



Election Matters:

Social and Paid Media Guidance for Clients on and around Election Day

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In advance of the 2024 U.S. elections, organizations are navigating a national landscape of extreme polarization. Political violence and concerns about the state of our democracy have escalated these tensions, leading businesses and brands to apply greater caution as they devise communications and marketing strategies.

According to The Weber Shandwick Collective's latest Pulse on America survey, most Americans believe businesses should protect democracy and serve as a stabilizing force in society, but they overwhelmingly believe business should remain politically neutral. These findings, combined with additional quantitative and qualitative analyses of American attitudes toward corporate engagement in politics and social issues, inform the following guidance for clients engaging in social and paid media this election season.

While there is no one-size-fits-all guidance for external engagement on and around Election Day, we broadly advise clients to take extra precautions throughout this time period. This is particularly important for social media engagement because the platforms serve as a critical source of news and information about the elections, as well as misinformation and disinformation.

Pre Election Day

- Evaluate upcoming social media and influencer campaigns and ongoing programs for the remainder of 2024 - whether brand-based, enterprise or C-Suite level - with an eye toward the election and politics. Almost anything can be politicized.
 - Consult a cross-functional team including communications, public affairs, marketing, government relations, legal and other relevant team members about social media and influencer engagement plans amid the election, alongside other external marketing and communications plans.
 - Tap agency partners for timely best practices and recommendations.
- Take extra precautions around social and paid media engagements throughout election season, from now through mid-November - and possibly beyond.
 - Conduct daily monitoring of current events for any red flags related to the election or politics (e.g., political violence) that might require adjustments or pauses in social and paid plans.
 - Increase social media listening efforts to identify and analyze election-related conversations that intersect with brand interests, ensuring proactive engagement and timely adjustments to strategies.



- Carefully review planned social content for the use of colors, emojis or iconography that may have new political connotations and could imply political support. Exercise extra caution when engaging with social trends and memes, as their meanings can quickly change.
- Augment vetting practices and brand risk assessments for influencer engagements and other partnerships, taking stock of influencers' POVs on the election, the candidates or hot-button issues.
- Enhance your community management and social comment response protocol to include potential scenarios related to organic comments from followers about the elections and politics.
- Avoid newsjacking election topics in service of your brand or products. This is likely to be seen as opportunistic and may do more reputational harm than aid marketing efforts and consumer interest.
- Closely track developments around the social platforms regarding content moderation policies related to the election.
 - If past is precedent, the platforms themselves stand to be implicated in election content moderation debates and/or election-related mis- and disinformation campaigns. Popular opinion about the safety or integrity of social media platforms can shift quickly.
 - Revisit platform-specific brand suitability controls for your paid advertising campaigns such as block lists and inventory filters to help you place ads adjacent to organic content that is more suitable for your brand.
- Conduct scenario planning around potential election-related events (e.g., contested election, protests,

political violence) and develop a decision framework to guide any rapid response on social channels.

- Review and/or reissue your employee social media policy relative to the election and politics, as well as any employee advocacy campaigns or activations planned over the coming months.

On and immediately around Election Day

- Pause all social and paid media engagement on Election Day itself, with the possible exception of posts supporting democracy, voting and civic engagement, based on the organization's values and commitments.
 - If you choose to proceed with engagement on Election Day, consider prioritizing lower-risk channels such as LinkedIn.
- Scale back or, at minimum, augment review of any planned executive or brand social media posts in the week prior to and after the election. Posts or statements, whether related or unrelated to the election, can easily be perceived as tone deaf, inappropriate or partisan.
- Consider scaling back or pausing influencer engagement the week prior to and immediately after the election given the potential for political statements, whether from influencers or their followers. Refrain from launching new influencer partnerships and collaborations in the 1-2 weeks before and after the election.
- For any campaigns planned before or shortly after Election Day, be prepared to hit pause at a moment's notice, and have a protocol in place to coordinate across your team to make decisions in a timely manner.

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