



# Corporate Social Media Policy

Policy Category: *Communications*

Policy No.:

Implementing Procedure No.:

Approving Authority:  
**COUNCIL**

Effective Date:

Approved or Last Reviewed Date:

Next Review Year:

Area(s) this policy applies to:

**All Town of Markham Departments  
conducting business conversations using  
social media**

Owner Department:

**COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS**

Related Policy(ies):

- Corporate Email Practices and Guidelines
- Corporate Media Relations Policy
- Corporate Visual Identity Standards

Note: Questions about this policy should be directed to the Owner Department.

## 1. Purpose Statement *(Outline why the organization is issuing the policy and its desired effect or outcome of the policy)*

Markham encourages the use of online Social Media tools where the tool is a part of a disciplined and thoughtful strategic communications strategy designed to reach and influence its target audience. This Policy establishes basic principles, guidelines and procedures for staff for the use and management of Social Media on behalf of the municipality.

## 2. Applicability and Scope Statement *(Who and what this policy applies to and/or affects)*

Town of Markham staff using approved corporate social media networking applications and Markham's Boards and Committees.

## 3. Background *(Indicate any reasons, history, and intent that led to the creation of the policy)*

This policy reflects Markham's interest and willingness to initiate appropriate Social Media opportunities with the goal of building strong relationships with key audiences and enhancing Markham's brand with residents, stakeholders and business partners.



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### 4. Definitions *(If applicable, define any terminology or interpret meanings of a general term)*

**Brand** – means the unique and identifiable symbol, association, name or trade-mark which serves to differentiate competing products or services. It represents a promise about who you are and what benefits you deliver that gets reinforced every time people come in contact with any facet of you or your business.

**Department** – means an administrative or business unit of the municipality

**Director** – means the Director of Corporate Communications & Community Relations, or his/her designate

**Social Media** – means Information created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies that is intended to facilitate communications, influence interaction with peers and public audiences typically via the Internet and mobile communications networks. It includes, but not limited to, web-based blogs and online social media networks such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Youtube and Flickr.

**Strategic Communication Plan** – means a formal Communications Plan developed by municipal Departments, in consultation with the Director, that identifies goals and objectives, resources required, target audiences, key messages and results measurement for a particular business communications or marketing initiative.

**Users** – means any designated Staff responsible for administering a particular Social Media site, including writing and publishing content to the site

#### **The Value of Markham's Brand**

Social media is a powerful communications and community engagement tool with high potential to influence Markham's brand. Markham's brand has measurable value, and the value of our brand is influenced by all public facing transactions - direct and indirect. Social media networking tools, while in their infancy, have the potential to influence Markham's brand of among millions of users worldwide – and without geographic boundaries. As a result the use of social media by Markham's businesses requires strong business discipline, prudent monitoring and appropriate controls and protocols for content management.

**5. Policy Statements** *(Detail the specific regulations, requirements, or modifications to organizational behaviour to be addressed by this policy)***Principles**

The following principles form the basis for Markham's Social Media Policy

- i) Markham recognizes that Social Media can be an effective way to improve citizen engagement and public communication.
- ii) Markham recognizes that Social Media can be an effective way to provide and receive information on Markham's public services, facilities and programs, and enhance the municipality's brand reputation as a public service corporation committed to excellence.
- iii) The use of Social Media must be part of an overall Strategic Communications Plan that is specific and targeted.

**Social Media Committee**

A committee of municipal employees appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer will be established. The committee will be responsible for establishing protocols, procedures and guidelines to implement this policy, including but not limited to:

- i) Identifying preferred Social Media tools
- ii) Recommending protocols for branding Social Media sites
- iii) Establishing guidelines for use of individual Social Media tools

**Establishing a Social Media Presence**

Prior to establishing a Social Media presence, a Department will:

- i) Obtain the written consent of the Department Head and Commissioner
- i) Identify the Social Media tool(s) to be used, which will be chosen from those previously approved by the Social Media Committee.
- ii) Develop, in consultation with the Director, a Strategic Communication Plan

- iii) Identify Users who will be responsible for administering the Social Media site ensuring that they are properly trained
- iv) Ensure that the Social Media site(s) are properly branded with the Markham logo, and/or some other appropriate Brand (including a branding statement, or a Sub-brand), the choice of which will be identified in the Strategic Communication Plan
- v) Ensure that Social Media sites are formatted to minimize the risk to the Corporation

**Social Media Users Guidelines**

Users of Social Media, in consultation with the Director, Communications and Community Relations and other appropriate Departments, will ensure the following:

- i) that the use of a particular Social Media site is compliant with Markham's existing policies and legislations, including but not limited to the Employee Code of Conduct, Email Practices and Guidelines, Respect in the Workplace, Corporate Media Relations Policy, and the *Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).
- ii) that there is transparency in the use of Social Media, including indentifying Users by position within the municipality, and by name when appropriate.
- iii) that the use of Social Media is discreet, does not disclose confidential information, or release personal information without prior consent.
- iv) that information posted by Users is accurate and consistent with corporate information, messages and policies.
- v) that information posted exhibits the same level of professionalism they would in any other means of internal and external business communications.
- vi) that only properly designated staff are representing and make comments on behalf of Markham, and that they do not inadvertently act as the official spokesperson in "unofficial" capacity concerning Town of Markham policies and practices. (Refer to Markham's Media Relations Policy for media spokesperson protocols.)

**Records Management and Retention**

Use of Social Media may result in the creation of corporate records. In consultation with Legislative Services, Users will ensure that content is accessible or retained for any retention period as required by Markham's Records Retention By-Law or other policies.



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### **Auditing and Monitoring**

All information created on Social Media sites using municipal technology is the property of Markham, and reasonable technological and procedural measures including auditing and random monitoring of Social Media sites will occur to ensure adherence to corporate policies and standards.

Department Heads must ensure moderators assigned to their social media sites undertake regular audits of social media comments to ensure inappropriate postings are removed in a timely fashion (e.g. a commercial advertisement, disparaging remarks). Department Heads shall have full 'Administrator' access privileges to social media sites managed their business.

### **Social Media Sites Established Prior to the Policy**

Any Social Media presence established by Markham Users prior to adoption of this policy will be reviewed by the originating Department, in consultation with the department Director, Director of Communications and Community Relations and/or Social Media Committee, for compliance with this policy.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities** *(Outline roles and responsibilities of those involved in the implementation of the policy)*

1. **Policy Approval** - CAO, Management Committee and Council
2. **Administration and Interpretation of Policy** - Director of Communications and Community Relations (C&CR)
3. **Investigations** – Human Resources and C&CR
4. **Privacy and Records Retention Requirements** – Legislative Services
5. **Compliance and Communications to staff** – Director of Communications and Community Relations and Department Heads
6. **Data classification, information systems to capture data, security, system controls** – Information and Technology Services
7. **Management of social media content** – Designated Users