



Do You Really Need an Internet Blog Policy©

Veterinary Business Advisors, Inc.
Flemington, New Jersey
(908) 782-4426
www.veterinarybusinessadvisors.com

A blog, or weblog, is a frequently updated personal journal intended for public viewing. Blogs first appeared on the Internet in the mid-1990s and consisted primarily of personal online diaries. In today's electronic age, most of us either blog or participate in one or more electronic-communications mediums. However, as blogs have become more popular, the ways in which they have been used and, thus, the difficulty in controlling their usage has expanded exponentially. In light of their ever-increasing popularity, it behooves every veterinary practice to create and enforce blog policies and protocols to ensure its team members use blogs in an appropriate and acceptable manner

If your practice, or any of its employees, is blogging either personally or on behalf of the practice, you need to develop a clearly defined and comprehensive blogging policy. To ensure your blogging policy affords the proper protections to your practice, its clients, vendors and other team members, you should consider including the following:

General Provisions

Unless specifically authorized by the Hospital to do so as part of employee's position, employees are not permitted to blog or use other forms of social media or technology on the Internet during working hours or at any time on Hospital computers or other Hospital-supplied devices. Blogging or other forms of social media or technology include but are not limited to video or wiki postings, chat rooms, personal blogs or other similar forms of online journals, diaries or personal newsletters not affiliated with [Hospital Name]. [Hospital Name] respects the right of its employees to use blogs and does not want to discourage employees from self-publishing and self expression. Therefore, the following guidelines have been established to provide a clear line between you as the individual and you as the employee:

- [Hospital Name] respects the right of employees to use blogs as a medium of self-expression and public conversation and does not discriminate against employees who use these mediums for personal interests and affiliations or other lawful purposes.

- Bloggers are personally responsible for their commentary. Bloggers can be held personally liable for commentary that is considered defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libelous by any offended party, including [Hospital Name].
- Employees cannot use employer-owned equipment, including computers, Hospital-licensed software or other electronic equipment, nor facilities or Hospital time, to conduct personal blogging.
- Employees cannot use blogs to harass, threaten, discriminate or disparage against employees or anyone associated with or doing business with [Hospital Name]. Negative statements about [Hospital Name], its products and services, team members, clients or any other aspect may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- If you choose to identify yourself as a [Hospital Name] employee, please understand that some readers may view you as a spokesperson for [Hospital Name]. Therefore, you are required to state that your views expressed in your blog are your own and not those of the Hospital, or of any person or organization affiliated or doing business with the Hospital.
- Employees cannot post on personal blogs the name, trademark, logo, or any other Hospital-privileged information of the Hospital or any business with a connection to [Hospital Name].
- Employees cannot post on personal blogs photographs of other employees, clients, vendors or suppliers, nor can employees post photographs of persons engaged in [Hospital Name] business, at Hospital events and of Hospital products.
- Employees cannot post on personal blogs any advertisements of Hospital products nor sell Hospital products and services.
- Employees cannot link from a personal blog to [Hospital Name]'s internal or external web site.
- [Hospital Name] reserves the right to use content management tools to monitor, review or block content on Hospital blogs that violate [Hospital Name] blogging rules and guidelines.
- If contacted by the media or press about your post that relates to [Hospital Name] business, employees are required to speak with the practice manager before responding.

It is also advisable to include offensive or inappropriate blogging as an example in the discipline section of the Handbook. Of course, all of the other required Employee Handbook acknowledgements and disclaimers would still apply.