

Publicly available social media sites started within people's private lives, and were mainly used to connect with friends and family. However, as more and more people started to recognize the simplicity and value of communicating through social media sites, the use expanded to the work place. In the last two years, governments have seen more and more requests by their employees to use social media to do their work. While it seems like a natural progression for government to connect to citizens through social media, or to "meet the citizens where they are," understanding how to take advantage of these new tools in the context of government is complex.

Recognizing the different reasons government employees engage in social media use and how they sometimes overlap is valuable in creating a social media policy. Through our interviews with government representatives, we heard three distinct ways employees are using social media tools while at work:

- **Employee use for official agency interests:** Official agency use implies that an employee's use of social media is for the express purpose of communicating an agency's broad interests or specific programmatic and policy interests. For example, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has its own YouTube channel dedicated to its activities. Additionally, many of EPA's program and policy areas maintain their own blogs. In other instances, an employee may be asked to run a contest on IdeaScale on behalf of the agency, program area, or policy area. There are also many official uses of social media that are not citizen facing, such as internal blogs or wikis for collaboration among agency project teams.
- **Employee use for professional interests:** Professional use implies that an employee's use of social media is for the purpose of furthering their specific job responsibilities or professional duties through an externally focused site. For example, almost 30,000 government employees have signed up as members at the external site GovLoop.com to engage with other professionals in a community of practice. Another way employees might engage in external sites is by accessing Facebook to view official government pages, such as the White House Facebook page, to research information on a newly issued directive. While use for professional interests are beneficial to the work of government by enabling employees to inform themselves on important issues or to collaborate with their peers, the social media tool or site the employee is using is not maintained or monitored by the agency itself. The employee is accessing sites and setting up accounts owned by private entities to consume and exchange information. Again, internally, professionals often collaborate through various technologies, but professional use implies going outside of the internal network of the agency.
- **Employee use for personal interests:** Using social media for personal interests has nothing to do with an employee's job duties for the organization. For example, an employee may want to check their personal Facebook page, send out a personal Tweet, or watch the latest viral YouTube video during a lunch hour or another designated break during work hours. In addition, outside of work hours, employees might maintain a blog related to a hobby, which has nothing to do with their government position.

These uses are not mutually exclusive and sometimes the lines between professional and personal or professional and official agency uses are rather fluid. For example, government employees might spend their work time networking on GovLoop by sharing ideas and experiences with peers in the *Acquisition 2.0* group and sharing recipes with the *Gov Gourmet* group. Our study revealed that governments are still trying to figure out how to put boundaries around an employee's personal, professional, and official agency uses. Each use has different security, legal, and managerial implications and government agencies are tasked with striking a balance between using social media for official agency interests only and allowing all employees access for personal and professional interests.

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