

Five rules for being social media savvy during the silly season



By [Thango Gombiza](#)

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'Tis the season to be jolly, but while you're having a blast at Christmas and New Year parties, remember that professionals do not let their hair down online.



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Social media platforms are not only 'social'. There have been enough online debacles to prove that Twitter is a highly watched medium that can make or break your reputation, and advance or damage your brand. Twitter and Facebook in particular, are notorious for creating controversy and attracting people who are nothing but trouble.

Have fun the smart way by observing these six rules of social media engagement over the holidays:

1. Think before you post

The first rule of social media is 'think before you post'. Always ask yourself who will see your post and how they may react to it. If your boss, business partner, colleagues, or clients would be unhappy about a post or photograph, then don't post it. Avoid at all costs inappropriate language, unpleasant links or compromising photographs. When in doubt, think of your online reputation and play it safe.

2. Control what people see about you

The second rule is 'if it's private, don't post it at all'. On most online networks, privacy settings allow you to control exactly what information people can see about you. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and LinkedIn have different levels of privacy settings; they are explained quite clearly and it's worth making the effort to understand how they work. But don't rely completely on privacy settings as they are not fool proof. Think of the number of Twitter users who have embarrassed themselves terribly by tweeting the wrong thing. As much as privacy setting can help to protect you, always assume that anything you post – updates, photographs, profile changes – could well be seen by anyone. Use social media with the assumption that anything you post could be seen by anyone.

3. Stay positive

As French philosopher Voltaire said, 'One always speaks badly when one has nothing to say.' It's difficult sometimes to avoid voicing a strong opinion, but if you are a professional concerned about your brand, tone things down on social media and do not see it as your personal venting platform. Clients, employers and colleagues may not take kindly to the unflattering meme you post of President Zuma in a Santa hat.

4. Fact check and proof read

Proofread your social posts, check your figures, check your grammar, verify spelling, and look up definitions. Incorrect claims will make you come across as unprofessional, while poor spelling is just plain sloppy.

5. Don't spread fake news

Spreading misinformation is bad for your reputation. How can clients take you seriously in January, when you've spent the holidays being part of the fake news problem? Ensure you don't share incorrect reporting by checking the source, comparing multiple reports, reading the full story (and not just the headline!) before you share it, and avoiding articles full of hyperbole like 'biggest', 'deadliest' 'worst', which are really just clickbait.

Go out and have a good time over the holidays, but always remember to keep your wits about you. By putting your best digital foot forward, you can start the new year on a positive note without losing customers, leads, or even friends.

ABOUT THANGO GOMBIZA

Thango joined Vurra Reputation Management as an account manager in 2017. She has worked with an array of clients in both the public and private sectors and is a seasoned public relations professional. Her expertise lies in communication and PR strategy development, media and client liaison, event management logistics, overseeing coordination of creative design elements, and developing project plans.

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