reasonable conditions prescribed by law;

WHEREAS, Section 6, paragraph 1, subparagraph (a) of Republic Act (RA) No. 10844, otherwise known as the "Department of Information and Communications Technology Act of 2015," mandates the Department to formulate, recommend and implement national policies, plans, programs and guidelines that will promote the development and use of ICT with due consideration to the advantages of convergence and emerging technologies;

WHEREAS, social media has introduced new opportunities for the government to communicate to, interact with and engage the public in matters of public interest, including its policy-making processes; create awareness of its programs and policies; and receive feedback thereon;

WHEREAS, RA 6713, otherwise known as the "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," provides that public officials and employees shall at all times be accountable to the people, lead modest lives, and uphold public interest over personal interest;

WHEREAS, the right to freedom of expression is upheld as a basic human right enshrined in Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article III of the 1987 Constitution; there is a need to establish guidelines on the safe and productive use of social media in government offices to standardize, establish and define acceptable norms and feedback mechanisms;

WHEREAS, the use of social media has become an integral part of the public and personal lives of civil servants; thus, it must be responsibly used to improve productivity and governance;

WHEREAS, it is imperative to formulate a policy that will guide government agencies and employees on the responsible use of social media and ensure that such will redound to global competitiveness, performance accountability, shared governance, organizational and personal effectiveness, and service excellence;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order:

SECTION 1. Objectives.

This Order aims to:

- a. Provide a framework and technical guidance to government agencies in managing their social media account and in crafting internal policies for the purpose;
- b. Establish a basic set of rules for a productive, responsible, and safe use of social media by civil service officers and employees, taking into consideration their right to privacy and freedom of expression; and
- c. Promote and advocate the use of social media to foster good governance, transparency and accountability, citizen participation, productivity and organizational performance and improvement of public service delivery.

SECTION 2. Scope.

This Order shall apply to all national government agencies, including instrumentalities under their control, government-owned and –controlled corporations (GOCCs), government instrumentalities with corporate powers (GICPs)/government corporate entities (GCEs), and government financial institutions (GFIs), including their subsidiaries and inter-agency collaborations, programs, and projects that use social media either as essential or merely incidental to their mandate, as well as to all government officials and employees who use social media.

Constitutional Commissions, the Congress, the Judiciary, local government units (LGUs) and other instrumentalities under their control, and other autonomous branches of the government, including state universities and colleges are encouraged to adopt this Order.

SECTION 3. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Order the following terms shall mean:

- a. **Civil Servants** are elective and appointive officials and employees whether in the career or non-career service, including the military-non-uniformed personnel and the police personnel, whether or not they receive compensation, regardless of amount.
- b. **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)** is the totality of electronic means to access, create, collect, store, process, receive, transmit, present and disseminate information.
- c. **Moderation** is the practice of facilitating online interaction to ensure that everyone can take part in the discussion and get their views across, and that the consultation meets its objectives. It is also about maintaining the flow of the discussion by checking all posts in relation to the terms and conditions of the site.
- d. **Social media** refers to computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas and other forms of expressions, and content via social media platforms and virtual networks.
- e. **Social media account** is an agency's or individual's account or page on any given social media platform.
- f. **Social media platform** refers to internet-based applications or sites such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, that allow users to share information and interact with each other.

- g. **Virtual Private Network (VPN)** is an extension of a private network to a public network. This improves an otherwise public domain with the security and features of a private network.

SECTION 4. Social Media Account Creation.

All agencies, whenever practicable, are encouraged to use social media to improve access to government information, to listen to the public's issues and concerns, and to engage them deeper in consultation.

- a. **Social Media Platform Selection Criteria**

The following are the criteria to be used to determine which social media sites are suited for an agency's use:

- i. **Agency Purpose** – the social media platform must be relevant to the fulfillment of the agency's mandate, goals, and purpose;
- ii. **Audience** – the users or subscribers of a particular social media platform shall coincide with the citizen-clients of a particular agency or the demographic target of the agency;
- iii. **Social Media Range** – the social media platform must have enough active subscribers fitting within the criteria of main audience so as to justify the use of resources and personnel in maintaining the social media account;
- iv. **Content Supported** – the social media platform must support the file formats which the agency plans on disseminating through the particular social media platform;
- v. **Appearance and Design** – the social media platform must be easy to use, interactive, and accessible; and
- vi. **Terms of Service and Contract** – the terms of service, end user agreement, subscription agreement, or any other contract governing the agency's use of the social media platform shall be reviewed by the agency's legal affairs office to ensure that the obligations imposed on the agency by virtue of the said contracts are legal and in the agency's best interests.

- b. **Social Media Platform Approval Process**

Social media platforms shall be screened by the management of each agency using an approval process based on a social media selection criteria outlined above.

The social media platform approval process is as follows:

- i. The Head of the Agency shall either grant or deny approval to utilize the social media platform under consideration; and
- ii. If approved, the social media platform shall be reviewed periodically by the agency's legal affairs office to ensure continuing compliance with the selection criteria and to ensure that any amendments or supplements to the contracts with the social media platform are within the best interests of the agency.

- c. **Social Media Account Creation**

- i. Only official e-mail addresses (with “[department name]@[agency acronym].gov.ph”) shall be used when creating all social media accounts.

- ii. For existing accounts, the Social Media Officer must check whether or not these were created with the official government e-mail.
- iii. If items (i) and (ii) above are not observed, the social media account shall be deemed “unofficial” and shall be deleted. A new one shall be created immediately.
Prior to the deletion of the account, the administrator must announce in the unofficial social media account that its followers should transfer to the new one. Adequate time must be allotted prior to the termination of the account. The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) shall also cross publish the announcement of the changes in its own social media accounts.
- iv. The Social Media Officer shall submit/resubmit the necessary requirements for the account to be verified or certified as “official.”
- v. For other social media platforms that require a GMAIL account (or any similar electronic mail service), the social media team could create one in the department or agency’s name. The e-mail address shall not be named after one individual.
- vi. Civil servants must create separate social media accounts using their official e-mails if they will become administrators or editors of the page. Those without department/agency issued e-mail addresses shall not be allowed to be administrators of any official social media account.

d. Naming Convention

The following naming convention, to the extent possible, shall be used by agencies in naming their social media accounts:

- i. Departments, agencies, GOCCs, bureaus, and instrumentalities shall spell out their entire name;
- ii. If there are limits on the number of characters that may be used, the official acronym shall be used, followed by “gov.ph;” and
- iii. If the account name is already taken, the agency shall contact the account name holder and/or the social media platform and request for the use of the said name or request the revocation of the name in favor of the agency.

e. Agency Description

Whenever possible, agencies must include the following information either in a prominent page in their social media account or as a link to their official website:

- i. Charter and mandate;
- ii. Description of the agency with its vision, mission, and goals;
- iii. Citizen's Charter;
- iv. Organizational Chart;
- v. Contact details, including address, telephone numbers, e-mail, and official website URL; and
- vi. Participation and Moderation Rules

SECTION 5. The Social Media Team.

Each agency shall create a social media team who shall ensure: (a) that this Order is properly executed, (b) that the use of social media aligns with the agency’s objectives, and (c) that the social

media approach suits the program and the type of audience which the program needs to capture and complements the other forms of media used by the agency.

The social media team shall be composed of the following:

- a. A Social Media Officer who shall act as advocate and provide over-all supervision and control on matters involving the implementation of the social media policy. He/she shall be designated by the Head of the Agency. The Social Media Officer must be at least a second level executive-managerial officer of the agency, and must have at least one (1) year of relevant experience in the field of ICT or communications, with management competencies such as providing over-all direction in the social media strategy of the organization, community building and crisis management, marketing, and having an understanding of the social media technology and landscape. He/she shall be responsible for the over-all design, content and campaign planning for social media.
- b. An Account Administrator who shall create and maintain social media account/s that would represent the agency or any of its units or programs for a specific audience, program, or purpose. They shall have at least one (1) year of relevant experience in ICT.

SECTION 6. Responsibilities and Guidelines for the Social Media Team.

Social media administrators must be guided by the following when posting on behalf of the agency:

- a. The Social Media Officer shall have the responsibility, but shall not be limited, to:
 - i. Initiate the development and periodic review of the social media policy;
 - ii. Act as social media advocate and ensure that resources are allocated for the purpose;
 - iii. Initiate social media analytics; and
 - iv. Recommend to the Head of the Agency the approval of, request for creation of social media accounts in the desired social media platform that would represent the agency or any of its units, programs or projects.
- b. An Account Administrator shall be guided by the following when posting on behalf of the agency:
 - i. Ensure consistency of posts with agency policies and pronouncements;
 - ii. Plan and manage the content of the account, such as posting of original content or sharing of content from other websites, to keep it active and updated;
 - iii. Review and delete posts based on participation and moderation rules of the social media account;
 - iv. Interact with users of the social media platform with good faith and in accordance with the code of conduct prescribed under RA 6713. Social media account administrators shall be responsive, prompt, and courteous;
 - v. Acknowledge concerns within 24 hours of receipt.
 - vi. Answer queries from users which shall be processed as follows:
 - a. Refer the user to a post or page on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) or provide an answer based on the FAQs;
 - b. Refer the user to any relevant prior posts;
 - c. Refer the user to the office, or division in charge of the matter under inquiry or to the office helpdesk; or

- d. Refer the client to the appropriate agency.
- vii. Be as accurate as possible. He/she shall be able to verify information; check grammar, spelling and punctuation; and be quick in admitting mistakes and in correcting inaccuracies. As much as possible, content must be sourced from credible, reliable or validated entities or websites only;
- viii. Be encouraged to disclose his/her position as a representative of the agency; and
- ix. Know his/her limitations when answering to posts. He/she can refer to a link or government site or escalate to higher officials.
- c. The Social Media Team shall create the Participation and Moderation Policies of the Social Media Accounts of the agency.
 - i. The participation policy provides the set of rules governing the behavior expected of users of the on-line discussion or community. Users must be required to acknowledge having read and agreed to the participation policy before registering or posting.
 - ii. The moderation policy must specify the form of moderation being applied, the person or team responsible for moderation, and their contact information. It should link back to the participation policy. Users must be informed that comments violating any of the rules shall be removed from the site.

SECTION 7. Content Management.

Agencies should be guided by the provisions of RA 6713; RA 10173 on Data Privacy; National Budget Circular 542 s. 2012 on the Transparency Seal; Executive Order (EO) No. 2 s. 2016 on Freedom of Information; and other relevant laws and issuances when publishing information. In addition, the following guidelines shall govern the content that may be posted, uploaded, or shared in a social media platform of the agency:

- a. Posting or uploading of content shall only be done by authorized personnel, including the social media team, the legal affairs office, or the Head of the Agency;
- b. Contents classified as “Top Secret,” “Secret,” “Confidential,” or “Restricted,” in accordance with Memorandum Circular No. 78, series of 1964 shall not be posted and the disclosure and/or misuse of such information as stated in RA 6713 is prohibited;
- c. Ownership, privacy, security, and copyright issues as identified by the legal affairs office reviewing a social media platform’s terms of service, end users’ agreement, subscription agreement, and other contracts shall be considered. The legal affairs office reviewing the contracts shall issue a memorandum on content that should not be posted, uploaded, or otherwise shared in a particular social media platform. This memorandum shall be approved and adopted by the Head of the Agency and shall supplement the blacklist mentioned below.
- d. The following content is considered blacklisted and shall not be posted:
 - i. Blackmail/insulting content – content which threatens an agency with possible problems in exchange for money, other things of value, or personal advantage;
 - ii. Pornographic content – content which contains lewd, indecent, or sexually connotative words, photographs, advertisements, and the like;
 - iii. Malicious content – content which shows an intention to discredit an entity/office or a government representative without basis or substantial proof or evidence;

- iv. Unauthorized posting of copyrighted material – content that is copyright-protected material such as books, publications, or research that is posted without the permission of the author/issuing organization, except as may be allowed under RA 8293, as amended by RA 10372, otherwise known as the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines;
- v. Unrelated information, jokes, or promotions – content containing unrelated or irrelevant advertisements, links, personal jokes, social media pages, and other information not of value to the agency;
- vi. Suspicious links and viruses – content with links to files or websites which may post security threats to the agency; and
- vii. Opinion – content made by employees/individuals, which do not represent the department's or agency's view.
- e. Recommended/allowable content such as, but not limited to:
 - i. Official statements, press releases, including official photos and videos;
 - ii. Publication of advisories, and memorandums, circulars and orders that are for public consumption; and
 - iii. Original materials produced by the agency, related to dispensing its function/mandate.

SECTION 8. Permissions, Privacy, and Confidentiality.

Private information or information privately shared by a social media platform user to his/her account or to the agency through private channels such as private messages shall be presumed private and shall not be shared or publicly used by the agency without the consent of the user.

Content that is shared publicly may be used and shared under applicable Creative Commons licenses or in accordance with the terms of service or contract governing the social media platform.

In case any personal information from users is given to the agency through a social media platform, the information shall be processed in accordance with Section 12 of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Under the said law, the processing of personal information shall be permitted only if not otherwise prohibited by law, and when at least one of the following conditions exist:

- a. The data subject has given his or her consent;
- b. The processing of personal information is necessary and is related to the fulfillment of a contract with the data subject or in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract;
- c. The processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which the personal information controller is subject;
- d. The processing is necessary to protect vitally important interests of the data subject, including life and health;
- e. The processing is necessary in order to respond to national emergency, to comply with the requirements of public order and safety, or to fulfill functions of public authority which necessarily includes the processing of personal data for the fulfillment of its mandate; or
- f. The processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the personal information controller or by a third party or parties to whom the data is disclosed,

except where such interests are overridden by fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection under the Philippine Constitution.

SECTION 9. Records Management.

For reasons of accountability and transparency, records management policies apply to information captured and stored through social media as they do in other information. Towards this end, agencies must assess the need to capture the information based on the associated risk of not capturing them.

SECTION 10. Account Management.

Units/Individuals that would like to create or maintain a social media account that would represent the agency or any of its units or programs for a specific audience, program, activity, or purpose must seek approval from the social media officer or the Head of the Agency through the social media officer.

The proponent must define the following:

- a. Social Media Account Name
- b. Platform
- c. Account Administrator/s
- d. Target Audience
- e. Duration of Activity/Account
- f. Content Management Plan
 - i. Content Creation and Publishing Approval Process
 - ii. Participation and Moderation Policy
 - iii. Records Management

The agency may set a standard as to who qualifies as an account administrator and/or social media contributor. Likewise, the agency must identify employees who shall be authorized to engage in social media in an official capacity and become social media administrators.

Accounts that are made for plans, programs, activities, events or projects shall be deleted when the same has ended.

When a member of the Social Media Team surrenders the Social Media Account, its credentials must be turned over five (5) working days before his/her last day in office. This should be a requirement for the employee's clearance.

SECTION 11. Guidelines for Civil Servants.

Civil servants are encouraged to participate in social media in order to improve efficiency and productivity. They shall not be prohibited from using social media in their personal capacity because it is the best way for them to learn how to use social media in their official capacity. However, as in all aspects of work, civil servants are duty-bound to use social media responsibly.

Civil servants must comply with the RA 6713 with respect to their actions on social media.

Thus, the following and similar acts shall be prohibited:

- a. Use of office e-mail addresses to establish personal social media accounts or as an identifier during participation in personal or otherwise unofficial social media activities;
- b. Making comments or contributions on behalf of government and/or government departments without express approval or authority;
- c. Disclosure and misuse of confidential/proprietary information to further private interest or to prejudice public interest;
- d. Excessive use of social media that interferes with official work duties and performance;
- e. Endorsement of private and commercial products, services, or entities/brands when using an official or the agency's account;
- f. Behaviors that would bring disrepute to public service, that discourage confidence and trust in public servants, or that adversely reflect on the agency, co-employees or self as a public sector employee; and
- g. Posts that might appear to solicit support for or against a political party, as applicable.

Public officials and employees in social media must bear in mind that there are legal restrictions that must be observed, such as but not limited to:

- a. Intellectual property rights – RA 8293, as amended by RA 10372;
- b. Confidentiality of information – RA 8792 (Electronic Commerce Act), RA 6713, and RA 10173;
- c. Cybercrime offenses including libel – RA 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act); and
- d. Political activities – COMELEC-CSC Joint Circular No. 1, series of 2016 (Advisory on Electioneering and Partisan Political Activities).

SECTION 12. Security.

Security protocols shall be installed to mitigate the risks of cyber-attacks and other threats on the agency's social media account. The accounts shall be accessed through a secure computer, web browser, and Virtual Private Network (VPN) or any other secure network. To the extent possible, all security features, including two-factor authentication and alternate credentials offered by the social media platform shall be utilized.

SECTION 13. Social Media Activity Monitoring and Evaluation.

The Social Media Officer shall identify specific and relevant performance metrics to determine if the social media initiative has achieved its intended purpose.

Incident reporting mechanisms shall be installed to document issues arising from the activity and the action taken.

As part of evaluation, accounts that are made for plans, programs, activities, events or projects shall be deleted when the same has ended.

SECTION 14. Social Media Education.

The DICT in collaboration with relevant agencies shall take the lead among concerned agencies in ensuring the proper use of social media through employee education and capacity-building where they will be made aware of the risks, legal restrictions, and responsibilities as users of social media.

SECTION 15. Administrative Accountability.

The commission of prohibited acts and the failure to comply with the provisions of this Order shall constitute misconduct and shall subject the offending civil servant to appropriate administrative sanctions under the 2017 Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service (RACCS) and Section 11 (Penalties) of RA 6713, in addition to any criminal and/or civil liability that may attach. Moreover, the 2017 RACCS also applies in the institution, investigation, prosecution and adjudication of cases involving the use of social media.

For personnel under Contract of Service or Job Orders, commission of prohibited acts shall be a valid ground for termination or cancellation of contract depending on the gravity of the offense committed.

SECTION 16. Repealing Clause.

All orders, rules and regulations and other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Order, are hereby revoked, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 17. Separability Clause.

If any provision of this Order is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 18. Effectivity.

This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately upon approval.

DONE, in the City of Manila, this ___ day of _____, in the year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Seventeen.