

# Social Media Governance

Empowerment With Accountability™

## Analysis of Social Media Policies: Lessons and Best Practices

December 16, 2009



## Letter From the Author

Fellow Leaders,

As organizations evolve beyond experimenting with social media and begin to use social media to pursue larger objectives, many organizations feel challenged to provide the right balance of empowerment and accountability to their employees – to truly engage their customers and other stakeholders, and to leverage employees in the market while ensuring appropriate accountability for results and managing potential risks to the organization.

As they seek to find the right balance of empowerment and accountability, many organizations craft one or more documents that provide boundaries and guidelines to employees using social media for personal and professional purposes. Many such organizations wonder whether they should publish a policy now, or wait until they know more about the space. In addition, those organizations who already published such policies continue to refine their guidelines as the organization learns; as their goals evolve; as they invest more into the business capabilities that leverage social media; and as employees grow more sophisticated and involved in social media personally and professionally.

I recently examined 46 social media policy documents from a wide range of B2B, B2C, non-profit and government organizations to understand the following:

- To what extent do organizations focus on risks versus opportunities in social media?
- What types of guidelines do organizations provide to employees?
- How are organizations providing guidance to employees who represent the organization in social media?

This document summarizes key insights from the study and provides best practices determined through client work and studies such as this. The study is not intended to statistically represent the universe of social media policies, but to provide ideas to support your efforts. I hope you find it helpful.

Regards,  
**Chris Boudreaux**  
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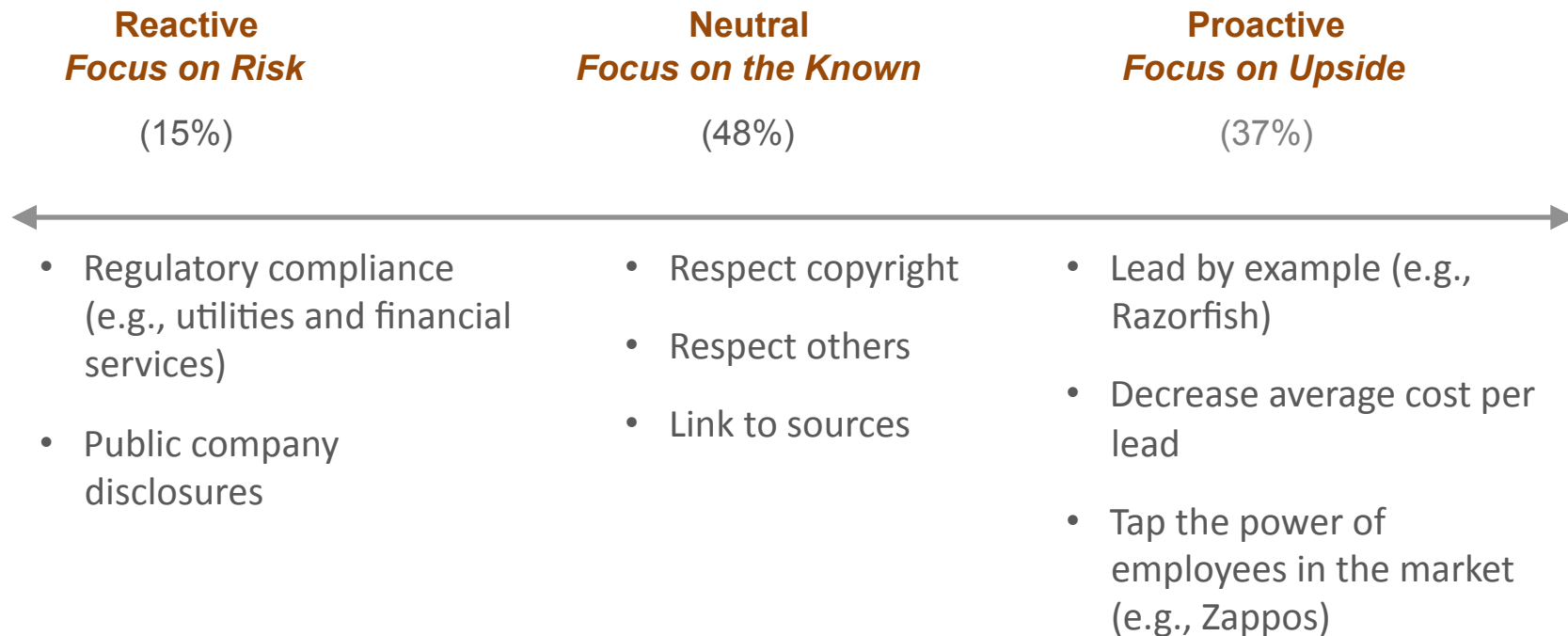
## Summary of Best Practices

1. Create at least two policies, as follows:
  - a. One policy that sets expectations and boundaries for all employees, including any relevant limitations or suggestions for the personal use of social media.
  - b. Operational guidelines for employees working in social media as part of their job.
2. Determine valuable opportunities to leverage your employees as ambassadors in your markets, then provide guidance that helps your employees to achieve greater impact and value in their social media interactions.
3. Support your employees and let them know where your boundaries lie. For example, tell them whether they are permitted to use your organizational trademarks, such as logos, in their personal content. Don't leave them guessing.
4. Provide the right information to the right people at the right times. Create distinct documents with specific purposes that your employees are likely to consume.
  - a. Help employees understand the benefits of the document, then post the document where employees can easily find it as needed.
  - b. If you want to create a positive impression of your brand, post it publicly, and consider posting the policy at:  
  

<http://SocialMediaGovernance.com/policies.php>
5. Provide hyperlinks in your social media policy to all relevant policies. Make it easy for your employees to find additional information as required.
  - Also provide a link to relevant contacts, such as email addresses of key personnel or URLs of internal web pages that provide relevant information.

**Only one-third of sampled organizations portray social media as a positive opportunity for employees and their organization.**

**Motivations for Social media Policies<sup>1</sup>**  
(Percentages Based on Tone<sup>2</sup>)

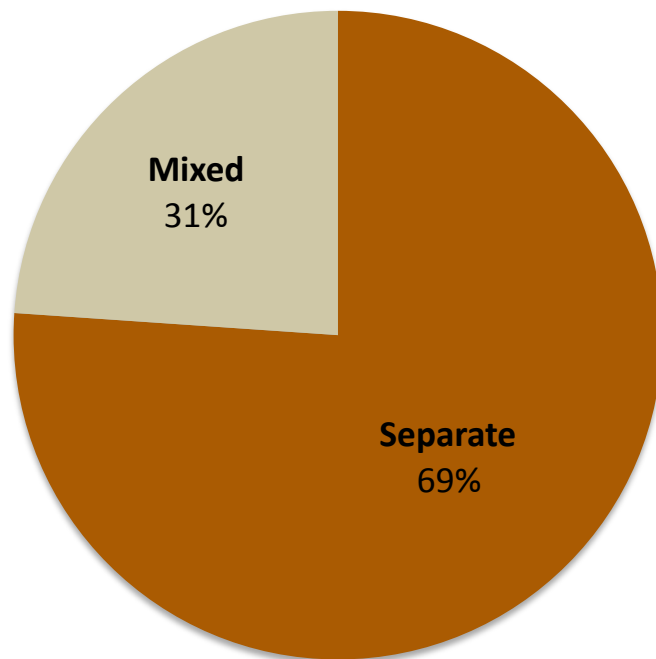


[1] Source: SocialMediaGovernance.com.

[2] Percentages based on SocialMediaGovernance.com analysis of 47 social media policies, 2009.

## Most organizations separate guidance about personal use of social media from guidelines for employees who represent the organization within social media.

Separation of Style and Performance Guidelines From Broader Social Media Policy



### What the Data Says

Most sampled organizations separate their broad guidance regarding personal use of social media from their detailed, operational guidance for employees who represent the organization in social media.

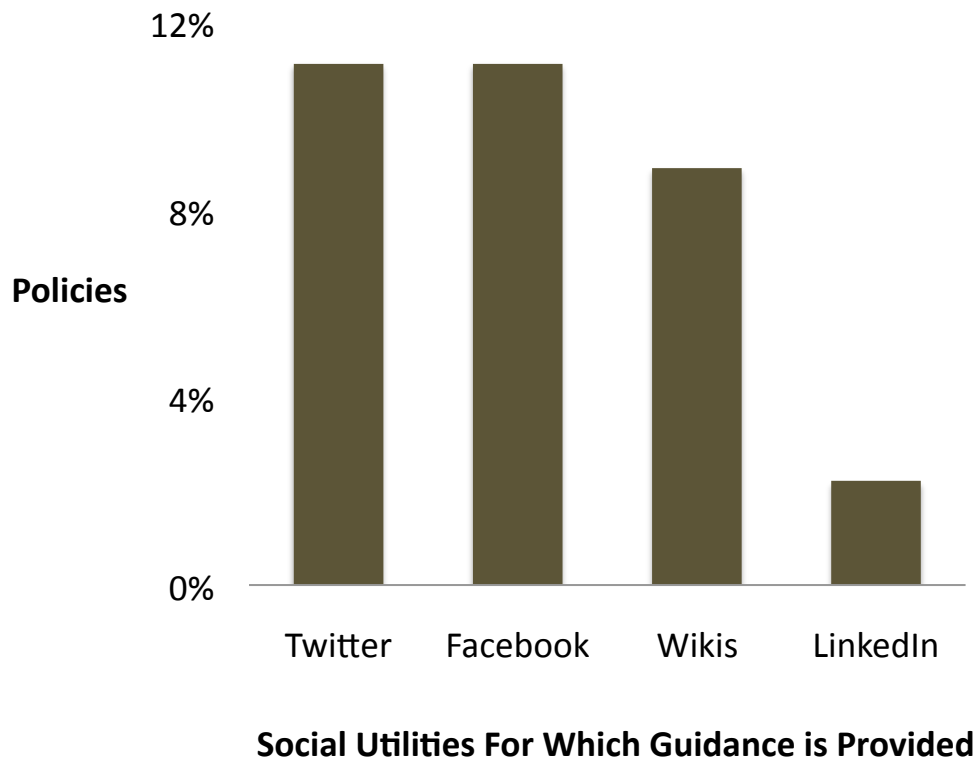
### Best Practice

Create at least two policies, as follows:

1. One policy that sets expectations and provides boundaries for all employees, including any relevant limitations or ideas for the personal use of social media.
2. Operational guidelines for employees working in social media as part of their job.

## Few organizations provide guidance to employees regarding specific social utilities.

Share of Organizations Providing Guidance for Specific Social Utilities



### What the Data Says

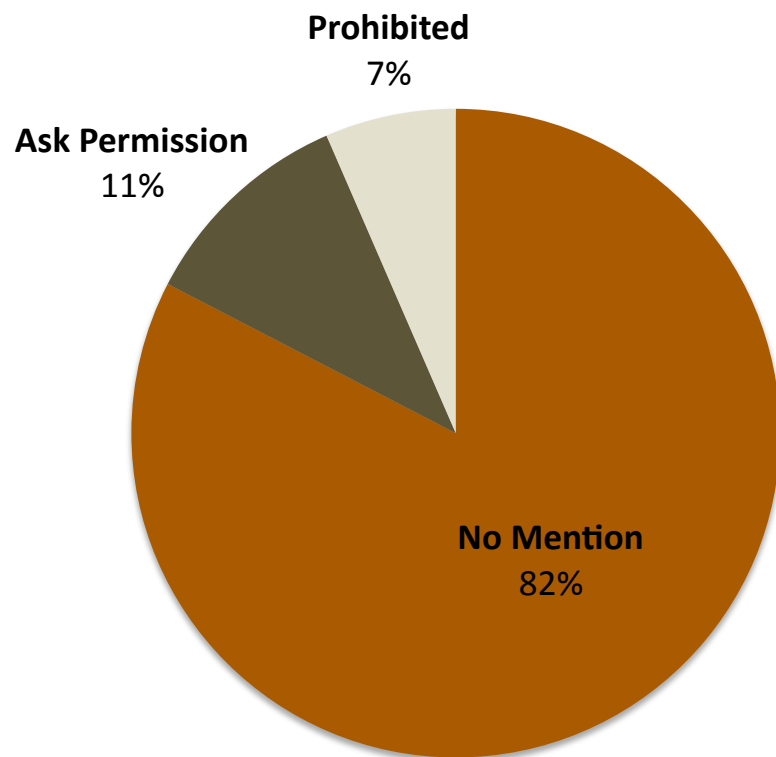
Very few organizations provide guidance to employees regarding specific social utilities. Those organizations that do provide guidance tend to focus on Facebook and Twitter. A few organizations provide guidance regarding employee participation in public wikis or online encyclopedias, and LinkedIn receives the least attention.

### Best Practice

Determine valuable opportunities to leverage your employees as ambassadors in your markets, then provide guidance that helps your employees to achieve greater impact and value in their social media interactions.

## Most sampled organizations provide no guidance regarding employee use of the organization's trademarks.

### Allowed Use of Organization's Trademarks in Personal Social Media



### What the Data Says

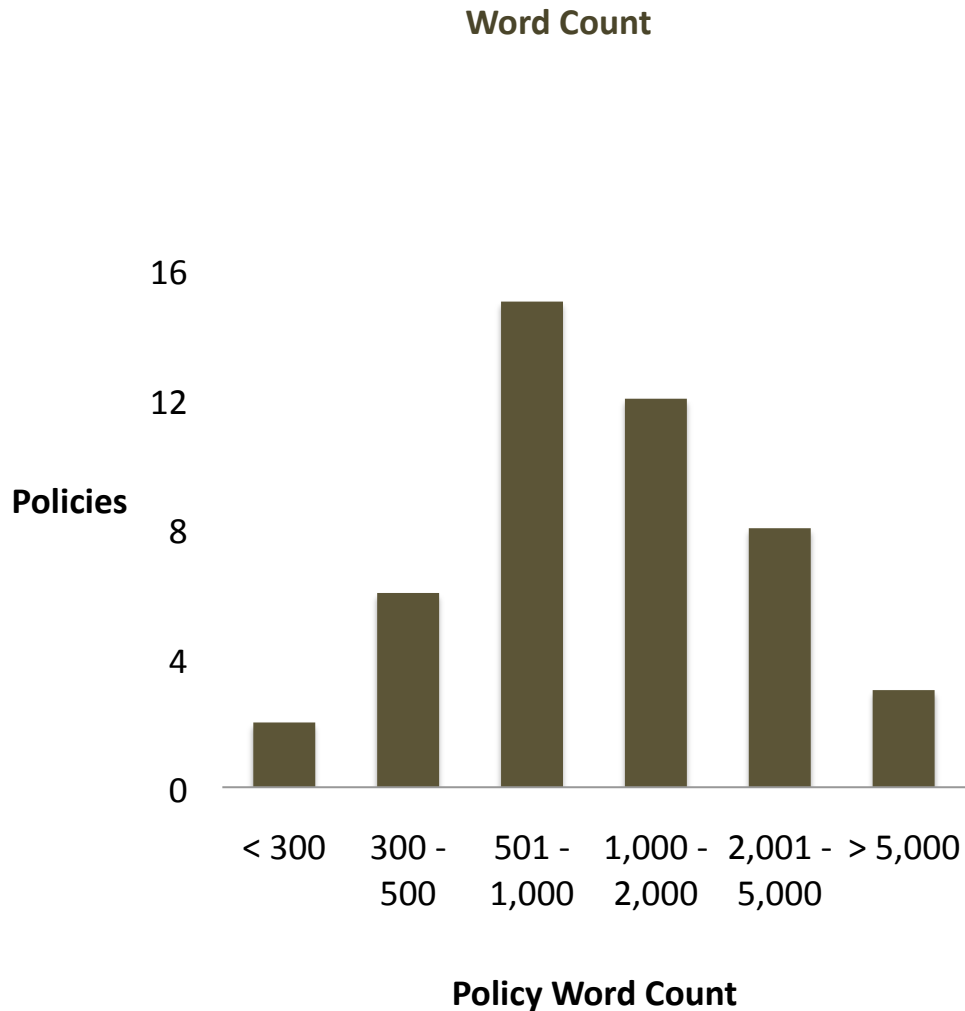
Most sampled organizations provide no guidance regarding employee use of the organization's trademarks.

### Best Practice

Support your employees and let them know where your boundaries lie. Tell them whether they are permitted to use your organizational trademarks, such as logos, in their personal content. Don't leave them guessing.



## Most social media policies contain 500 – 1,000 words.



### What the Data Says

Most policies are 500 – 1,000 words. A few organizations combined multiple policy topics into a single document, with guidelines for style, and even strategy.

- Longest: 28,000 words by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Jacksonville District

### Best Practice

Provide the right information to the right people at the right times. Create distinct documents with specific purposes that your people are likely to consume.

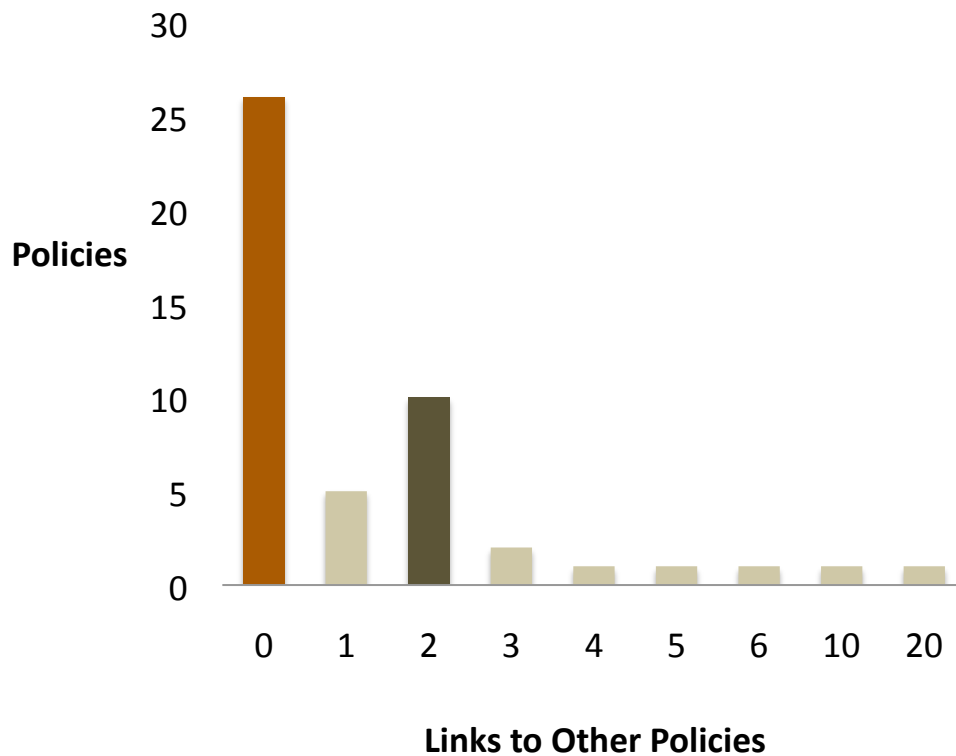
Help employees understand the benefits of the document, then post the document where employees can easily find it as needed.

Consider posting the policy on:

<http://SocialMediaGovernance.com/policies.php>

## Most organizations provide no links to other relevant policies or documents.

Links to Other Policies



### What the Data Says

Most sampled organizations provide no links to other policies from within their social media policy. A few sampled organizations provide links to the most pertinent policies, such as employee handbooks or privacy policies.

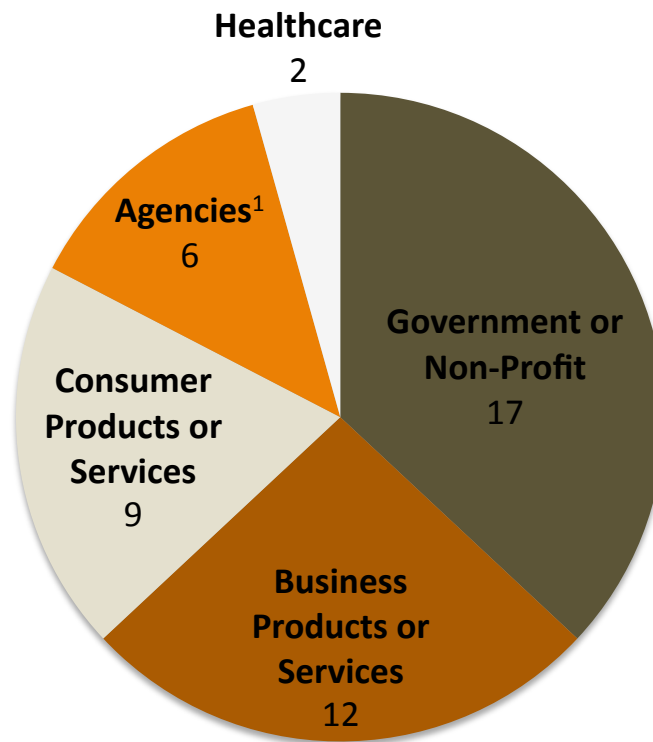
### Best Practice

Provide hyperlinks in your social media policy to all relevant policies. Make it easy for your employees to find additional information as required.

Also provide a link to relevant contacts, such as email addresses of staff who handle press inquiries and URLs of internal web pages that provide relevant information.

The study contains policies from a wide mix of organizations, including B2B, B2C, government and non-profit.

Industries of Analyzed Policies



[1] Advertising, PR and Marketing agencies.

## Policies Analyzed

American Red Cross - Social Media Handbook for Local Red Cross Units

Australian Public Service Commission - Interim Protocols for Online Media Participation

Baker & Daniels - Social Media Policy

BBC - Editorial Guidelines, personal use of Social Networking

BBYO - Staff/Volunteer Presence on Social Networking Sites

Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) - Social Media Guidelines

Cicso - Internet Postings Policy

City of Hampton, VA - Social Media Policy

Dell - Online Policy

DePaul University - Social Media Guidelines

ESPN - Social Media Guidelines For ESPN Employees

eWay Direct - Social Media Policy

Feedster - Corporate Blogging Policy

Fellowship Church - Personal Website and Weblog Policies

FINRA - Guide to the Internet for Registered Representatives

Gartner - Public Web Participation Guidelines

General Services Administration (GSA) - Social Media Policy

Greteman Group - Social Media Policy

Headset Brothers - Social Media Policy

Hill and Knowlton (3 documents) - Blogging Policies and Guidelines (selected extracts)

IBM - Social Computing Guidelines

Intel - Social Media Guidelines

Kaiser Permanente - Social Media Policy

Mayo Clinic - Participation Guidelines

Microsoft - Tweeting Guidelines and Blogging Guidelines

National Public Radio (NPR) - NPR News Social Media Guidelines

New Zealand State Services Commission - Principles for Interaction with Social Media

New Zealand State Services Commission - The Guide to Online Participation

Oce - Social Computing Guidelines

Opera - Employee Blogging Policy

Porter Novelli - Our Social Media Policy

Razorfish - Employee Social Influence Marketing Guidelines

RightNow - Social Web Employee Policy

Roanoke County, VA - Social Media Policy

Roanoke Times - News Standards and Policies

SAP - Social Media Participation Guidelines 2009

State of Delaware - Social Media Policy

Sun Microsystems - Guidelines on Public Disclosure

Telstra - 3 Rs of Social Media Engagement

U.S. Air Force - New Media and the Air Force

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Jacksonville District - Social Media User Guidelines

U.S. Coast Guard - Social Media - The Way Ahead

U.S. Navy - Web 2.0: Utilizing New Web Tools

UK Civil Service - Code for Online Participation

Wake County, North Carolina - Web 2.0 – Guidelines for Use

Washington Post (via PaidContent.org) - Newsroom Guidelines for Use of Facebook, Twitter and Other Online Social Networks

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# Social Media Governance

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My name is Chris Boudreaux and I lead cross-functional teams to create new sales and marketing capabilities – from strategy through execution. Recently, I created SocialMediaGovernance.com to provide tools and resources for leaders and managers who want to get the most from their social media investments.

In the past, I led online product development and business transformation initiatives at companies including Bank of America, Boeing, eBay and Microsoft. I also led product development and business development at two digital media and online advertising start-ups – one of which was acquired by Glam Media in 2008.

Today I live in Silicon Valley, and I have lived and worked in Charlotte, Chicago, Germany, London, San Francisco and Seattle.

- Visit my blog: <http://SocialMediaGovernance.com/blog>
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