

Social Networking Policy

Ventura County Bar Association

The following are the guidelines for the social networking on the Ventura County Bar (VCBA) Website.

Guidelines for social networking

In sum, be professional, respectful, and discreet in your online dialog. Represent the VCBA and your profession well. Exercise good judgment. VCBA members who fail to do so, or who fail to comply with these guidelines, may not only forfeit the right to participate in social networking activities sponsored by the VCBA, but may also be subject to penalties and discipline for failing to adhere to applicable Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as civil or criminal liability and penalties, as warranted.

- 1. Be responsible.** You are personally responsible for the material you post. All statements must be true and not misleading. Carefully consider content; what you publish will be widely accessible for some time and, in some cases, indefinitely. Protect your privacy and the privacy of others, and adhere to all statutory prescriptions and Professional Rules of Conduct governing the privacy of individuals and confidential information of your clients.
- 2. Be upfront, identify yourself.** Your honesty-or dishonesty will quickly be noticed in the social networking environment. Use your real name, and, if relevant, your role or interest in the topic discussed. When appropriate, make it clear you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the VCBA.
- 3. Be civil, respectful.** It's okay to disagree with others, but do not use defamatory, abusive, threatening, offensive, or obscene language or post illegal material.
- 4. Be quick to correct an error.** If you make a mistake, admit it. Quickly provide the correct information. If appropriate, modify an earlier post to make it clear that you have corrected an error.
- 5. Keep it relevant, add value.** Write about what you know. Information can add value if it contributes to the legal community's knowledge or skills, improves the legal system or public understanding of the legal system, or builds a sense of community.
- 6. Follow copyright and fair use laws.** Always give people proper credit for their work. Make sure you have the right to use material with attribution before publishing. It's a good practice to link to others' work rather than reproducing it on your site. When in doubt, as to the proprietary nature of material, don't use it. Recognize the potential professional and legal consequences of any failure to follow applicable laws governing the use of others' material.
- 7. Protect proprietary and client information.** Do not discuss or misuse proprietary or confidential information, and follow all professional and ethical rules governing the disclosure of information shared with you by clients. When in doubt, leave it out.
- 8. Refrain from endorsement of political candidates.** The activities of the VCBA are governed by its bylaws. As a membership organization, the VCBA needs to avoid even the appearance that it directly or indirectly endorses or financially supports candidates for political office.

9. **Comply with California rules governing lawyer advertising.** Comply with all Rules of Professional Conduct and other applicable rules and regulations when posting content to any social network.
10. **Abide by the social network's rules.** By joining a particular social network, you agree to abide by that community's terms of use, so review those terms carefully.