



Social Media Guidelines

This document provides guidelines for the participation of ACTRA elected leaders and staff in social media conversations. ACTRA Branches are encouraged to adopt these guidelines, or to draft and adopt guidelines similar in spirit.

Use of ACTRA trademark

“ACTRA” is a registered trademark and use of the name and brand is the exclusive right of ACTRA.

The creation and use of social media identities, logon IDs and user names using “ACTRA” may not be used without prior approval of ACTRA National or the relevant ACTRA Branch/Local Union.

ACTRA By-Law No. 15 states the National President is the official spokesperson for and on behalf of ACTRA.

For the purpose of these guidelines, ‘social media’ refers to any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki’s, and social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

These guidelines are intended to be complementary to any existing or future ACTRA policies regarding the use of technology, computers, e-mail and the Internet.

ACTRA National social media accounts are administered by the National Public Policy & Communications department. Members wishing to have content appear on an ACTRA National account can send their request to actra@actra.ca.

Freedom of Expression

As stated in the ACTRA Constitution and By-Laws, under no circumstances will the obligation of membership in ACTRA preclude an individual member from exercising free speech (By-Law No. 7, II). As a matter of fundamental policy, ACTRA promotes freedom of expression and communication and unequivocally opposes censorship.

As also stated in the ACTRA Constitution and Bylaws, a member is not to act in a manner that is prejudicial to the interest and welfare of ACTRA or its members (By-Law No. 7, III).

While ACTRA supports freedom of expression, there is a strict zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate posts. Any such posts will be removed or reported. Inappropriate content includes, but is not limited to, content that is discriminatory, harassing, threatening, confidential or offensive. If a member refuses to remove the post from an ACTRA account, the member may be blocked and ACTRA may contact the social media platform to have the content removed.

ACTRA will not discuss member complaints on social media. The content will be removed, and the member may be referred to the appropriate ACTRA branch for resolution.

Protocols on posting and use of Social Media

Each ACTRA department and Branch should develop clear protocols for posting material under ACTRA accounts.

In most cases, ACTRA-branded accounts for social media networks are best administered by ACTRA staff under the direction of ACTRA's elected leadership (for example, the ACTRA National Twitter and Facebook accounts are staff-administered). Since ACTRA is a member-run organization, any work undertaken by staff is done under the direction and guidance of elected member-leaders, including ACTRA's participation in social media.

ACTRA elected leaders should not endorse policies contrary to the ACTRA Constitution & By-Laws or Equality Statement in any forum, online or not. Publishing confidential information to which elected ACTRA leaders are privy is prohibited.

All publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations and liabilities to any other kind of publication or commentary. Therefore, it is critical the laws governing copyright and fair use or fair dealing of material owned by others are respected, including ACTRA's own copyrights and brands.

Finally, if you choose to include that you are an elected leader of ACTRA in your social media bio or description area, for liability purposes, you must also note the views expressed on your social media account are your views only (i.e. "posts/tweets are my own") and are not necessarily those of ACTRA.

Dealing with trolls

A social media "troll" is defined as someone who likes to sow discord online by starting quarrels or upsetting people; or by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community. Sadly, social media trolls have become an inevitable part of the social media experience.

Tips on how to deal with trolls

1. First and foremost, don't feed the trolls (i.e. don't engage with them)
2. How to deal with a troll:
 - a. It's generally best to ignore them;
 - b. If you feel there is a reason to respond, then respond with facts (calmly and clearly reply and correct the misinformation the troll has shared. While the troll likely doesn't care, and probably knows very well everything they've written is made-up, not everyone in your social network does. This response is for them);
 - c. Block or ban the troll, when appropriate. In cases where trolls take things too far, such as they've escalated to threats or hate speech, it's reasonable to consider blocking or banning the user. Please also alert ACTRA National and/or the relevant Branch about abusive behaviour and conduct. Such behaviour will not be tolerated. If it is a member, this could warrant disciplinary action by the union.
3. If you do choose to respond, limit your responses. You don't have to continue the conversation once a solution or answer has been provided (i.e. don't keep engaging just because they do – esp. if you've addressed the question already – this will further just feed the troll).
4. In some cases, take it (the issue) out of the spotlight. Offer to continue the conversation in an appropriate forum – whether that's by phone, email or an existing online support forum. This shouldn't be an attempt to silence the critic, simply to help them where it makes sense (if they're a troll (i.e. they just want to quarrel or upset you), they will likely just drop it once you offer to connect on another channel as they really only want online (anonymous) attention).

Trolls vs. constructive feedback

Sometimes it's hard to distinguish between a troll or someone who might just have a different opinion than you and thus may respond negatively to your post. Before you decide if/how to reply, first decide whether the post is from a troll or a member of your social media network who is interested in constructively engaging. Here are some tips on trolls vs. constructive engagement:

1. If it's a troll: their motivation is simply to incite anger from you; trolls won't stop until they're forced to or get bored.
 - a. key characteristics of a troll: tendency to exaggerate; like to make things personal with ad-hominem attacks, which attack an opponent's character rather than their argument.
2. If it's a member/constructive comment: they are motivated to make an angry comment due to frustration about your organization, organizational policies or service. This person is possibly a member who needs to have their complaint heard. Real people, upon having their issue addressed and resolved, will probably be satisfied and the unhappy messages will cease. If you think or know it is a member, feel free to reach out to ACTRA National or an ACTRA Branch to confirm if the person is a member and how/if you (or ACTRA) should respond.

ACTRA National Councillor Social Media Response Process

