(Exploring) Ethical Issues in Social Media

Illustrations and Examples from Undergraduate Digital and Social Media Marketing Students

This material was developed by T. Martin Key, Ph.D and is intended for classroom discussion rather than to illustrate effective or ineffective handling of administrative, ethical, or legal decisions by management. No permission or compensation is needed for classroom use as long as it is acknowledged to be the creative work of the author and the UCCS Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative. For publication or electronic posting, please contact the UCCS Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative at 1-719-255-5168. (2018)
Why do SM Ethics Matter?

US Facebook Users and Penetration, 2014-2020
millions and % of population

- 2014: 153.3, 48.1%
- 2015: 158.4, 49.3%
- 2016: 162.9, 50.3%
- 2017: 167.2, 51.2%
- 2018: 171.0, 51.9%
- 2019: 174.4, 52.6%
- 2020: 177.5, 53.1%

Note: internet users of any age who access their Facebook account via any device at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, Feb 2016
Why do SM Ethics Matter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Social Network Users and Penetration, by Platform, 2014-2020</th>
<th>millions, % change and % of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>153.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—% of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: internet users of any age who access their Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and/or Tumblr accounts via any device at least once per month; social networking audiences are not mutually exclusive; there is overlap between groups
Source: eMarketer, Feb 2016
Incorporating Ethics

- Every week Students were tasked with finding an example of an ethical dilemma in social media
- Filter the dilemma through the 7 principles
- Present the case for class discussion (resolution)
- Survey SM Ethical Codes of Conduct
- Create “custom” SM Ethical Code of Conduct into final class project
Exercise Example

http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/aug/12/kim-kardashian-selfie-morning-sickness-drug-instagram
Integrity
Act with honesty in all situations

Trust
Build trust in all stakeholder relationships

Accountability
Accept responsibility for all decisions

Transparency
Maintain open and truthful communications

Fairness
Engage in fair competition and create equitable and just relationships

Respect
Honor the rights, freedoms, views, and property of others

Rule of Law
Comply with the spirit and intent of laws and regulations

Viability
Create long-term value for all relevant stakeholders
Student Examples
Vitaminwater Marketing Campaign Goes Horribly Wrong

Coca-Cola apologized on Thursday for a marketing promotion for its Vitaminwater brand in Canada that went terribly wrong. The campaign, targeted at French and English speakers, featured words in both languages printed on bottle caps. Customers could put the caps together to form phrases and send them in for prizes.

The whole thing fell apart this week when a woman in the province of Alberta found the words "You Retard" on the underside of her bottlecap. "Retard" is the French word for "late."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/19/offensive-bottle-cap_n_3955846.html
**Integrity**
Act with honesty in all situations

**Trust**
Build trust in all stakeholder relationships

**Accountability**
Accept responsibility for all decisions

**Transparency**
Maintain open and truthful communications

**Fairness**
Engage in fair competition and create equitable and just relationships

**Respect**
Honor the rights, freedoms, views, and property of others

**Rule of Law**
Comply with the spirit and intent of laws and regulations

**Viability**
Create long-term value for all relevant stakeholders
Dave and Busters

Ethical Issues

- Respect
- Trust
- Accountability
USE OF “PUBLIC” PHOTO

- Mother posted picture of daughters (ages 9 and 7) to her public Instagram account
- BuzzFeed used photo in article “21 Questions You’re Afraid to Ask Your Friends with Kids” without mother’s knowledge or consent
- Article provided access to mother and children’s names, location, and place often frequent
essenaoneill NOT REAL LIFE - paid $$$ to promote both the jeans and top. More info on how instagrammers make a lot of $$$ on www.letsgamechangers.com

Log in to like or comment.
essenaoniel Was paid $400 to post a dress. That's when I had maybe 150k followers, with half a million followers, I know of many online brands (with big budgets) that pay up to $2000 per post. Nothing is wrong with accepting brand deals. I just think it should be known. This photo had no substance, it was not of ethical manufacturing (I was uneducated at the time). SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOT REAL is my point. Be aware what people promote, ask yourself, what's their intention behind the photo?
"It was never my conscious intention, but I deluded a lot of people... Call it deception, manipulation, lying, not saying the whole truth... I was both addicted to social approval and terrified no one would value me for myself. So I rewrote the captions of these false photos with short shots of reality."

- **Integrity**: Act with honesty in all situations
- **Trust**: Build trust in all stakeholder relationships (followers)
- **Transparency**: Maintain open and truthful communications
- **Accountability**: Accept responsibility for all decisions
Goals and Outcomes

• Create student sensitivity to potential ethical dilemmas
• Explore SM ethical boundaries and complexities
• Identify resolutions
• Create Social Media Ethical Codes of Conduct
Confidentiality:

• When posting about users and events always maintain privacy and confidentiality.

• Ask for customer’s permission to use their names prior to posting their pictures on the page.
Code of Conduct Examples

• **Crisis Management:**
  – In cases of unexpected social media issues, including poor customer reactions, timing issues, or any other sensitive breaches in social media:
  – Be sure to follow the structured plan:
    • Do not ignore customers
    • Do not attack or blame customers on the social media site
    • For any backlash on posts, please seek out manager immediately.
      – Managers:
        » Determine if post needs to be deleted
        » Issue, if necessary, an apology statement
          • Be sincere
          • Straight to the point
          • Leave contact information
    • Be available via social media, phone, and email after incident occurs