

In my previous blog I discussed social media risks for restaurants and how these risks can be categorized into three distinct groups, reputational risks, legal risks, and operational risks. In that blog I promised that the next offering will have a 5 step checklist that you can use to help get control of these risks. And remember, even if your restaurant does not actively participate in social media, you still need to spend some time managing these risks because they can still have a huge negative effect on your restaurant's success. This is because it is extremely likely that your employees are engaged in social media in ways that could create risk exposures for your restaurant. In addition, your clients are also engaged in social media in ways that could have an impact on your restaurant, whether you choose to use social media or not. So, take a moment to review the 5 step checklist below and implement as needed to help protect your restaurant.

Assess Your Social Media Environment: You should start by conducting a broad assessment of general social media activities related to your restaurant with a sharp eye toward discovering potential risks. Keep in mind the three broad risk categories mentioned above and evaluate each link in the social media chain with each different risk group in mind. If you are actively using and designing social media campaigns, try to evaluate each campaign's specific risks to your restaurant. You want each campaign to align with the culture of your organization and your overall marketing strategies, and the risks associated with each branch of social media must be measured against the overall perceived benefits of each campaign.

Identify Key Players: For each and every type of social media interaction, you will need to carefully identify all of the people who will be involved in that process. Make sure that everyone understands what they can and can't say, what they can and can't do and what their limitations are with regard to that social media platform. Develop a system that will allow you to track their actions on that social media platform. Plan to review their work in this area on an ongoing basis so that you have control over the risks that their actions create for your restaurant.

Put It In Writing: Draft a social media policy statement with a set of guidelines. This should spell out what is and what is not acceptable social media behavior for anyone who may be representing your restaurant on a social media platform. You should also consider a separate social media rules statement that creates guidelines for employees using social media while not at work. Then have an independent attorney review all of these written statements to make sure that they comply with employment practices rules and regulations.

Discuss With Employees: Formally address the risks of social media to your restaurant that

are created by your employees. They are generally the largest social media risk to your company, usually without meaning to be so. You should plan to provide regularly updated training to your employees regarding the dangers of damaging your organization through the use of social media, either on or off the job.

Create A Social Media Agreement: This agreement, which should be reviewed and signed annually by each employee as a condition of continued employment, should carefully spell out the expectations that you have for each employee in the area of social media and the risks to your organization. This agreement should be updated at least once a year as the social media world is evolving and changing quite quickly.

Social media offers many excellent opportunities for restaurants to add new clients, increase sales and enhance their reputations in their respective communities. It is important though for each restaurant owner to understand and begin to manage the substantial risks that are created by this new age of social media. If you would like more help understanding your social media risks or the ways that insurance may be able to help protect your restaurant, please feel free to call us, toll free, at 877-687-7557. We look forward to helping you.