



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social Media Strategy & Social Media Policy Guidelines for Biathlon Canada

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Social media represents an opportunity for Biathlon Canada to grow their audience in a cost-effective and quick means. At the same time, this opportunity comes with challenges and therefore needs to be framed and guided by effective policy to ensure best use and maximum effectiveness. Without clear guidelines and parameters AND a strategy, the scope of the possibilities associated with social media can become too large rendering this tool essentially ineffective (which detracts from organizational communications objectives).

For this reason it is essential that Biathlon Canada have an effective strategy associated with its e-communications in the social media forum. Biathlon Canada also needs a clear policy that outlines how the organization will use social media.

If done effectively, Biathlon Canada can use social media to:

- Promote organizational goals
- Build athlete and coach visibility
- Build the profile of the sport and the organization as a whole
- Increase membership and improve services to existing members
- Expand reach (i.e. communicate with fans and build fan base)
- Spread the message (in its own words and according to Biathlon Canada's schedule)
- Highlight Biathlon Canada events
- Expand visibility when traditional media is not as effective
- Support marketing and promotional efforts
- Provide new added value opportunities for sponsors
- Give the Biathlon Canada membership opportunities to network amongst themselves (and share ideas and best practices)

Biathlon Canada can only support the aforementioned goals if it is an effective administrator or gate keeper of its e-communications and social media activities. In fact, most sport organizations (and many corporations) have dived into social media and figured they would worry about the credibility of their organization later. Big mistake.

Note: At the 2014 Olympic Games, there will be a strict and clear policy in place that regulates the use of social media in conjunction with the Games. Therefore it is important for Biathlon Canada to immediately develop a comprehensive policy that is consistent with the regulations developed by the IOC as its athletes will be required to comply.

Types of Social Media Tools

Social media is basically web-based and mobile technologies that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue. Content is user-generated. There are various different forms and types of social media platforms. Currently Biathlon Canada is using Twitter and FaceBook in a limited fashion.

The Development of a Social Media Policy

Social media policies are not one size fits all. The right policy will reinforce the organization's existing corporate culture and provide practical guidance to those who will be governed by the social media policy that is developed.

Important Considerations/Cautions in the Development of a Social Media Policy & Strategy

Social media, overall, has its pros and cons. Some important things to consider include:

- Selection of the Administrators (gate keepers) – keep it a tight circle, not too large
- What will Biathlon Canada do if there are others using social media and referencing biathlon but the content does not reflect those values or views of Biathlon Canada?
- Respect for Biathlon Canada's mission and vision
- Use of social media for personal attacks and the use of rude or unacceptable language
- Personal use of an organization's social media tools
- The definition or parameters of what can be discussed
- Will photos/videos reflect the sport in the way that Biathlon Canada wishes it to be portrayed?
- Not every audience will be reached through social media – it is only one communication tool and needs to be part of an overall marketing & communications strategy
- What is the staff /consultant/volunteer capacity for daily management of social media tools and monitoring of social media content and evaluation of effectiveness of social media campaigns?