



INTERTANKO

Social Media Guidance for Seafarers

Social media is a very important tool for communicating with the world off the ship as well as keeping direct contact with family and friends. Such social media platforms as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat and many others are fantastic for keeping in touch, sharing information and general entertainment. They are immensely powerful and can make the separation from home less onerous.

It should be remembered that the use of instant communication tools must be done so carefully, responsibly and with regard to negative consequences. The possibility of the use of an innocent post by the news media is an ever-present situation. A post that appears innocent from a seafarer's perspective can be misinterpreted by the news media to show the ship and company in a very bad light.

It is entirely natural for a person to want to immediately share something. The popularity of photo sharing sites is testament to that. But when you share something online you have to remember that it is publically viewable and open for scrutiny and criticism within a matter of seconds. Some people refer to the red-faced test. This means if the post was viewed by your boss ashore, would you be embarrassed about it? The safest option is not to post, or at least wait until the morning. It should also be remembered that a post which could be viewed negatively can have a serious impact upon the corporate image and reputation of the shipping company.

Your company will also have a corporate policy regarding posting on social media. It is quite reasonable to expect that the shipping company will have a policy which in the event of an employee posting something in breach of a safety policy, they could face disciplinary action. An example could be a picture of a party on board showing non-compliance with the company's alcohol policy or breaches of the PPE policies.

In the event of an emergency incident, it would be reasonable for a company to prioritise official communication over social media for bandwidth and access reasons. As social media is heavily analysed and referenced by media organisations, a company will need to take an official line in communications. Therefore, great care must be taken to avoid posting anything which can be used to either contradict or negatively influence that company approach. During such times, the news media may make direct approaches to seafarers and any such approaches should be referred back to the company.

Social media is one of the most fantastic innovations available to seafarers. It can close the distance between ship and shore and bring your family into your cabin. Used carefully and sensibly, it can enhance the life on board. There are of course risks, but for professional seafarers, used to facing risks on a day-to-day basis, they are risks that can be managed.

'Golden Rules'

- Never publish inaccurate information.
- If you are unsure of the accuracy of your comments, do not publish them.
- Always ensure that if you are talking about your workplace online that you have made it clear any statements are your own and do not represent the views or values of the Company.
- Avoid violating the privacy of your fellow seafarers and co-workers.
- Only post online what you would be comfortable saying to people in person or in public.
- Never use social media as a platform to harm, intimidate, insult, threaten, defame or embarrass others.

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