

PRINZ

PUBLIC RELATIONS
& COMMUNICATION
MANAGEMENT

PRINZ Guidelines for

Online Engagement



contents

The Online Norm	3
Purpose	5
Approach	7
Behaviour	9
Content & Community	11
Disclosure	14
Data	16
Ethics	17
Laws, Codes & Regulations	19

the online norm



Online engagement is now the rule rather than the exception. Since 2000, the pace of change has created societies that share on the move, engage on the move and react on the move. All forms of digital engagement - from VoIP and video to social networks and apps - are entrenched in our daily lives. Public relations and communication management professionals develop and implement online engagement campaigns across all digital channels on a daily basis. Many of the channels are, in themselves, 'new-borns' with the rules of engagement determined by the user communities (and the commercial

organisations behind them) as each channel matures.

Prescriptive guidelines and lists of 'do this, don't do that' are likely to be outstripped by advancing technologies, particularly as we move away from networks and exchanges into the realm of augmented realities, data intelligence and artificial intelligence - all of which will be 'the new norm' before too long.

All PRINZ members subscribe to the Public Relations Code of Ethics, and in doing so, abide by the Global Alliance Ethics Protocol.

[<http://www.globalalliancepr.org/code-of-ethics/>]

All public relations and communication management activity should adhere to, and be informed by the values and behaviours identified in each of these documents. Practitioners must also work within New Zealand's legislative framework as it applies to their undertakings.

This living document provides behavioural and indicative guidelines for best practice in online engagement. It is designed to assist practitioners with their work and help them make informed decisions when engaging online.



“Prescriptive guidelines and lists of ‘do this, don’t do that’ are likely to be outstripped by advancing technologies...”

purpose

Public relations builds and sustains the relationships necessary to maintain a licence to operate. It involves communication, understanding and action and involves the guardianship of reputation - essential if relationships are to be built and sustained - the development of social capital with regard to the public interest and advocacy, both on behalf of an organisation and within the organisation itself.

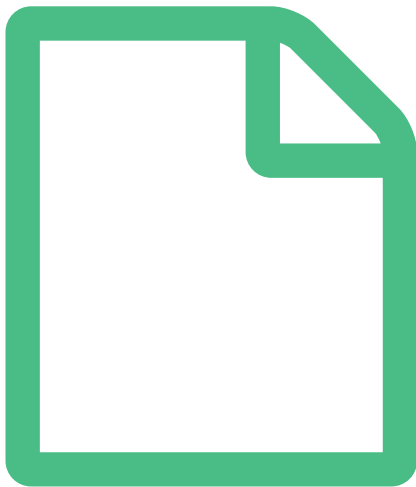
The online environment is well suited to the development of relationships as it allows direct and largely

unfiltered communication between communities, groups and individuals. Organisations are both publishers and providers of information, required to be transparent, engage in frank dialogue and exchanges with their stakeholders and - on demand - be 'live' to their communities. These multi-faceted roles must be approached responsibly and carefully. Technology allows us to engage faster and more smartly with stakeholders and at times, the legal system has struggled to keep pace with technological and societal change. This means practitioners have an additional duty of care when working online.

The first note of guidance for practitioners relates to two aspects of the PRINZ Code of Ethics:

Abide by the laws affecting the practice of public relations and the laws and regulations affecting the client.

Actively pursue personal professional development.



Practitioners need to keep pace with technological change, trends and developments as well as an ongoing working knowledge of the online channels they are involved with – many of which change operational methods and abilities on a regular basis.

Legislation is amended in response to incidents or issues that arise as a result of developing online engagement and a number of laws are referenced as examples at the end of this document.

approach

Develop a sound digital strategy that encompasses all your online activity - from website to message service, social network to infographic. A good digital strategy supports your public relations strategy and, in turn, your organisational outcomes.

Having a plan rather than a number of reactive tactics will help you determine whether your approach is transparent, ethical and achievable, allowing you to quickly identify areas where there might be a potential conflict of interest or if disclosures are required.

Any public relations activity begins with listening and there are many platforms and tools available to help with this. PRINZ runs regular training sessions that will help if you are unfamiliar with social media monitoring. As part of your strategic planning, ensure that your organisation has a social media and governance policy that helps everyone in the organisation engage online. It should provide clear guidelines that empower and encourage rather than frighten and alarm those who will be involved.

Guidance

- Develop an appropriate digital strategy
- Set up suitable social media monitoring systems and, in doing so, be aware of and check against existing privacy and data legislation
- Review your strategy before implementation to identify areas where conflicts of interest might arise and/or disclosures may be necessary
- Check your strategy against the PRINZ Code of Ethics
- Ensure that you and your team have the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the strategy

behaviour

Put simply, behave well online.

You would behave well everywhere else - and online is no exception. A great deal of bizarre behaviour has occurred over the last decade, with organisations pretending to be people they are not, fake blogs, rude and angry exchanges in comments sections everywhere - not to mention thousands of Twitter meltdowns and #Instagram incidents.



Guidance

Always be clear about who you are, who you are representing and your engagement purpose, whether you are commenting on a blog, posting an update or sending a tweet. Everything you undertake should be clearly recognisable as originating from your organisation.

Follow a 'review, respect and respond' philosophy if it helps you to make sure you are behaving well and transparently.

REVIEW

Look at all your content, analyse your digital assets. Is it clear they are about or originate from your organisation? If not fix the problem before you post, share or comment.

RESPECT

It is highly likely that a only a tiny minority of people will agree with what you have to say. Be ready for extreme opinions, trolls, meltdowns and occasionally mayhem. A good community is a respectful community - of each other, their place of connection and of you. Demonstrate your respect for your stakeholder community through your content, interactions and dialogue.

RESPOND

Respectfully and never in anger. Don't be afraid to correct the incorrect or put forward the perspective of your organisation. Respect individual member rights to privacy, taking conversations offline when necessary to avoid a potential breach.

content & community

Developing a community online takes time, dedication and commitment. Managing a community doesn't mean amassing as many likes or followers as possible - this isn't a numbers game. The central purpose is to build, sustain or repair a relationship so develop your strategy before you proceed. Be clear about what you hope to achieve as clarity of outcomes will allow you to accurately measure the success of your campaign or programme.

As part of your initial planning you will have determined where your stakeholders engage. Learn about and

understand the channels they are using, develop a content plan that can be consistently maintained over time and, if you are managing the community for your organisation, make sure your community members know who you are (or your organisation) and understand why you are there. There are a number of quasi-protocols that have developed over time, such as the caret symbol used to introduce a signature - for example on managed Twitter accounts, the person running the account will sign off with a caret and their initials like so: ^CA.

If you are posting about a client or your own organisation then declare it. The declaration can be a simple #clientnews hashtag.

Guidance

- If you are posting about a client or your own organisation then declare it. The declaration can be a simple #clientnews hashtag.
- Make sure you don't breach the PRINZ Code of Ethics by disclosing confidential information - for example financial reports or agreements still under discussion.
- Create content that is appropriate for your community, understand copyright and check that your material doesn't breach copyright law. Your content must conform to all legal requirements - for example defamation - in the same way as off line content you produce. If you are re-sharing other people's content, double check to make sure it meets your own high content standards along with legal standards.
- Resolve conflict respectfully and avoid deleting social commentary unless it is clearly in breach of the channel's conditions regarding inflammatory/offensive speech and content.
- Ensure that your content has been approved by your organisation or, more realistically, that content themes and scenario responses have been agreed so those implementing the programme can respond in a timely and appropriate fashion.
- If you are running a live content feed make sure the live content is appropriate for the channel, your community and it meets all legal and regulatory standards.

disclosure

At the time of writing (December 2016) the issue of disclosure is the one causing the most discussion and debate.

It is covered by the PRINZ Code of Ethics as follows:

Conflicts of Interest

A member shall:

- i. Disclose promptly any existing or potential conflict of interest to affected clients or organisations.
- ii. Disclose any client or business interest in published or broadcast editorial work.

AND

Balancing Openness and Privacy

A member shall:

- i. Promote open communication in the public interest wherever possible.
- ii. Respect the rights of others to have their say.
- iii. Be prepared to name clients or employers represented and the sponsors for causes and interests represented.
- iv. Safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former and prospective clients and employers.



Much discussion centres on marketing communications activity when, for example, a blogger has been part of an outreach programme and had either goods or services gifted to the blog for review. While the practitioner, under the Code of Ethics, has a duty to declare the services or goods, there is no compulsion to do so on the part of the blogger - at this point in time - to make a similar declaration. Equally the targeting of 'influencers' with goods and services which are then publicised on social channels with no declaration is also the subject of debate.

Guidance

- As part of any outreach programme, make all appropriate disclosures and request or require the third party participants to disclose that goods or services have been gifted and/or payments have been made. Work to guidelines such as those published by the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN) of which New Zealand is a member and remember that in many countries bloggers and others deemed to be online influencers are required by law to declare payment or payment in kind.
- For more info check out <http://www.asa.co.nz/codes/codes/advertising-code-of-ethics/>

data

During the course of our work we gather and store data pertinent to many areas of activity.

As ethical practitioners we have a duty of care to ensure that this data is used and managed responsibly and within the law.

The Privacy Act and Codes provide both the legal framework and an excellent guide to privacy and data matching.

PRINZ would recommend that all practitioners are aware of their duties and responsibilities under the Privacy Act and take time to read through the guidance available at privacy.org.nz.

Full link:

<https://privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/privacy-act-and-codes-introduction/>

ethics

Overview

Public relations professionals use communications to develop or maintain trusting, productive relationships between our clients or employers and their stakeholders. We promote the views of those we represent

to contribute to public debate and informed decision-making in a democratic society.

We balance our role as advocates for individuals or groups with the public interest. We must also balance a commitment to promote open communication with the privacy rights of individuals and organisations.



Values

These values provide the foundation for the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand Code of Ethics and set the industry standard for the professional practice of public relations.

They are the fundamental beliefs that guide our behaviour and decision-making processes.

ADVOCACY

- We serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent.
- We provide a voice for the ideas, facts and viewpoints of those we represent to aid informed public debate.

HONESTY

- We are accurate and truthful in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public.

EXPERTISE

- We acquire and responsibly use specialised knowledge and experience.
- We advance the profession through continued professional development, research and education.
- We build mutual understanding, credibility and relationships among an array of institutions and audiences.

INDEPENDENCE

- We provide objective counsel to those we represent.
- We are accountable for our actions.

LOYALTY

- We are faithful to those we represent, while honouring our obligations to serve the public interest.
- We safeguard the confidences of former or present employers and clients.

FAIRNESS

- We deal fairly with clients, employers, competitors, peers, suppliers, the media and the society.
- We respect all opinions and support the right of free expression.

laws, codes & regulations

Fair Trading Act 1986

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1986/0121/latest/DLM96439.html>

Gambling Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2003/0051/latest/whole.html>

Medicines Act 1981

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1981/0118/latest/DLM53790.html>

Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2012/0120/69.0/DLM3339333.html>

Major Events Management Act 2007

<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2007/0035/47.0/DLM411987.html>

Global Alliance Ethics Protocol

<http://www.globalalliancepr.org/code-of-ethics/>

Privacy Act 1993

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0028/latest/DLM296639.html>

Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0063/latest/whole.html>

Electronic Mail Act 2007

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2007/0007/latest/DLM405134.html>

Defamation Act 1992

<http://www.legislation.co.nz/act/public/1992/0105/latest/DLM280687.html>