

Tweeting Guidelines

As the name suggests, Micro-blogging is a form of blogging typified by a focus on short – or “micro” – posts and the formation of communities of “followers”.

Please refer to Microsoft’s [Blogging FAQ](#) and best practices for general guidance on blogging at Microsoft. These micro-blogging guidelines are intended to complement the general guidance and address issues more specific to micro-blogging and third party micro-blogging services. Since Twitter is currently the most popular micro-blogging service, specific questions about appropriate use of Twitter are also addressed below.

Does Microsoft permit employees to use third party micro-blogging services?

Microsoft does not maintain lists of recommended or restricted micro-blogging services, but encourages employees to use their judgment when choosing to use these services, to read the service terms and conditions and adhere to them, and to post sensibly and responsibly in accordance with Microsoft policies and blogging guidelines. If you are unsure of the requirements of the terms and conditions for a specific micro-blogging service you should not use it.

Should I register an account that identifies me as a Microsoft employee?

Since the majority of micro-blogging sites are individual- rather than group-oriented, it can be difficult to indicate a professional affiliation. However, if you plan to tweet about any professional matters (such as about the business of Microsoft or other companies, products or services in the same business space as Microsoft), in addition to referencing your alias@microsoft.com mail address, whenever possible use the service’s profile or contact information to assert that you are a Microsoft employee and/or affiliated with a specific group/team at Microsoft.

Are there limits on the kind of micro-blogging account names I can create?

As stated in other places, make sure to work with your team and get appropriate approval before registering a new micro-blogging account for company business. If you intend to use a Microsoft product name or trademark in the account name, make sure to be a good steward for our company by using the full, appropriate name of the product, i.e. Silverlight, not Slvrlite. This helps build consumer awareness in our names, and shows the same respect for our trademarks that we ask other companies to give us. Also, do not use other companies’ product names or trademarks for an account name, i.e. SwitchfromFlash or Flashsucks. This potentially creates legal risk for Microsoft, and may cause PR problems for the company.

Should I register accounts on behalf of Microsoft teams/groups?

Generally, employees should not register micro-blogging accounts on behalf of Microsoft teams and groups unless they are clearly responsible for the team's or group's community engagement activities and have checked to make sure an account for that team or group doesn't already exist. If in doubt, don't. Also, as a best practice and to reflect the frequent career moves employees make at Microsoft, please choose an alias for the account that can be easily managed by your group if you move to a new role, such as silverlighttwitter@microsoft.com, rather than johnsmith@microsoft.com. Micro-blogging accounts that you register for company business, and any accounts you register that contain Microsoft product names and trademarks are considered Microsoft intellectual property, per the terms of your employment agreement with the company.

What should I do if I encounter an instance of impersonation or name-squatting?

If you find a service in which you feel Microsoft, one of its brands, products or teams is being impersonated or victimized by name squatting on the third party micro-blogging service, you should send detailed information on the service/account to your Trademark LCA representative and work with them to resolve the issue. Some micro-blogging services (e.g. Twitter) have specific notice and takedown processes for removing impersonators or squatters. To make sure we take a consistent approach as a company to impersonation and name-squatting issues, it's important to route all notice and takedown requests through LCA Trademarks. You can find your Trademark contact at [//lcaweb/trademarks](http://lcaweb/trademarks).

What content may I post? What content must I not post?

Please refer to Microsoft's [Blogging FAQ](#) for general guidance on blogging at Microsoft. In line with those guidelines, Microsoft encourages and trusts its employees to micro-blog sensibly and responsibly.

How should I tag content?

Micro-blogging sites use different mechanisms to help tag content. A primary goal for tagging is to coalesce related content and to help users find relevant content. You are encouraged to utilize any common tagging practices of the micro-blog services that you use. Please make sure that Microsoft trademarks are not abbreviated in hash tags or other mechanisms of tagging content--use the full names of Microsoft trademarks in all tagging.

Does Microsoft recommend URL shortening services?

Because micro-blogging services focus on short/micro messages, the inclusion of URLs in posts often causes the post to exceed a maximum length. To overcome this problem, URL shortening services (e.g. <http://tinyurl.com>) are used. Microsoft does not maintain lists of preferred or restricted URL shortening services. Some micro-blogging services may recommend/include a URL shortening service but, for those (e.g. Twitter) that do not, you may use the service that you prefer as long as you have read and can abide by the shortening service's terms and conditions and the use of the shortening service does not contravene the micro-blogging site's terms and conditions. If you are unsure of either service's terms and conditions, you should not use them.

May I create Twitter accounts that represent a Microsoft team or group?

Generally , you should not register a micro-blogging account on behalf of a Microsoft team or group unless you are clearly responsible for the team's or group's community engagement activities and have ensured that an account does not already exist. If in doubt, you should not create Twitter accounts for teams at Microsoft.

How do I advertise my Twitter account?

Twitter accounts may be advertised through other digital channels by providing a URL to your Twitter account (e.g. [http://twitter.com/\[\[MyTwitterAccount\]\]](http://twitter.com/[[MyTwitterAccount]])). A common shorthand for the URL is "Twitter: @[MyTwitterAccount]". Twitter communities are formed by following others. People interested in your Twitter posts (the set is called a 'feed' or 'event stream') may follow you. Similarly, you may follow other people that interest you.

Blogging Guidelines

Frequently Asked Questions About Blogging At Microsoft

These FAQs were created to answer some of the most common general questions about company policies relating to blogging.

- [Does Microsoft have a specific policy governing employee blogs?](#)
- [Can I disclose confidential information when blogging?](#)
- [How do I handle personal information in my blog?](#)
- [Do I need to clear my posts before making them?](#)
- [Can I post about our competitors?](#)
- [Can I post about my prior employer?](#)
- [Should I disclose my Microsoft affiliation?](#)
- [Can I solicit feedback in my blog?](#)
- [Can I offer technical assistance in my blog?](#)
- [Can I post code in my blog?](#)
- [Do I own my blog content?](#)
- [Can I use photos in my blog?](#)
- [Can I make commitments on behalf of the company?](#)
- [How do I respond if I'm contacted by the press?](#)
- [Do I have to use a disclaimer on my blog?](#)
- [Do I have to blog on Microsoft sites?](#)
- [If I blog on a Microsoft site, what happens to my blog when I leave Microsoft?](#)
- [I still don't have an answer to my specific question.](#)

Q. Does Microsoft have a specific policy governing employee blogs?

A. The company expects employees to exercise good judgment and “be smart” when blogging.

The same principles and policies that apply to public interactions generally also apply to blogging, such as the:

[Confidential Information Policy](#),
[Competitive Intelligence Policy](#),
[Employee Handbook](#),
[Standards of Business Conduct](#),
[IT Guidelines and Policies](#),
[Anti-Harassment Policy](#),
[Sexually Explicit or Otherwise Offensive Material Policy](#), and
Microsoft Corporation Employee Agreement that each employee

signs upon hire.

You should familiarize yourself with these policies before you begin blogging.

Finally, individual managers, teams, or divisions may develop their own specific policies about blogging, and blogs hosted on Microsoft servers may be subject to certain additional requirements. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with any such specific policies or requirements. You should also discuss your blogging plans with your manager before beginning.

Q. Do I need to clear my posts before making them?

A. As a general rule, Microsoft does not review, edit, censor, or, obviously, endorse individual posts. You should “be smart” and, as an employee of the company, you should not only think about how your blog reflects on you as an individual, but also about how your blog affects Microsoft as a whole. How would it look on *Slashdot* or on the front page of the *New York Times*? What would your manager or VP think? If you’re posting about another team’s product, what would they and their management think? Could a customer or partner make a wrong decision based on your posting? What would a competitor do with your posting? Using your public blog to gratuitously trash Microsoft, our products, partners or competitors reflects poorly on all of us.

Q. Can I disclose confidential information when blogging?

A. As with all public communications, you should not disclose Microsoft confidential information unless there is a compelling business purpose and you have at least Director-level approval, pursuant to the company’s [Confidential Information Policy](#). You should not disclose confidential information of a customer, partner, vendor or other third party without consulting your LCA contact. In general, do not post any information, code, inventions, or other material that may be confidential to Microsoft or its customers, partners or vendors. Don’t post anything marked “Confidential,” “Proprietary,” or “Privileged” or material from any internal corporate emails, web pages or documents (including these FAQs). Be especially careful in talking about patents, open source software, antitrust law, or our legal strategies; or revealing anything related to Microsoft facilities, product release schedules, or other employees. **Most importantly, to preserve Microsoft’s rights to protect its innovations through patents, do not disclose or describe any new features, functionalities, or innovations that have not been publicly disclosed or released without first checking with your business unit management or your LCA patent contact.** Finally, don’t break news without clearing it through your manager and your PR contact; breaking news not only risks destroying trade secret and patent protection, it could even be deemed to violate the company’s disclosure obligations under the securities laws. If you have any doubts about whether something is confidential, check with your manager or your LCA contacts before you post.

Q. How do I handle personal information in my blog?

A. Your blog is a permanent record so treat your own and other’s personal information with appropriate care. Make sure you have permission before including anyone else’s

personal information in your blog. If you are planning to use personal information attained from blogs, your use must be consistent with any restriction on such use contained in the terms or privacy statement of the blog in question, as well as with our own [corporate privacy policy and standards](#). If you are unsure of the requirements contact your [Privacy Lead](#).

Q. Can I post about our competitors?

A. There is no company rule against discussing competitors, so long as you use good judgment and comply with the [Competitive Intelligence Policy](#). In particular, do not solicit any information or materials that appear to be confidential or proprietary to a third party, and delete any comments that you suspect the commentator did not have the right to share. Be especially careful about criticizing competitors or any third parties or their products or service, and make sure that any criticism you feel compelled to offer is totally accurate and substantiated--critical blog posts about competitors and others generate ill will and can even lead to lawsuits, justified or not.

Q. Can I post about my prior employer?

A. If you must discuss a prior employer, do not disclose any of their trade secrets or other information you were required to keep secret.

Q. Should I disclose my Microsoft affiliation?

A. You may not hide or mislead others about your affiliation with Microsoft, and if asked, should respond honestly. If you think it will matter to the audience that you are a Microsoft employee, you should say that you are. If you are blogging on behalf of Microsoft, you should not give the impression that you are blogging on your own behalf. For more information, read the [Competitive Intelligence Policy](#).

Q. Can I solicit feedback in my blog?

A. Blogs are a great resource to gather feedback on a product, a plan, or an idea. These are some guidelines to make sure that you gather and use feedback the right way to protect both Microsoft and those providing their opinions to you:

Generally, you may solicit, use, and share your readers' opinions about the appearance, usability, quality, or desired feature sets or functionalities of Microsoft offerings, or about whether Microsoft should follow a particular course of action. Even this kind of feedback could increase the risk of others claiming patent infringement, however, if it leads to additions or other changes to a Microsoft product or service. Accordingly, if you are involved in product development and want community feedback, you should educate yourself on patent risks and your team's position on community feedback.

Do not solicit, review, use, or share source code for implementation in Microsoft products or services without at least Director-level approval and/or involving LCA.

Do not solicit, review, use, or share APIs, file formats, schema, or similar

items from your readers without at least Director-level approval and/or involving LCA.

If your job responsibilities include soliciting specific or detailed community feedback on Microsoft products or services, work with your LCA contact to evaluate the attendant risks and/or to design a streamlined process for handling the feedback.

Our readers often have great ideas to share, and we are constantly looking at new ways to help them share ideas in a safe and effective way for the company. For product feedback, consider directing readers to the [MSWish](#) and [Product Feedback Center](#) web sites. For any business development proposals, including proposed partnerships or sales pitches, refer readers to the [Opportunity Management Center](#).

Q. Can I offer technical assistance in my blog?

A. Customers and partners sometimes look to Microsoft bloggers for help with an existing or future product when they can't find the answer in one of our web resources. It's great to send someone away happy with an answer if you can help, but follow these basic guidelines to make sure you are doing the best thing for all involved:

Make sure your information is accurate, up to date, and suitable for public disclosure (e.g., not confidential).

If you're not the expert, don't imply you are or make up the answer.

Security in particular is a really complicated topic where wrong advice can be damaging for the recipient and Microsoft, so unless you are a true expert whose job is focused on security, don't try to go too deep into prescriptive guidance beyond telling people to use anti-virus software, run a firewall, and keep their software up to date. For more guidance on this topic, read the Microsoft Security & Privacy Messaging Guidelines.

Don't speak for other product teams.

Don't forget about other sources of technical support such as [Product Support Services](#), [Newsgroups](#), other blogs, user groups, and Microsoft and community run Web sites.

Q. Can I post code in my blog?

A. There isn't a one size fits all answer to this question. Whether you are posting code as part of your job at Microsoft or code related to Microsoft products on your own time, you need to comply with the release and approval procedures established by your business unit. The release and approval procedures vary depending on what you are posting, so before doing anything you should discuss what you want to do with your manager and involve your [LCA contact](#).

Q. Do I own my blog content?

A. Under the Microsoft Corporation Employee Agreement you signed upon hire, Microsoft owns all copyrightable works prepared within the scope of your employment at Microsoft. Whether a post is made within the scope of your employment depends on a number of factors, including the extent to which the post relates to your duties at

Microsoft. Accordingly, if you blog in connection with the business of Microsoft, then, regardless of whether you blog on a non-Microsoft site and/or after work hours, don't sell, convey, or monetize rights in your postings (such as by selling advertising) without first consulting your manager and LCA contact. This also applies after you leave Microsoft – if you'd like to make use of blog postings made during your time here, please consult your manager and LCA contacts before you leave.

Q. Can I use photos in my blog?

A. As long as you have the right to use the photo (from the photographed individuals and the photographer), the photo does not contain any confidential information, and you comply with applicable corporate policies such as [Sexually Explicit or Otherwise Offensive Material Policy](#), you can post photos on your blog. However, if you would like to use photos taken at Microsoft, make sure that you comply with all corporate security and PR policies regarding on-campus photography, and remember that no photos may be taken in labs or executive areas. Please consult your PR and/or security contact if you have any questions.

Q. Can I make commitments on behalf of the company?

A. Unless you are empowered to do so, don't try to speak on behalf of the company--be yourself and use your own voice. As you know, Microsoft is often the target of lawsuits, and opposing parties may seek to use statements taken from employee blogs against the company or as an admission by Microsoft in court. Many bloggers include a disclaimer saying that they are speaking for themselves, e.g., 'this blog contains my own views and does not necessarily reflect the view of employer.' In any case, avoid stating your or other's opinions as facts, drawing legal conclusions, or making exaggerated or broad generalizations about our products, competitors, or markets in which they compete. Similarly, when expressing an *opinion* or making a *commitment*, you should make it clear that you are speaking for yourself. For example, in offering opinions, lead with "IMO" or "IMHO."

Q. How do I respond if I'm contacted by the press?

A. If you think you may be dealing with the press, involve your PR lead immediately. For more information, see [Talking to the Press](#) in the Employee Handbook.

Q. Do I have to use a disclaimer on my blog?

A. Unless your business unit requires it, there is no hard and fast rule that requires disclaimers on your blog site or individual postings. Using an appropriate disclaimer can help you emphasize that your opinions are your own, not those of Microsoft generally. If you host your blog on a Microsoft blog site, you may want to reference that your blog is governed by the site terms of use. In addition, if you wish, you may choose to indicate on your blog that the contents are licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](#) license (note that this license is NOT appropriate for software). Finally, if you feel that the nature of your blog or an individual posting warrants a disclaimer, please consider using the disclaimer at

<http://mscommunity/Disclaimer.aspx>.

Q. Do I have to blog on Microsoft sites?

A. If you are blogging in connection with the business of Microsoft, we encourage you to blog on blogs.msdn.com or blogs.technet.com, as appropriate. Having employees blog on these sites helps the company ensure that blog postings are archived, enables us to put any required legal language on the blog templates so you don't have to worry about it, and helps our customers and partners by creating a centralized resource for Microsoft blogs. Of course, if you have an existing blog hosted elsewhere when you join Microsoft, it may make sense to keep the same URL for your readers.

Q. If I blog on a Microsoft site, what happens to my blog when I leave Microsoft?

A. If you are leaving Microsoft, and you have a blog hosted on blogs.msdn.com or blogs.technet.com, you must notify the bloghelp@microsoft.com alias of your last day with the company. Generally, Microsoft will not delete your blog, but will freeze it so that no posts are made after you leave. This policy may not apply to blogs hosted on sites Microsoft makes generally available to the public, but you should cease holding yourself out as a Microsoft employee after you leave.

Q. I still don't have an answer to my specific question.

A. For additional guidance about blogging, visit <http://community/blogs.aspx>, query the [Bloggers alias](#), talk with your manager, or reach out to your [HR representative](#), PR lead, or [LCA contact](#), as appropriate.