

# Social Media Scenarios and Discussion Questions

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## Why use scenarios?

Scenarios allow us to apply knowledge and skills in situations that simulate those we encounter in real-life. Working with social media scenarios gives us opportunities to:

- Practice in a safe, non-threatening environment
- Work alone or in small groups which helps us to be comfortable trying out new approaches
- Receive targeted feedback
- Ask questions and reflect on the factors at play in different situations
- Compare our social media choices with those in the scenarios
- Become confident using the Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use

The scenarios below illustrate some fictional, yet-plausible, situations. They can help readers reflect on social media choices in a more contextualized way. We hope these scenarios will serve as a starting point for considering a range of social media choices that we as individuals might make in a given situation, as well as the possible consequences of those choices.

The scenarios can be used both individually and in a group discussion setting.

The steps below describe a process for using the scenarios as the starting point for a group discussion. If your group is large, we suggest dividing into smaller groups of four to six.

# How to use the scenarios: Steps for a group discussion

1. Choose a facilitator for the discussion
2. Everybody reads the scenario silently (the facilitator may also read the scenario aloud)
3. The facilitator asks participants to put the problem(s) embedded in the scenario into their own words: How do you read the situation? What might be the underlying issues or problems? Note: This step is important. The group may want to dive immediately into deciding what the outcome should be. However, resisting that temptation long enough to discuss the problems first will yield a richer conversation
4. When the group has reached a shared understanding of the problem(s), the facilitator asks the discussion questions
5. Through discussion, the group may or may not come to an agreement. The response sheet (this document) has points which should be considered, so it is a useful check to ensure the group hasn't missed any key points. The response sheet may be handed out to participants, or the facilitator can share the points with the group in the discussion

# Scenario 1: Passion and Posting

Jeanine is a passionate anti-poverty advocate. On her personal Facebook page, she posts criticisms of what she sees as her ministry's inaction. Her profile identifies her as a "sometimes reluctant employee of a certain very large B.C. government ministry." She also posts angry comments in response to B.C. government ads and press releases.

## Questions for discussion

1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?
2. How can we remain true to ourselves and adhere to our duties as public servants?
3. What information might you provide to Jeanine as a friend and colleague?

## Scenario 1: Passion and Posting responses

### 1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?

Jeanine's criticisms of her ministry and her angry comments in response to BC government ads and press releases is an issue. These actions aren't consistent with the [Standards of Conduct](#) which all employees must follow as a condition of employment.

As a public service employee, how Jeanine engages in public dialogue on topics such as political parties and government policy must take into account some special considerations because of the [Oath of Employment](#) and the [Standards of Conduct](#). Her comments must not demonstrate disloyalty or a lack of impartiality in the conduct of her duties.

When making public comments, Jeanine needs to consider all of the below factors, including:

- Only making public comments when the topic or issue is not related to her government role or ministry.
- Not using her position in government to lend weight to the public expression of her personal opinions.
- Not making comments that would be reasonably perceived as an official act or representation of government (unless authorized to do so).
- Not making comments that would make a reasonable person doubt her ability to conduct her work responsibilities impartially.
- Not campaigning for a political party or initiative using her government email address or any other self-identification as a public service employee (completely separating her political activities from her work).
- Not identifying herself as a public service employee through her profile, photos posted, etc. if she is going to be engaging in public dialogue about political topics.
- Not listing her job when signing online petitions.

It's a significant issue that Jeanine is publicly criticizing her ministry's policies and operations. Her posts are likely to undermine public trust and confidence in how the ministry operates.

The posts may also cast doubt on her own impartiality in the performance of her duties. The public expects her to follow the direction of the government

in conducting her work. If she publicly criticizes her ministry's policies, the public may doubt that she can follow those policies while doing her job.

Indicating that she is a public service employee is a problem given her public comments. Her comments may also result in her using her position in government to lend weight to her personal opinions. Based on her profile and comments, it would not be hard to figure out what ministry she works for.

## **2. How can we remain true to ourselves and adhere to our duties as public servants?**

There may be times when our personal beliefs and values or political positions conflict with the work we're being asked to do in our jobs or with the direction our organization is following.

During these times, we need to remember what we swore or affirmed in the Oath of Employment: to do our work impartially and act with integrity, putting the interests of the public and the public service above our own.

Each of us, from time to time, may find we need some support in meeting this obligation. Employees should check in with their supervisors if this happens. If you're in a job where you often or always feel conflicted between your personal opinions and professional responsibilities, you may want to consider moving to another role or organization where you don't feel conflicted.

### 3. What information might you provide to Jeanine as a friend and colleague?

You can encourage Jeanine to read the Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use and reflect on the [Standards of Conduct](#) and [Oath of Employment](#). You can also encourage her to speak with her supervisor about the actions she's taken so far and any steps she should take going forward.

If Jeanine wishes to continue being active in online conversations about anti-poverty causes, she needs to carefully consider what is appropriate to post about her ministry's actions, and be cautious about what she posts, how she represents herself and how she asks her friends to represent her:

- Jeanine should refrain from posting certain types of content, such as criticisms of her ministry and angry comments on press releases
- If she's going to continue being active in these conversations, it's a good idea for Jeanine to also update her profile to remove reference to her employer
- She should also instruct her friends not to refer to her as a ministry employee when they repost or comment on her content. She should also regularly review her privacy settings

# Scenario 2: Here But Not Here

Raj feels strongly that it's important to be responsive on his personal social media accounts, and when his phone goes off with an alert from his X (Twitter) or other social media accounts, he checks it and responds pretty quickly. Even in a meeting, if it's something quick, he'll respond. He always gets his work done, but other people on his team have noticed and don't always think he's paying attention or being courteous.

## Questions for discussion

1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?
2. How might Raj's behaviour impact the workplace?
3. What strategies could be used to address the issue?

## Scenario 2: Here But Not Here responses

### 1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?

There are several issues in this scenario. First, the time spent on his personal social media is time that is taken away from work. As with personal telephone calls or other personal errands such as online banking, these activities are personal activities, not work activities.

Raj's choices also suggest that he is easily distracted by the alerts he receives. When Raj chooses to check and respond on his personal social media accounts every time his phone goes off, his focus on work is interrupted. As a public service employee, Raj is responsible for providing service in a manner that is efficient and effective. Even though he gets his



work done, Raj may not be delivering service that's as efficient and effective as it could be because he's distracted at work by his personal interests.

Raj's actions also create a perception that he's not paying attention to others. His coworkers sometimes feel his responses to his phone going off demonstrate a lack of courtesy and attention, and therefore his actions may be undermining the team's ability to work together.

Limited and reasonable use of personal social media accounts during work hours should be discussed with your supervisor to ensure the activity is consistent with the [Oath of Employment](#), [Standards of Conduct](#), [Appropriate Use Policy](#), [BC Public Service Corporate Values](#) and other policies and guidelines.

## **2. How might Raj's behaviour impact the workplace?**

Raj's behaviour can interfere with his ability to meet established service standards or provide a level of service that is expected of him, and it disturbs his colleagues. Raj may not be fully "present" when he needs to listen attentively to capture important information and to act on an issue.

Raj's distracted behaviour may cause members of his team or clients to lose trust and confidence in him.

Even though Raj may not realize the impact of his behavior on the workplace, his personal social media use may have larger unintended consequences for his work environment that could undermine the public's trust and confidence in how the ministry operates.

### 3. What strategies could be used to support Raj in avoiding overuse of personal social media at work?

Employees should talk to their supervisors for guidance on limited and reasonable use of personal social media at work.

Raj needs to be conscious of whether the time used for social media during the workday is his own time or the employer's and correct as necessary. He also needs to consider how people in his social networks will perceive his personal social media activity during the workday.

Some strategies Raj can use to support his reasonable use of his social media at work include:

- Minimizing temptation:
  - Changing a device's alerts and settings to silent mode
  - Putting the device out of arm's reach
  - Signing out of personal social media accounts while at work
  - Not taking the device to meetings.
- Setting expectations with social media contacts:
  - Letting friends or family know that when he's at work, he won't be checking social media or responding except at set periods during the day
  - Finding an appropriate time and place to check and respond to social media

# Scenario 3: Gary's Frustration

Gary is part of an ongoing investigation about a complaint he launched about another employee, and he's frustrated with the perceived lack of results. He starts venting about his frustration on his private Facebook account, sharing details of the complaint he launched. Some of his Facebook friends are also work colleagues and one of them notifies Gary's supervisor about the posts.

## Questions for discussion

1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?
2. What could Gary have done instead?
3. Who should Gary's supervisor contact for help?

## Scenario 3: Gary's Frustration responses

### 1. Is this an issue? Why or why not

This is a serious issue. Complaints and investigations are confidential, which Gary would know from clear instructions provided by investigators. Gary is not permitted to share this confidential information even in a private conversation with friends. Gary's disclosure constitutes misconduct that should be reported.

Sharing this information could hinder the investigative process and damage workplace morale and is a privacy breach. The fact that Gary's work colleagues are Facebook friends makes this situation worse, but it would still be a problem if they weren't.

## 2. What could Gary have done instead?

Gary's need for emotional support and an outlet for his feelings is natural but doesn't justify revealing confidential information. Gary could have taken advantage of other supports to manage his emotions without breaching confidentiality or putting an ongoing investigation in jeopardy.

For example, he could have spoken with his supervisor about how he was feeling or he could have gotten support via confidential short-term counselling from [Employee and Family Assistance Services \(EFAS\)](#). During or following the investigation, Gary could have also contacted his union or the Excluded Employees Association (if he is a member) for assistance.

Gary should have faith in the process and understand that just because he hasn't heard anything doesn't mean nothing is happening. Read [Sharing the Results of Misconduct Allegations](#) on Careers & MyHR to understand more about privacy during and after investigations.

## 3. Who should Gary's supervisor contact for help?

Gary's supervisor should contact the BC Public Service Agency via AskMyHR for guidance. Gary's supervisor should also consider his [obligation to report information incidents](#).

# Scenario 4: Social Media Marketing

Jin has a side business selling baby clothes online on Etsy.com. She uses X (Twitter) and Instagram for marketing and responding to questions. She sometimes does this during worktime and when she has called in sick. She also uses her BC Public Service work computer for this online business.

## Questions for discussion

1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?
2. What could Jin have done instead?
3. Who should Jin's supervisor contact for help?

## Scenario 4: Social Media Marketing responses

### 1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?

Jin's business activities are an issue. The [Standards of Conduct](#) state that BC Public Service employees are permitted to have secondary employment or run a business, provided that outside work does not:

- Interfere with the performance of the employees' duties as a BC Public Service employee
- Bring the government into disrepute
- Represent a conflict of interest or a perception of one
- Appear to be an official act or to represent government opinion or policy

- Involve the unauthorized use of work time or government premises, services, equipment or supplies
- Gain an advantage that is derived from their employment with the BC Public Service

First, Jin is conducting her secondary business during work hours and is using her work equipment to do so. This is a clear violation of the Standards of Conduct and a conflict of interest. Second, Jin is conducting her secondary business while on paid sick leave. This may be a misconduct issue for misuse of sick leave.

## **2. What could Jin have done instead?**

There would not be an issue if Jin:

- Did not engage in her secondary business during work hours
- Did not use government equipment
- Did not engage in her personal business during the time she was paid to be on sick leave

## **3. Who should Jin's supervisor contact for help?**

If Jin's supervisor becomes aware that Jin is running a secondary business during work hours and on work equipment and is misusing sick leave, they should contact the BC Public Service Agency via AskMyHR.

# Scenario 5: I Heart Your Photo

Harper 'likes' all of the posts on Instagram that show their colleague Jill in them. Harper sometimes makes sexualized statements in the comments of these photos. Jill has told Harper that she is uncomfortable with this and yet it continues to happen.

## Questions for discussion

1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?
2. Who can Jill go to for help?

## Scenario 5: I Heart Your Photo responses

### 1. Is this an issue? Why or why not?

Harper's behaviour is an issue. When colleagues interact online, their interactions can become an extension of the workplace. Harper's interactions with Jill online, including the sexualized comments, may constitute [sexual harassment \(PDF, 131KB\)](#). Jill has the right to be respected and to work in a harassment free environment.

The fact that the comments continue, despite Jill's request that they stop, makes them even more problematic.

### 2. Who can Jill go to for help?

Jill should review [HR Policy 11 – Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace \(PDF, 141KB\)](#) as well as [Addressing discrimination, bullying and harassment](#) on Careers & MyHR.

Since Jill already attempted to address the behaviour directly with Harper, she should connect with her supervisor to discuss the issue. Her supervisor can then work with her and the BC Public Service Agency to determine the best way to address the behaviour and ensure it does not happen again.