Are utilities giving employees brand-affiliated social media handles?

An Ask E Source answer
By Luke Currin

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Q:How many utilities have employees using brand-affiliated handles for social media outreach?

A:The results from the 2016 E Source Social Media Survey show that 48% of the 31 utilities that participated have brand-affiliated handles outside of their main channels, whether they're public affairs officers, members of the social media team, executives, or others (**figure 1**).

Figure 1: Employees using brand-affiliated handles

Data from the E Source 2016 Social Media Survey showed that 52% of utilities say that no one has brand-affiliated handles outside of the main channels. But when employees do have brand handles, it's mostly public affairs officers or members of the social media team.

We reached out to three utilities we know to have company spokespeople on Twitter to learn about their process for approving company spokespeople from a legal perspective. None of the utilities we spoke with required employees with official company handles to undergo any type of legal review before their handle went live.

One utility's employees with official company handles were professional communicators entrusted to speak on behalf of the company before they got their handle. Therefore, the utility doesn't require legal review for the employees that have official company handles.

Another utility requires employees interested in an official company handle to be approved by the social media manager and to undergo digital spokesperson training.

The third utility requires employees with official company handles to go through a training regimen, and it used an internal audit to make sure the employees understood the utility's social media response and escalation policies.

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