

Road Safety Authority

Guidance on how to handle Social Media Complaints

March 2023



Guidance to RSA Board on how to handle complaints, negativity, or inappropriateness on Social Media.

Document it

If a negative or controversial comment comes up on Twitter, Facebook, your website comments, etc., the first thing you should do is take a screen capture or document it in some way. Some things can be deleted or modified by the poster, so it is important to have proof if the matter is contested or the issue escalates to a more serious matter.

Do not delete negative comments

This applies to both your own posts on all social channels and comments underneath posts on Facebook/LinkedIn. If you do delete a tweet, it will almost certainly have been screen grabbed by someone on the internet. It will only aggravate the commenter or move the conversation elsewhere. Deleting things on the internet is an illusion anyway and will bring into question your integrity to not only the complainer, but all your followers.

On Facebook you can hide comments posted by others and that will take the sting out of the majority of comments.

(Do block users who abuse the site, and remove inappropriate comments (i.e., racist, derogatory, pornographic, etc.), ones that are too far off-topic, or just trying to use your site to sell a product or service.)

Keep it cool

It's not uncommon that an offended customer or internet troll is trying to get an emotional reaction or response from their post. It is critical that you never take it personal or engage or challenge the person negatively. Remember, this is in public, and you are being judged by not only the poster, but all your followers. Act as if you are responding to an angry mob: being right might not be the end goal. You don't have to reply to everything. If the comment is clearly an attack or an effort to pick a fight, let it go.

Social media is just like any other social experience to the extent that there is never a clear answer, it is chaotic and unpredictable just like any other social experience. Before reacting, communicate the issue to your colleagues/RSA Directors.

Should I respond?

Responding to a barrage of replies and quoted tweets can be time-consuming first of all and secondly it can lead you down a route you did not intend to go on. Each response can spiral off into a myriad of other replies and the original issue can sometimes be lost completely. I would recommend, if you find yourself in the centre of a "tweet-storm" or under attack by trolls, log off for a couple of hours and when you return, start to mute the accounts that are trolling the most. In that way you will not have to see their tweets in your timeline/responses, and they can continue to shout into the void. Eventually they will move onto the next perceived issue, and they will not have the satisfaction of you blocking them – something that they will happily screenshot and tweet to their followers.



Keep your eyes open

Use Google Alerts to keep an eye on your reputation. Google Alerts and similar services allow you to enter search terms, such as your organization's name, your Twitter handle, and just about any other name or term that relates to your organization. The service scours the internet for any match to your terms and e-mails you when it finds any. Trial and error till you feel comfortable with the volume and nature of the matches.

When the dust settles

Once the mob have moved on to the next issue, consider were there any individuals who might be worth engaging with off-line, in a calmer setting. If so, think about how you might reach out to them, by email or phone to discuss your point of view.

