



Recommended

Blog and Social Media Response Protocols

INTRODUCTION

Every day, people discuss, debate and embrace the merits of companies and organizations in thousands of online conversations. We recognize the importance of engaging in on-line conversations and are committed to ensuring we participate in online social media the right and ethical way.

As a result, WaterMark Associates has developed the following blog and social media response protocols to empower our clients to participate in this global conversation, while representing and managing their brand in a positive and optimistic manner.

Here are five tactics that you should follow to help shape your responses:

- **Empathize-** Show you care.
- **Be transparent-** Let the commenter know what your quality standards are.
- **Take it direct-** Move it out of the public domain and direct to the individual.
- **Be in the moment-** Give clear timeframes and show you appreciate the urgency.
- **Exceed expectations-** Give the individual options and show you are there to help.

In addition to our client's customers, stakeholders, potential employees and current employees, there are also a number of other types of individuals participating in the online social conversations. Here are a few types of individuals you need to be aware of and respond appropriately:

- **Trolls.** "Trolls" lurk on the Internet to cause trouble. Typically, Trolls have a website, blog or other web presence devotedly entirely to bashing others. Approach trolls with caution. Trolls live to provoke a reaction; they are often abusive and repetitive. In most cases, following the response protocols appropriately will determine if and when you should eliminate them from your online community. This is important for the benefit of other users and their experiences.
- **Inflamed or also known as "Ragers".** Ragers are individuals that post with rage, a rant or, are satirical in nature. Like Trolls, approach with caution and monitor closely.
- **Misguided.** These individuals are sometimes considered Mavens or experts on a variety of topics within their communities. Their intentions are usually good but their information is erroneous or provides only part of the story. Setting the record straight, referencing third party expertise and monitoring the community's response are appropriate for these individuals.



- **Unhappy.** These individuals have had a negative experience with the organization. Their complaints may or may not be justified. Ideally, respond in a positive manner, redirecting the conversation to another location (email, phone call follow up, etc....)

Response Considerations

When our clients respond to any comment on a blog, website or social media site, the following considerations need to be followed:

- **Transparency:** Disclose your connection and your role in the organization
- **Sourcing:** Re-enforce your response by citing third party sources including websites, articles, trade journals and white papers.
- **Timeline:** Do Not Rush but, Do Not Delay! Take the time to craft a relevant and appropriate response
- **Tone:** Respond in a tone and manner that positively reflects on your brand, your mission, your customer, your leadership, your employees and your other stakeholders
- **Influence:** Focus on responding to the active and relevant approved social media sites.

Keep in mind that it is important first and foremost to follow adopted organizational policies including and all Social Media Policies. As a representative of your organization, act with honesty and integrity in all matters. This is true for all forms of media including blogs, digital, social and traditional.

Be mindful that you are representing your brand; as a representative, it is important that your posts convey the leadership and spirit of your organization. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures. Be mindful of how you conduct yourself when you respond online and keep in mind that is not only a reflection of you but also of the organization and all who are associated with it.

Fully disclose your affiliation with your organization. In this instance, not telling really is seen as lying. Exercise sound judgement and common sense.

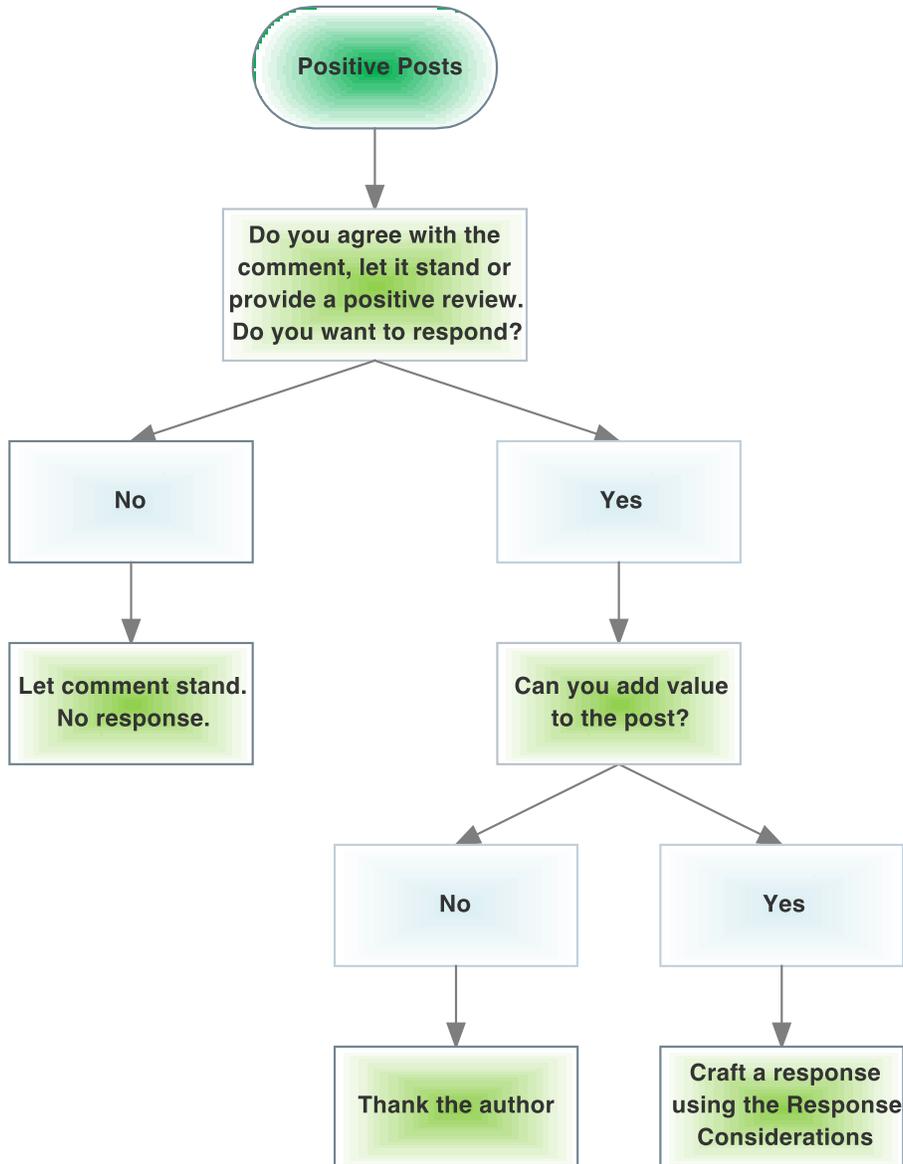
When in doubt, do not post. Employees are personally responsible for their words and actions. You must ensure that your posts and responses are accurate and not misleading and that **they do not reveal any personnel, non-public information or otherwise inappropriate information of your organization.**

If you are using another entity's content, make sure to give them credit for it, and obtain any and all necessary approvals before posting. Remember that the internet is permanent. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record. Removing it or deleting it later will not always work.

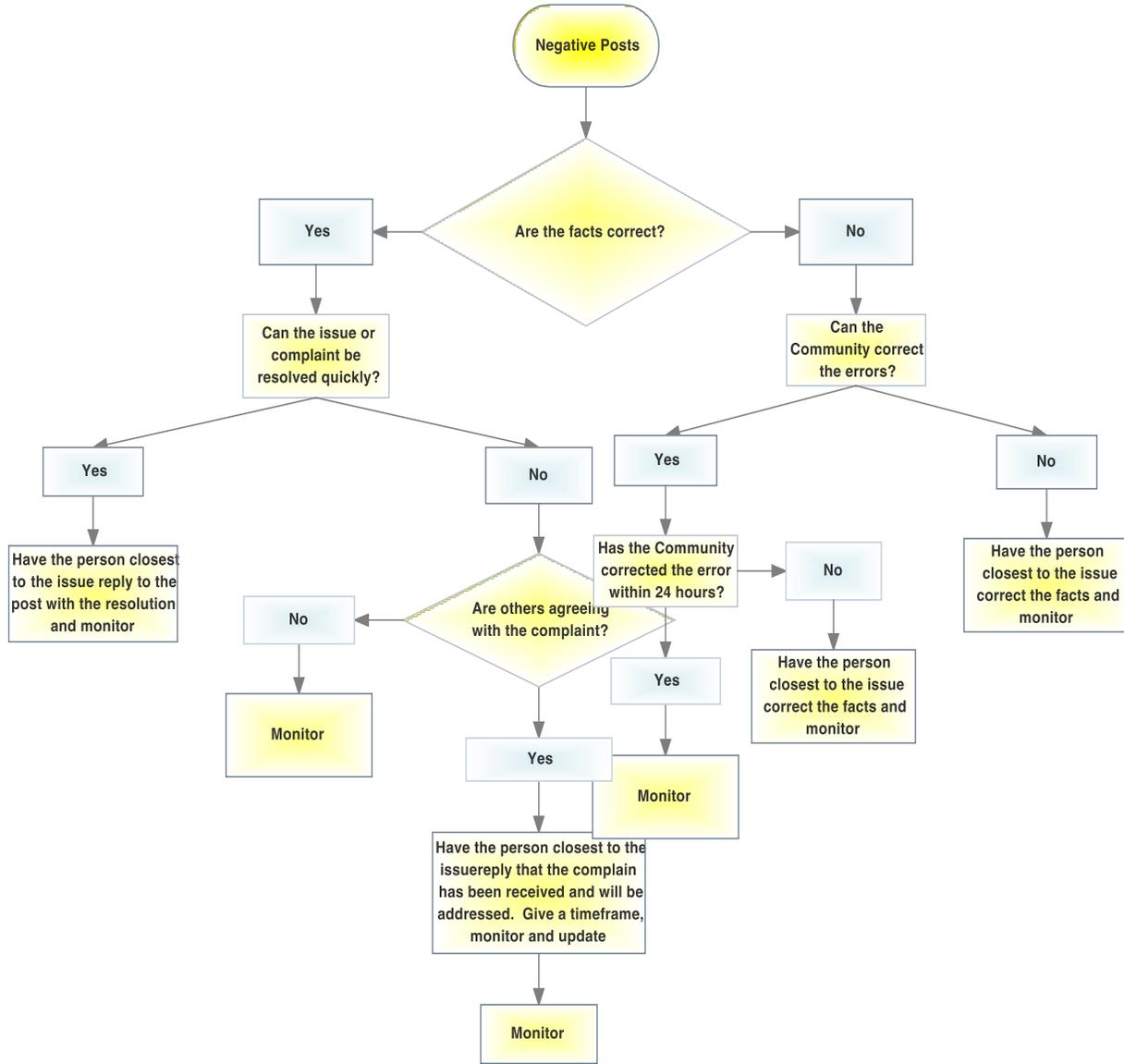


All of our client's social media sites should be actively monitored for comments. Monitoring includes reviewing comments/posts and making a determination of action; whether to respond or not.

For positive postings and comments, the following response protocol should be followed:

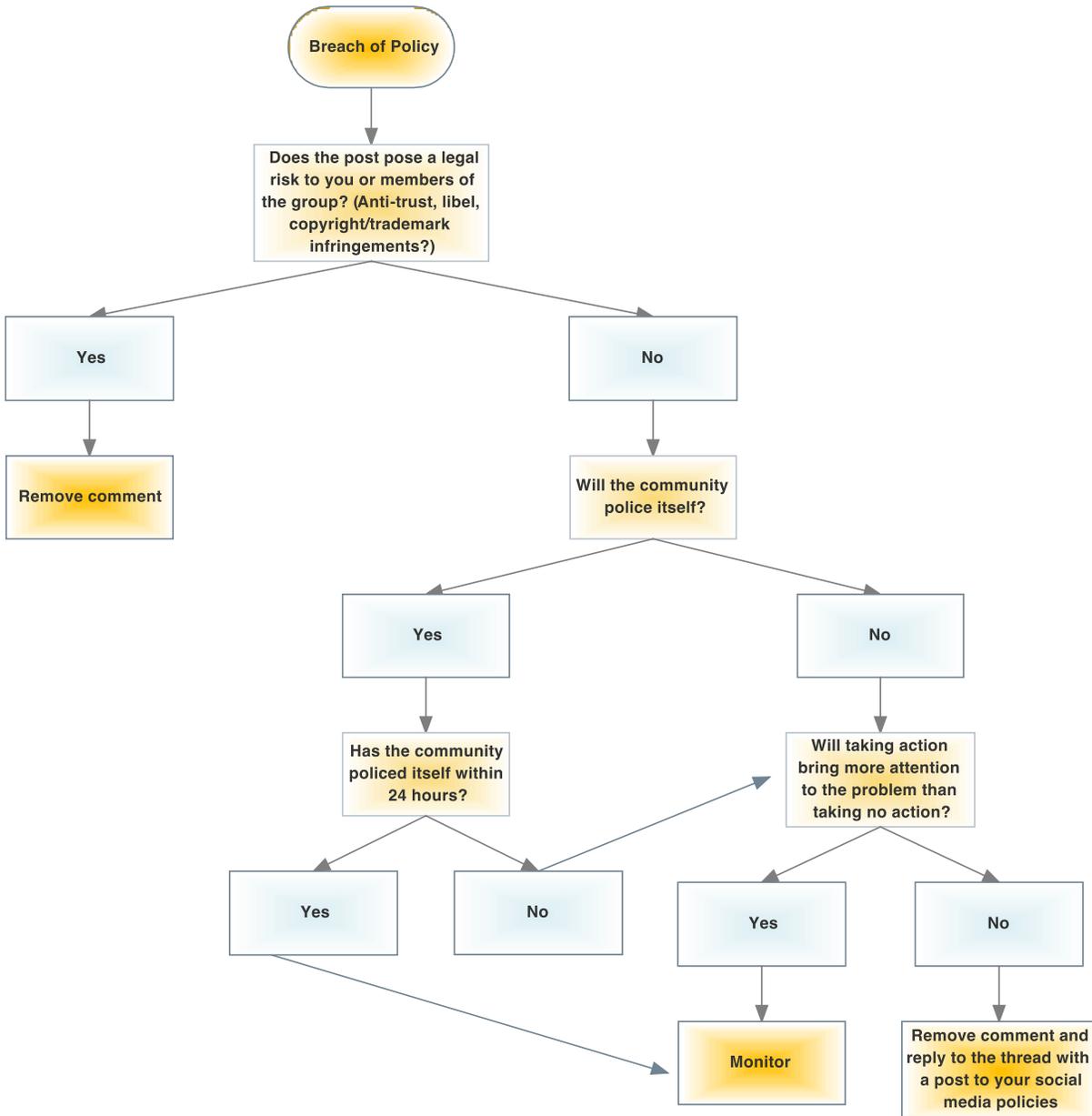


For Negative Posts, the following response protocol should be followed:





For those comments that are a breach of your organization’s policy, the following response protocol should be followed:



For situations that are questionable or need further review, notify the person in leadership that has the responsibility for managing social media immediately, and continue to monitor the activity.