

IP Inclusive Social Media Guidelines



IPINCLUSIVE

Working for diversity and inclusion in IP

Introduction	1
What and who these guidelines apply to	2
Our general Communications Policy	2
The guidelines	2
The most important two rules of all...	3
Our communication style	4
Annex:	
Don't be anti-social - some good advice for social media users	5
You are not alone	5
Think before you post	5
Control your forum	5
Spread news; don't make or break it	6
Be smart	6
Be human	6
Don't rely on a disclaimer	6
And finally...	6

Introduction

Social media communications provide an extremely effective way for IP Inclusive to engage with its stakeholders. They are rapid, accessible, inclusive and interactive. Through our websites, LinkedIn groups and pages, and Instagram account, we and our supporters share information, resources and ideas and in doing so, create a stronger sense of community.

However, social media is also one of our key sources of risk, in particular of reputational damage or loss of stakeholder goodwill, or in the worst case, of complaints or legal problems.

These guidelines are intended to mitigate such risks, and to help our volunteers to use social media communications safely and effectively, in order to enhance IP Inclusive's engagement both with its supporters and among the wider public. They are intended to be read alongside our general Communications Policy and, where applicable, our Website Content Guidelines, both of which can be accessed on our [Policy Documents Hub](#).

If you have any queries about them, please contact our Lead Executive Office Andrea Brewster (andrea.brewster@ipinclusive.org.uk).

What and who these guidelines apply to

Our Social Media Guidelines are for people who handle social media communications for or on behalf of IP Inclusive, including its communities, networks and working groups and any specific projects or initiatives – for example Careers in Ideas – established under the IP Inclusive banner.

They apply to:

- the handling of all social media accounts (including on LinkedIn and Instagram) that are associated with IP Inclusive
- content posted on the IP Inclusive websites (www.ipinclusive.org.uk and www.careersinideas.org.uk).
- both original content and redistributed or endorsed content (for example content that is “shared”, “reposted” or “liked”).

If you are contributing content (for example a blog post) to the IP Inclusive or Careers in Ideas website, please also read our Website Content Guidelines, which are available on our [Policy Documents Hub](#).

Please note that IP Inclusive is not currently active on X (formerly Twitter). Please do not post content on X about, or on behalf of, IP Inclusive.

Our general Communications Policy

In any form of communication that is, or could be, associated with IP Inclusive, it is vital that you adhere to our Communications Policy (see our [Policy Documents Hub](#)). This sets out the principles that govern IP Inclusive’s communications with the outside world, including via social media. Please take a moment to read it and make sure you are comfortable with it.

If you have any queries about the policy, please ask a member of the IP Inclusive executive or management team. Relevant contact details are provided in a separate document which you can access via the [“Contact us” page of our website](#).

The guidelines

In addition to the rules in our [Communications Policy](#), please keep to the following guidelines when handling IP Inclusive social media communications, whatever your actual or intended audience. If you have any queries or concerns about applying them, please speak to the executive or management team.

Please also make use of the advice on social media usage that we’ve included in the Annex to these guidelines.

1. Only “follow” reputable and relevant sources.

2. If you “like”, “repost”, share, quote, link to or otherwise endorse somebody else’s content, make sure it’s a source that you know you can trust. If you wish to quote but not endorse, make that clear.
3. Steer clear of overtly political content. IP Inclusive does not undertake political campaigning or activities intended to support political campaigning.
4. If an online conversation takes an uncomfortable turn, distance yourself from it as soon as possible. Say nothing further. Avoid implicating yourself by getting drawn into an online argument. If possible and appropriate:
 - a. “Unfollow” the relevant account(s).
 - b. Delete the relevant comment or comment thread.
 - c. Close the conversation to further comment.
 - d. Consider excluding an account from your platform, but please check with the executive or management team first.
5. By all means use images to make your communications more engaging, but take care over copyright, confidentiality, data protection and privacy issues, as per rule 9 in our Communications Policy.
6. Try to use social media to widen our support base and strengthen our community: tag other IP Inclusive communities, projects or supporters whenever appropriate (see the IP Inclusive Contact Details document referred to above).
7. In general, if you’re running an IP Inclusive social media account, avoid expressing opinions (as opposed to information and facts) on anything other than “safe” and uncontroversial topics. It is usually more appropriate to allow others to converse, to keep an eye on how things progress and to learn from the resultant conversations.
8. Don’t set up a new IP Inclusive social media account without approval from the executive or management team.

The most important two rules of all...

...Are, of course, as in our Communications Policy, these:

9. Think before you post!
 - a. Consider how your words are likely to be read – by IP Inclusive supporters, would-be supporters and critics, and by the wider public. Is there anyone they could offend, upset, embarrass or irritate? How will they reflect on IP Inclusive? How might they be used by someone with a different agenda to yours?
 - b. Have you included anything sensitive or confidential or that isn’t yours to disclose?
10. *If in doubt, don’t post at all.*

Our communication style

Our usual communication style is informal and upbeat, but still professional. Be yourself as far as possible, and naturally on LinkedIn and Instagram follow the lead of other trusted users, but keep this guidance in mind.

If you're contributing content (for example a blog post) to the IP Inclusive or Careers in Ideas website, please also read our Website Content Guidelines for guidance on the appropriate style and tone.

Annex:

Don't be anti-social - some good advice for social media users

Here is some advice for responsible social media usage, in particular when addressing sensitive topics to do with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and wellbeing and when communicating about, or on behalf of, IP Inclusive. Our thanks to CIPA's Chief Executive Lee Davies, himself an accomplished social media user, for his help in compiling these tips.

You are not alone

Whilst your blog, Facebook page, Instagram feed and so on might feel like your own safe and comfortable home on the internet, where colleagues, family and friends occasionally stop by to catch up with you, it is really an open and highly accessible public space. People can and will land on your page from a random search, read just one post and take it completely out of context. The things you say, write or do in social media live on forever in search engines, long after you have forgotten about them. Think of your space on the web as less like a family room and more like your front window.

In social media, the lines between the personal and the professional are often blurred. So even things you post in a personal capacity can reflect on the organisations that you work with.

Think before you post

Before you post anything, stop and think for a moment. Who's going to read it and in what contexts (remember that it will be visible far more widely than just your intended audience)? What will it look like to them? How will it reflect on other people and organisations you're associated with – for example IP Inclusive?

Always check you're in the right account before you post something. Don't mix up your personal social media accounts with your IP Inclusive ones. A good tip, if you look after an IP Inclusive account, is to log in and out only as needed.

Avoid posting things when you're feeling upset, irritated or frustrated, or when your judgement is otherwise impaired (for example after alcohol). Resist the pressure for social media communications to be immediate and fast-paced; it isn't always appropriate to "shoot from the hip".

Remember that once you've posted something online, you lose control over where, when and by whom it gets shared. It is almost impossible to "undo" something you've made public in an online forum.

Control your forum

Limit your interactions to people and organisations you know and trust. People will judge you not only for your own content but also for the content you share and the content that reaches your feed because of who you "follow".

Spread news; don't make or break it

We generally love it when you use social media to share what IP Inclusive is doing. There are times, however, when things you hear at an event, a meeting or via one of our communities are not ready or suitable for public consumption. For example, people might share confidential or sensitive experiences and ideas, in a small forum, but not intend them to be more widely disseminated.

Once you see IP Inclusive talking about something in a public forum, for instance on our website or in an external publication, then you are good to go. Otherwise, be wary of breaching other people's confidentiality. The mantra is a simple one: if in doubt, ask!¹

Also please don't criticise IP Inclusive on social media. Whilst we are more than happy to accept constructive criticism and to discuss complaints and grievances, those conversations are best not conducted in public forums such as LinkedIn.

Be smart

From a legal perspective, you are responsible for what appears on your personal social media spaces. If you want to refer to IP Inclusive content, a good approach to take is "point, don't copy and paste". It is better to link to the material on IP Inclusive's communication channels, rather than recreating it on your own blog, feed or site. The same goes for external sites, where linking through to original content is much better than reproducing it, especially given that this is the world of intellectual property.

Whatever you post, make sure it's accurate and justifiable. Avoid straying outside your sphere of competence, however tempted you are to join a debate on something you feel passionately about.

Be human

A good rule of thumb for social media communications is to apply the same standards as you would when interacting with people using any other medium, including face to face. If you couldn't explain your words sitting across a table from the recipient, arguably you shouldn't be posting them at all.

Don't rely on a disclaimer

When posting something that might be seen to be at odds with IP Inclusive's purpose, it's advisable to include a disclaimer (for example: "These views are mine alone; they do not reflect the views of IP Inclusive"). Even with a disclaimer, however, what you say on your blog, on your Facebook page or in any other public forum can be seen as reflecting on our work if you link or tag IP Inclusive in your content, or even simply because people know you're associated with IP Inclusive.

And finally...

...Please remember not to speak or post on behalf of IP Inclusive unless we have asked or authorised you to do so. Thank you!

¹ Our executive and management teams will be happy to help: you can find all the necessary contact details at <https://ipinclusive.org.uk/contact/>