



**SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE
FOR CFP® PROFESSIONALS**

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Social media has transformed the way people find information and interact with each other. It has become an important addition to the marketing and communication tools available to business people in every profession and those working within financial services are no exception. According to CFP Board's [2012 CFP® Professionals and Social Media survey](#), 45 percent of CFP® professionals surveyed indicated that they are currently using social media to enhance their professional knowledge and improve business communications. In the financial planning profession, where trust and communication are key components to developing a strong relationship with clients, social media can be a valuable asset for enhancing this relationship, providing a platform for real time, two-way communication.

To help CFP® professionals effectively use social media, CFP Board created this resource document to provide tips and best practices for getting started with social media or enhancing a current social media strategy.

Before using any social media network, please check with your compliance department for guidance and information about any regulatory or company-specific requirements.

How Financial Planners Are Using Social Media

Use of social media has become a routine part of the day for many people, across all demographics, including the clients and potential clients of CFP® professionals. People increasingly expect businesses to have a social media presence in addition to a website. Social media can help financial planners market and promote their services with a mass audience, and it can also be used to enhance communication with individual clients and with their colleagues.

CFP Board's 2012 *CFP® Professionals and Social Media* survey indicated that many CFP® professionals use social media as a source to keep up with professional news and trends, and share relevant information with their clients and social network. Many financial planners are using blogs to share original content, strengthen ongoing relationships with clients and connect with new clients. Other social media platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, can be used as avenues to share one's expertise, or to promote personal and company blogs. And social media does not require all original content – social media makes it easy to organize and share your social network relevant content that others have shared online.

Some advisors use social media to gain valuable insight into clients' financial lives, allowing them to better meet their clients' needs. Social listening, or observing messaging produced by clients on social media channels, can help advisors understand what is important to their clients, deepening the professional relationship.

Many financial planners also use social media to connect and network with other financial professionals. Similar to in-person networking events, many financial planners use LinkedIn, for example, as a means to network, share financial strategies and business ideas and discuss trends in the financial planning profession.

Below are some general, best practices applicable to all social media networks.

- **Pause before you post.** If you've just created your account on a social media network, take some time to see how others are using the network successfully before you become active on the network.
- **Outline a specific purpose for your social media activities.** Define your desired audience to give yourself guidance on the proper content and tone for your activities. Give people a reason to connect with you on social media by providing information not contained on your website or other materials.
- **Keep your branding consistent.** The style and imagery on your social media pages should reflect the look and feel of your other business materials.
- **Highlight your expertise by featuring the CFP® marks.** Include the CFP® mark in the biographical statements and images featured on your social media pages.
- **Create a strong network.** Social media allows you to connect with the colleagues and clients in your immediate circle, as well as with respected experts and resources.
- **Avoid comments on specific financial strategies or products.** Your post may be viewed by people you will never meet, and may be construed as a recommendation. This may also be in violation of various compliance department rules and government regulations.
- **Distinguish the public from the private.** Determine what types of content and conversations are appropriate for public posting and what topics are best addressed privately through direct messaging or offline communication.
- **Be relevant to your followers.** Post information on topics relevant to your followers and engage them with posts they can interact with, whether by sharing with their networks or by adding comments in response. For example:
 - Sharing links to updates on your website, or to featured articles in your company newsletter or blog.
 - Commenting on the news of the day.
 - Sharing your perspective as a CFP® professional, and highlighting related issues that individuals should discuss with you or another CFP® professional.

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- Providing general information about financial planning or posing a question to generate discussion around a specific topic. Don't forget to share posts from [CFP Board accounts](#) that reinforce the importance of financial planning.
 - Including multimedia elements in your posts. Video, audio and photos can enhance a message on social media and make your posts stand out to your followers and connections. For example:
 - A financial planner is like personal trainer for your financial life VIDEO: <http://onforb.es/JhQhfm>
 - To protect your finances as you age, start a dialogue with a trusted friend or relative about financial planning AUDIO: <http://bit.ly/Ld3j8>
 - Volunteered at this year's Financial Planning Day in Sacramento. Great turnout! PIC: <http://ow.ly/i/16l5Q>
 - **Use a link shortening tool.** Hyperlinks are often extremely lengthy and can take up valuable character space in a social media post; however, link shortening tools condense the length of links and make posts more concise. Link shortening services, such as [bit.ly](#), [ow.ly](#) or [goo.gl](#), also commonly provide information on how many people click each shortened link.
 - **Watch the time.** Pay attention to what times your followers are online and interacting with the social media sites, and schedule your social media activities during those times. To help with scheduling, create an editorial calendar and prepare a group of posts in advance.
 - **Use scheduling/monitoring/archiving tools.** Consider using social media tools to assist with scheduling and monitoring of social media posts. Services such as [HootSuite](#) or [TweetDeck](#) allow you to connect to multiple social networks from one source, schedule posts in advance, and monitor your social media efforts using analytics tools. Services such as [SocialWare](#) or [Arkovi](#) can assist with archiving your social media activities.
 - **Listen.** Paying attention to what others are saying on social media can help you improve your social media strategy, as well as identify opportunities for meaningful interaction with people in your network. A client's Facebook post, for example, may relate to a major life change that affects his or her financial planning.

Quick Tips for Popular Social Media Channels



***LinkedIn** is the world's largest online professional network and the most popular social media channel used by financial planners because it allows planners to connect with colleagues and exchange knowledge, ideas and opportunities with a large network of professional connections.*

Quick Tips

- Display your CFP® certification within your LinkedIn profile by editing your basic information and adding the CFP® mark behind your name. [Learn how to change your name as it appears on your LinkedIn profile >](#)
- Monitor the “recommend” and “endorse” features on your LinkedIn profile, and remove recommendations or endorsements by colleagues or clients that may be construed as a testimonial and raise compliance issues. [Watch a video by Bill Winterberg, CFP® on how to hide recommendations from your LinkedIn profile >](#)
- Utilize the networking capabilities of LinkedIn by sending personalized connection requests to former colleagues, new business acquaintances, or other LinkedIn users with whom you would like to foster a professional relationship. LinkedIn also allows you to request an introduction from a current connection to someone whom you are not currently connected. [Learn how to request an introduction >](#)
- Enhance your profile by highlighting your CFP® certification, accomplishments and volunteer experiences. [Learn how to share professional accomplishments and interests on your profile >](#)
- [Join CFP Board's LinkedIn group](#) to receive information about CFP Board news and events, to engage in discussions with others who share your interest in financial planning, and to share ideas and discuss topics related to the financial planning profession.



***Twitter** is a social networking and microblogging website that allows you to share brief messages (140 characters or shorter) and to connect and engage in conversation with other Twitter users.*

Quick Tips

- Include the CFP® marks in your Twitter profile (not your Twitter handle — just as you can't use CFP® marks in an email address or website URL, you can't use them within the URL for your Twitter account).
- Customize your Twitter page design to align with your company's branding. [Learn how to customize your Twitter design >](#)
- Twitter caps tweets at 140 characters, but shorter messages — optimally between 71-100 characters — make it easier for others to share your posts.
- @mention others to generate conversation about a particular topic or join into a conversation by using the @reply function. [Learn more about @mentions & @replies >](#)
- Retweet media outlets or other financial professionals when you think their posts will be of interest to your followers. [Learn more about retweets >](#)
- Use #hashtags within tweets to start or join a conversation around a specific topic or event. [Learn more about using hashtags >](#)
- Spread out your social media posts to avoid cluttering your followers' feeds, and work in original content in between posts that you may retweet.
- Create "lists" to organize and follow specific Twitter users' tweets. [Learn more about creating lists >](#)
- Follow [@CFPBoard](#) and CFP Board's Consumer Advocate [@EleanorBlayney](#), CFP® to find topics/articles that may be of interest to your followers, or to engage in conversation with CFP Board.



***Facebook** is a social networking website that allows users to create profiles, upload/share photos and video, send messages, and connect with friends, family and colleagues. Businesses often create groups or fan pages to promote events, engage with customers/clients, and increase brand awareness.*

Quick Tips

- Include the CFP® marks in your profile.
- Establish a company or business page to increase awareness of your services and to begin engaging with clients and colleagues. [Learn how to create a Facebook Page >](#)
- Use the large branding area (cover photo) at the top of your page to portray your company's brand message or corporate culture. The optimal size cover photo is 850 pixels wide by 315 pixels tall. [Learn more about optimizing your Facebook cover photo >](#)
- Add a picture or video to enhance your messages and engage your audience.
- Share posts or articles by others that your Facebook network will find noteworthy. [Learn more about sharing Facebook posts >](#)
- Visit and “Like” the [CFP Board Facebook page](#) and [Consumer Advocate Facebook page](#) to keep up with CFP Board news and events, and to find topics and articles that may be of interest to your followers.



***Google+** is a social networking website that allows users to create profiles and organize contacts into “circles” for sharing tailored content to specific audiences.*

Quick Tips

- Include the CFP® marks in your profile.
- Establish a company or business page to increase awareness of your services and to begin professionally engaging with clients and colleagues. [Learn how to create a Google+ profile >](#)
- Group your contacts in “circles” based on specific criteria such as high-net-worth investors, colleagues/financial professionals, or prospective clients. This allows you to post content relevant to different audiences. [Learn how to create Google+ Circles >](#)
- Set up a “hangout” video session to enhance communication with clients and colleagues. [Learn more about Google+ Hangouts >](#)

Compliance Issues

The SEC and FINRA allow firms and financial professionals to communicate with clients using social media, and both agencies have issued guidance documents related to social media activity. In many instances, these guidelines are similar to the guidelines the SEC and FINRA have issued for general client communication or advertising. Financial professionals must ensure that clients and investors are protected from false or misleading claims and representations. Firms also are required to effectively and appropriately supervise employees' use of social media.

Many firms have established specific guidelines for their employees and representatives, such as a formal social media policy that may address topics ranging from procedures for monitoring social media usage by an in-house compliance department, to limitations on topics that may be shared or discussed on social media channels, to requirements for prior approval of all outgoing communications on social media channels.

The following social media guidance documents are a sample of those issued by regulatory bodies:

- [SEC Risk Alert: Investment Adviser Use of Social Media >](#)
(PDF, 178 KB)
- [FINRA Regulatory Notice 11-39: Guidance on Social Networking Websites and Business Communications >](#)
- [FINRA Regulatory Notice 10-06: Guidance on Blogs and Social Networking Web Sites >](#)

Before using any social media network, please check with your compliance department for guidance and information about any regulatory or company-specific requirements. Check in regularly with your compliance department, as social media guidelines may be updated frequently.



CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER BOARD OF STANDARDS, INC.

1425 K ST NW # 500 ■ WASHINGTON DC 20005
P 800-487-1497 ■ F 202-379-2299
MAIL@CFPBOARD.ORG ■ CFP.NET

