**Social Media Policy**

Date Established: **August 2020**

Amended:

HTA encourages members and volunteers to use social media to engage with one another and communicate about HTA activities, conferences, publications, and professional development resources. The following guidelines and best practices are intended to assist HTA volunteers, leaders, conference organizers, regional representatives, members and staff in effectively promoting HTA on online platforms intended for users to share and engage with content.

**Messages and Comments**

* Respond to or acknowledge messages sent through Twitter and Facebook as soon as possible but not more than 24 hours later.
* Messages that contain critical or threatening information, etc. should be forwarded to the appropriate board member.
* If a user comments on our content and asks a question, in most cases, it is appropriate to respond to the user.
* It best to remain silent when the act of responding, in any way, is likely to ignite a firestorm of argumentative comments.

**Mentions and Tags**

* Mentioning and tagging organizations that align with our goals and values can attract new followers to our page if the other entity has a large network of social media followers.

**Blocking and Reporting**

* All content that is violent, profane, inappropriate or is deemed not-family-friendly will be blocked.
* Inappropriate comments will result in the user being blocked. Negative comments about the association or about an HTA activity are not in and of themselves considered inappropriate unless presented in an abusive, profane or otherwise unacceptable by reasonable standard.

**Social Media Sense for Users**

* Use common sense: If you are uneasy about a post you are about to make, step away and reconsider. Either change what makes you uncomfortable, talk to a supervisor, or don’t post it.
* Be honest, be accurate, be respectful. Also, be clear and concise; even status message updates can be written well (or poorly).
* Be productive. Don’t over post or post just for the sake of posting. Share useful, interesting information with your audience.
* Be professional: Since you should assume that postings can eventually be seen by anyone, present the image you would want your boss to have of you. Use good grammar and language, don’t spread gossip, and be mindful of the types of photos that you post. Although you may employ a more conversational tone on a social media vehicle, you are representing the association the same way you would in a presentation, a press release or during an appearance at an event. The text of social posts should maintain a conversational and accessible tone while conveying professionalism and a sense of authority on the topic.
* Have a personality: Social media is about connecting with people. Give friends and fans a look at your true personality.
* Play nice: No name-calling and bullying on social media. It’s ok (and even encouraged) to have your own opinion. It’s not ok to insult others, use slurs, or otherwise antagonize them. Libel, harassment, and discrimination laws still apply on social networks and you can be held legally liable if guilty.
* Be judicious when it comes to the notorious back-and-forth nature of internet interactions. Focus only on correcting any inaccuracies of known facts; don’t worry about winning an argument. In all instances, be civil.
* Don’t tell secrets: If it’s not your news, don’t share it. Confidential info (mergers, acquisitions, financials, etc.) is off limits. Designated staff will break the news when the time is right.
* Don’t share personal info about customers, employees, competitors, or even vendors without advance written permission.
* Handling of confidential personal or industry-related data: As previously noted, staff may not discuss or disclose online (or through any other means) confidential and/or proprietary information.
* Join the conversation: If you feel you have something our followers would benefit from, share it.
* Just not the fights: From time to time, someone may post a negative story or comment about the association. Your first instinct is to jump in and defend the association and community, which is great, however, consider who would be the best person to respond to a given issue and direct the post to that person.
* Fair use/copyright: Do not copy or use another person’s or entity’s intellectual property as though it were your own. Properly attribute work that you reuse. The internet affords ample opportunity to link to whatever materials you deem important to your audience. Note “Fair Use” doctrine in U.S. law allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission from the rights holder, speaking specifically to use for nonprofit or educational purposes; refer questions to the Executive Director.
* When names, photos, user IDs, etc. are involved in social media posts/updates, secure written permission for use and err on the side of caution.
* Laws forbidding any partisan political activity: As a 501(c) organization, certain legal restrictions apply to the association with respect to lobbying and partisan political activity. The association as an organization therefore should never appear as a “Fan” of an elected official, candidate for office, or partisan political cause on any social media page/feed.

**Best Practice Guidelines**

* Schedule posts when your audience is most active and likely to engage with your content, and ensure that there is a steady stream of posts from your account.
* Visually engaging content is more likely to generate higher engagement, so posts should contain a prominent photo, video or illustration whenever possible.
* Third-party content (posts not directly related to an HTA activity, product, or service) should come from reputable and authoritative sources and be of interest to the broader computing community. Posts should also not promote commercial products or services.
* Posts should include relevant hashtags to increase their exposure and “@mentions” to engage other users who would be interested in their content.
* Social media content should be viewed as part of a conversation, and posts should aim to generate reactions, comments and engagement.
* HTA social media representatives are encouraged to actively monitor comments from followers and respond in a timely and professional manner.