

## Social Media



The following has been put together to help assist Officers and staff in the Union to not only be aware of some common issues with the use of social media, but also to highlight the way in which it can work to positively help promote our activities. Given our role as a representative body of students at the University of Stirling, social media provides a unique addition to the marketing mix. It does so as long as we seek to use it pro-actively to focus on the 'social' element of social media. We often talk about 'You Said, We Did' campaigns – to do so, we need to start with the 'You Said' element. Social media offers a very effective mechanism to do so (although not in isolation).

The following should be seen as Guidelines to assist you in the pursuit of your goals – not rules! For both staff and Officers issues around conduct are contained within your terms and conditions and as a form of public communication, any issues relating to use of social media will be dealt with through the relevant processes in place.

With the right application and approach the various social media outlets available to the Union offer a great direct way in which to engage with the membership directly to their rooms, their laptops, their labs whilst that everyone in the Union gives some thought to how they use social media both in work and beyond.

### The key principles to using social media

- Remember that social media is all about conversation! It is not exclusively a platform to broadcast from, nor is it sales and marketing tool. Social media is about community and connecting people, about developing personalities and building relationships. For example, which post do you think is more likely to get a response from students?

Freshers is coming, buy your ticket now!

OR

Freshers is coming, who are you looking forward to seeing?

- Authenticity, honesty and open dialogue are a must!
- Social media is a powerful tool for learning what people are saying about you... Whilst allowing you to respond. Sometimes it's best to listen first and speak second. Compare these two, which is going to generate valuable feedback?

Freshers was fun, I'm doing a great job as a sabbatical officer!

OR

Thanks for making Freshers a success! What was your favourite part and what can we do to improve next year?

- Being useful and relevant! Don't be afraid to try new things, but always think through what it is you want to achieve before things kick off!
- Once you make a post on any social media channel, you will lose control over that message, either through sharing and Retweets, or distortion through the grapevine... just be sure that the message you are putting out is appropriate and that you want to share with potentially millions of people.

- You are responsible for the posts that you make on your social media channels. Never post anything which could be deemed obscene, libellous or defamatory. Always think before you post – could it be construed in another way than I intended? It doesn't matter whether you intended to cause offense or not – it's how something is received. If you've asked yourself, 'is this ok' or 'can I say this?' and not been sure, then there's a good chance you're telling yourself you need a second opinion which you should never be afraid of asking for! It also doesn't matter if you're doing from a personal rather than a work stand point, you are responsible for both.

## **The Union online**

The Union uses a variety of online platforms as part of the overall marketing and communication mix. These currently are:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/stirlingstudentsunion](http://www.facebook.com/stirlingstudentsunion)

Twitter: @stirlingunion

Instagram: @stirlingunion

Union website: [www.stirlingstudentsunion.com](http://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com)

In a work capacity, please try to use these accounts to promote your own area of work and well as the wider work of the Union.

## **Twitter**

**When posting please tag @stirlingunion**

Current Officer Twitter accounts:

President @stir\_president

VP Communities @stir\_community

VP Education @stir\_education

Sports President @stir\_sports

## **Hashtags**

Whilst they have a place, these are best co-ordinated via the communication strategies for larger communication projects such as Elections and Freshers. More generally, we seek to embed the #makingstudentlivesbetter in all that we do.

## **Engagement**

Social media is a term used to describe a method to foster interaction, discussion and a community atmosphere – Social media allows people to build relationships and share information.

Social media can take form in any number of ways, from blog posts, photos and videos to networking via social networks such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Whilst others are available, the big 3 are those which we focus on in promoting the Union.

When using social media in a work capacity, focus should be on engagement – focus on pull rather than push – there will always be an element of this and that's not to say it's not permitted – it's also important to think about the wider Union priorities at any one time and how any communications sit alongside this. For example, during mid-March when the Union is in election mode, St Patrick's Day is coming up, RATE Awards are coming to a close and it's Comic Relief, then there's a good chance your message will be lost. Plan in advance to fit any social media work into the events, priorities and campaigns which are of Union focus (as agreed via the Union's agreed year plan of activity).

Vary your content – our monthly digital reports consistently demonstrate the importance of relevant content and using video/photographs – people will engage with something relevant, relatable and has meaning for them (for example, includes one of the friends in a photo).

What it is not – social media is different things to different people and whereby in a conversation with someone using sarcasm or irony can be clearly interpreted, text typed online in any format is often devoid of delivery (even with a smiley face ☺). **ALSO DON'T USE CAPS – IT'S SHOUTY.** If you are communicating via social media then bear this in mind. A golden rule is if you're unsure to post or not, hold off and ask someone else.

Take the time to think about what you are posting and sharing. Even the most innocent of shares about something may be seen as tacit approval for something and this is becoming an increasing tactic for online groups to garner support. Everyone should remember the Union's Equal Opportunities statement when thinking about what they post both privately and professionally.

## **Should I be using Social Media?**

Before diving straight in, there are a few things you should consider first when thinking about social media to help promote the Union's work;

- What are your goals? – What do you want to achieve through setting up a social media channel? How will you judge it a success?
- Who is your audience? – Is your audience a very specific section of the student demographic, the broad spectrum of our students, or even the public? Really think about this when posting – why am I posting it and who do I hope to reach out to? Am I adding something for the sake of it or is it helping with communication?
- What do I want to tell my audience or get them to do? – Referring back to your goals and audience, don't just promote – Engage!
- Is social media necessarily the best way to reach your audience? – How can offline media help to reinforce your social media content? Is there already a more suitable channel available elsewhere?

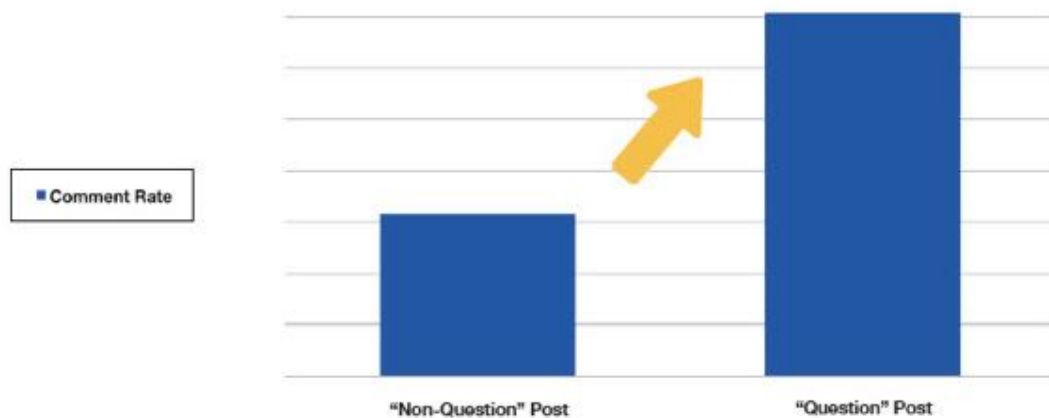
The answer to any promotion should not simply be 'stick it on Facebook'. Think first about your goals and which social platforms can help as part of an overall mix to engage with the membership and inform your work.

### **'Start conversations'**

Again, focus on the 'social' context of the media outlet. Our Official Freshers page on Facebook is always a good example of this. We ask questions and encourage students to engage!

## Ask questions to spark dialogue –

"question" Posts generate Comment rates **double** that of "non-question" Posts.



## The Do's of Social Media

### Do Celebrate

Example of divestment, additional seating in the Atrium, scrapping of Graduation fees – use it as a means for good. This medium offers a very unique and direct way to tell them about successes and make the work of the Union relevant. This kind of content also consistently performs well.

### Do Be Honest

Don't be afraid to say you don't know – but you'll find out. Also, don't be afraid to say you're sorry. You should however avoid prolonged conversations in the public format – encourage people to take forward discussions elsewhere be it via email or in person.

Thanks for letting us know about your plagiarism appeal. Don't worry about it, I'm sure it will work out fine, it did for my mate Brian. I remember how upset he was, so I guess you must feel pretty bad right now?

OR

Thanks for letting us know about your plagiarism appeal. It be really helpful if you could e-mail [lynn.maher@stir.ac.uk](mailto:lynn.maher@stir.ac.uk) with more details. I'm sure she can help you.

### Do ask if you're not sure!

If you're not sure, always get a second opinion on the nature, wording or appropriateness of posting something online. You would have someone proof a written submission so why not something in this communication format?

### Do think about what you're posting and how it can be construed!

The classic example to promote the release of Susan Boyle's new album is famous for not taking into account what the hashtag spelt out!

### #susanalbumparty

It was meant to be an invite to the launch of Susan Boyle's new album. Instead, an unfortunate hashtag meant Twitter was invited to [an entirely different kind of party](#) than the one the singer's PR team had in mind. Debunking site [Is Twitter Wrong?](#) tracked down the original tweet from Susan Boyle's official Twitter account, noting it was hastily changed to the more family-friendly #SusanBoyleAlbumParty. By then, it was definitely too late and there were mock-invites to Susan's party popping up left, right and centre.



**Susan Boyle** Susan will be answering your questions at her album listening party on Saturday. Send in your questions #SusanBoyleAlbumParty Susan HQ

30 Oct on Twitter



**Susan Boyle** Susan will be answering your questions at her exclusive album listening party on Saturday. Send in your questions #susanalbumparty Susan HQ

30 Oct on Twitter



**Susan Boyle** Susan is attending the prestigious Pride of Britain Awards this evening in London and by all accounts having a fabulous time...

29 Oct on Twitter

## Do be positive

Social media can often become an arena for those who choose to hide behind a keyboard and criticise. Whilst this is difficult at times, it's important that we are all open to 'fair' criticism when using these platforms in a work capacity. This shouldn't however been seen as acceptance of any form of online abuse or bullying. The Union takes instances of this very seriously so if you have any concerns please speak with your Line Manager.

## Do post photos/video and bring people into your media

When these guidelines were first written, the focus of this section was all about photographs – whilst they are still important, video is now equally (if not more) important. Latest industry info suggests that 80% of all internet traffic by 2020 will come from video.

Nothing encourages people to engage with our platforms more than posting content that gets their attention and contains relatable info of them and their friends. The first example below shows the variation in our reach following the Clubs & Socs Ball 2014 – photos are engaging – people want a reason to engage!

### TOP 3 FACEBOOK POSTS



**8,352 REACHED**  
**883 POST CLICKS**

A photograph of the confirmed Election candidates for Sabbatical, posted just after the hustings, gained a lot of interaction. With loads of reactions but more importantly people clicking the link to view more about the Elections.

**5,387 REACHED**  
**164 CLICKS TO PLAY**

A very silly, very over the top video about Walk To the Moon by Josh (Astrid's boyfriend) absolutely killed it on Facebook! The Director of Sport had asked us to put together something silly to raise awareness and get some engagement with students, so we did. This is a top video for the month so we'll look at view stats later in the report.

**5,341 REACHED**  
**137 ENGAGEMENTS**

The divestment announcement, with accompanying press shoot including the Principal, had huge reach on Facebook. We're seeing a higher engagement with widely known environmental issues/projects such as fossil fuels, single use plastics etc which is encouraging! Interestingly, one person wasn't happy about it with an 'angry' react...

# SPOTLIGHT: VIDEO CONTENT



With Josefina, one of our Marketing & Events Interns, currently producing video content for us on a regular basis, we're now able to look at how they are performing.

Looking at metrics for all of the videos in February, 2.8K minutes of videos were viewed - a 67.4% increase on January!

Performance for your post	
Minutes viewed	1,596
3-second video views	4,714
10-second video views	2,961
Average video watch time	0:10
Audience retention	
Audience and engagement	

Making a change from our Facebook cover video being the most popular, this month the graduation fees video was the most popular. This was our most popular post across all of our social media channels this month but particularly on Facebook, where it has been viewed for 1,596 minutes.

Performance for your post	
Minutes viewed	912
3-second video views	1,181
10-second video views	547
Average video watch time	0:16
Audience retention	
Audience and engagement	

Another popular video this month was the video of former Sabbatical Officers talking about their time at the Students' Union in the run up to this year's elections. With the video being over eight minutes long, audience retention wasn't strong but it did reach 2,373 people.

When thinking about your own use of these platforms think about how much you skim over but are drawn in by photographs/images.

## Do always check for grammar

You may be posting the most important piece of news in Stirling's history but if you've a spelling mistake you can be sure people will focus on this more than your message! Take time to review before posting. You should also take into account how you've written something and ensure you correctly use punctuation.

Let's eat grandpa.  
Let's eat, grandpa.

**correct punctuation can  
save a person`s life.**

**Do always think about when?**

Think about the right time to post – how does it sit with other campaigns, activities, promotions going on with the Union –when is it too much? There are also some helpful online resources

Certain times in the day will have more internet traffic too, so consider when you want to post exciting announcements (6am in the morning may not be quite as busy as 8-10pm!). The best times to post are:

Facebook | 10-11am and 1-4pm

Twitter 10am-12noon and 3-9pm

Weekdays are better than weekends. Also think about what else is happening in the Union and don't make the same mistakes British Gas did (you can see it in list of Social Media fails link at the end of this document). How will your message/tweet sit alongside other items going on?

**Do Include links**

Promote other Union resources (the Union website in particular [www.stirlingstudentsunion.com](http://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com) and encourage use by directing people there for more information).

**Do Think about what you're posting, who it's for and why?**

That's a lot to take in! Another way to think about this is your own use of social media – what grabs your attention? You've got to make it relevant and here's why – look how much goes on online!! How is your message going to stand out from the noise? Looking at the monthly digital reports can help guide you in what works well across different platforms.



It cannot be stressed how seriously you should think about what you post and what may happen with what you say. This article from the BBC shows just how much social media and bullying, harassment and abuse social media is now playing in mainstream society.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27949674>

### **Do Explain terms**

It's very easy to get caught up in jargon for JPPRC, FRC, SWOT, PESTLE and the like – don't assume prior knowledge when posting – always try and explain in full what you mean to ensure your posting is relevant to as many people as possible.

### **Do Respond to every message/post**

There's nothing worse than being ignored when using social media to ask something of the Union – even if it's simply to acknowledge you got it – this cuts down on the people saying I contacted my Union and nothing happened. However, should a post be abusive or confrontational, seek advice from colleagues first before replying.

### **Do keep to Brand**

Please ensure that where appropriate you are following the Union's Branding Guidelines. These are available for all staff and Officers in the Union's shared area.

### **Do write concisely and think about the language you use**

Nobody wants to read an essay as they skim through their newsfeed, you've only got a split second to grab someone's attention so make sure the essential information is there and nothing else! Consider how tabloid newspapers grab the reader's attention with an impactful headline and think of how you can apply this to writing an important status. Include images and links to help promote what you post. Also bear in mind how others may attribute a different meaning to what you post. Saying something is 'gay' isn't funny or appropriate to denote something being lame or something worthy of ridicule. Everyone should remember the Union's Equal Opportunities statement when thinking about what they post both privately and professionally.

Eurovision party is coming soon! We know not everyone is a big fan of the music but even if you just enjoy the political voting get along to Studio and watch it all develop before your very eyes! Eurovision is on the 10<sup>th</sup> May this year and studio will be decorated accordingly – this could be the best excuse of a revision break you get!

OR

Don't forget – Eurovision this Saturday! It's all happening in Studio!

### **A note on external businesses**

Our new Media Pack offers (limited) opportunities to promote via our social media and this will be managed by the Marketing team – it is important to remember though that the page is ours and any non-approved business promoting via the Facebook group will be handled appropriately – it is not a vehicle for external business to promote to our members unless they're contributing to our activities by doing so.

## The Don'ts

### **DON'T think it's private**

Nothing you write and publish on the internet is truly private, especially if you share it with someone. As outlined above, you have no control about who shares or sends on what you've posted. This applies equally for those using social media in a personal capacity as it does for those who do so in a work capacity. For everyone across the organisation, don't think that if posting in your own time or on your own private social media format that it doesn't have consequences if it brings the organisation into disrepute. All should be aware that information that they may post, originally intended for just friends or family can be forwarded on – colleagues and line managers may have access to the content of their postings. If staff or Officers post comments privately on social networking sites that bring the Union into disrepute, this could well have consequences in the workplace and lead to disciplinary action. The biggest single piece of advice is to 'think' before you post, whether in a personal or professional capacity.

### **Don't use it as a forum for venting about work**

In line with the above, if you've got an issue in the workplace, take it up through your Line Manager as appropriately. Airing issues online will not likely help or see resolution to any concerns you may have.

### **DON'T SHOUT!!!!!!!**

Ease up on the Caps Lock there.

NEW STOCK IN THE  
UNION SHOP, NOW WE  
HAVE KEYRINGS AND  
PENCIL SHARPENERS.

OR

Just seen the new stock in the  
Union shop and it looks great -  
make sure you check it out!

### **Don't fight**

Don't get into heated discussions with people – say you'll be happy to discuss with them further in person or via email. The advantage to this is that people may be much more responsive and you can help address/resolve any issues better this way or they will simply hide behind their keyboard and disappear.

### **Don't be aggressive**

You may get frustrated at times, but social media isn't the vehicle to vent your frustrations!

PARTY IN VENUE! COME  
ALONG OR WE'LL HAVE  
TO SHUT IT.  
#USEITORLOSEIT!  
#UNGRATEFULSTUDENTS

OR

Check out the amazing party  
planned for Your Union! Click for  
tickets #loveyourunion

### **Don't comment on what you don't know Let the right people respond**

Never speak out of your area of expertise. If a question or comment is posted, always check with the most relevant colleague as how best to respond – Even if that means directing the user to another channel.

### **Don't take everything as representative**

Be wary of taking the views of 12 people on a social media platform as being that of the entire student body – it's important to engage in this way but don't abandon other forms of encouraging feedback.

**Don't rush in – Think before you post**

People do tend to take things and look for offense – don't give them an opportunity to do so. Have a read at the attached article which reflects on De Montfort Students' Union's 'Would you say it to your Nan' article.

**Don't take criticism personally**

Criticism – holding Officers and the Union to account is a natural part of our democratic function – this doesn't mean that under the much used term of 'free speech' people can say what they like. Think about when is it appropriate to respond? Do you have all the facts? Is someone else better placed to do it? Remember you can post a holding reply rather than simply ignoring. What do you hope to achieve by responding (dialogue can be good and productive – tit for tat isn't).

**Don't keep going around in circle – Know when to stop**

Don't get into slugging matches with people – post rationally, take on board comments but accept sometimes you're not going to win – but you can win in terms of listening, responding and taking comments on board – doesn't mean you need to do everything each person asks.

**Don't use Social Media as a tick box exercise**

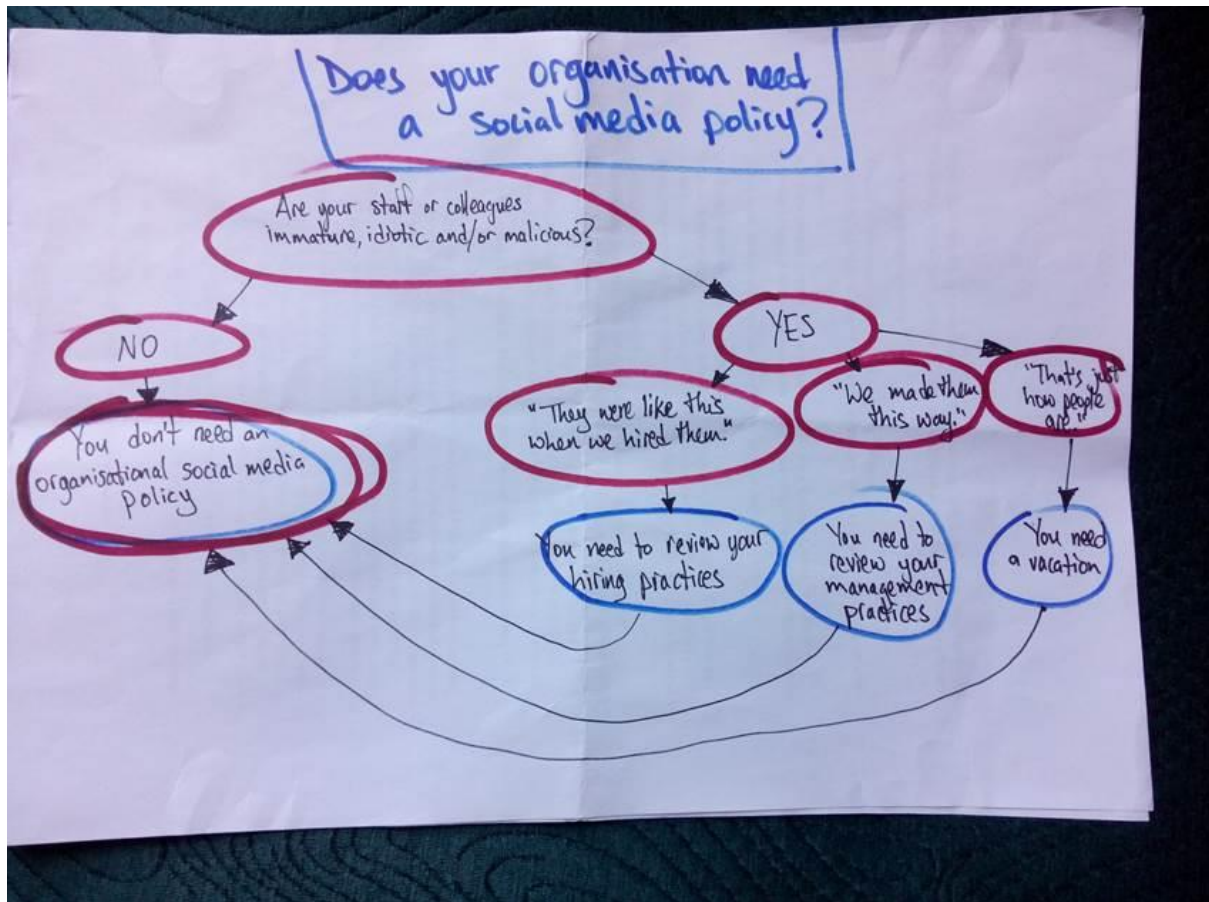
Assess what you've posted, did it work – if yes, why, if not, why not. Make your content engaging, purposeful and relevant. If you're doing it to tick a box, there's a good chance it's not the right message, format or focus.

**Don't be afraid**

Be afraid of spiders or people running their fingers down a chalkboard but don't be afraid of using social media. For all the horror stories, social media can offer a great way to engage with the membership. If you take the time to think about what you're posting, why, for whom and are comfortable with the content, then you can look to use this platform constructively in work and in your personal life.

## Social Media Policies

This is an area which is much talked about to be honest. Feedback from both other Unions and wider business environment tends to support that social media and its use comes under your existing terms and conditions for conduct during work. To give an example, if saying you should have a 'social media' policy, you should also have a 'using the phone/email/talking to people in person' policy! It's about general understanding and behaviours rather than blaming the medium. This rather delightful image demonstrates (with a bit of humour) this wonderfully!



With that in mind for both Officers and staff, everyone should be aware of how they communicate and interact with people in any format. For social media though people do sometimes get confused into thinking it's outside work or 'private'. If you've got a problem in the workplace then it's best to take that up as appropriate instead of venting online about it – this is only likely to exacerbate an issue. Our existing contract elements are equality and diversity also ensure that no one should be posting or sharing anything in contravention of this. If doing so as an identifiable member of the Union this must be considered at all times.

For further information on social media policies and good practice, check out this excellent set of guidelines from Coca-Cola – you'd think as one of the planet's largest global company's they'd have a 50 page guide but they don't – check it out here:

<http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/TCCC-Online-Social-Media-Principles-12-2009.pdf>

## What next?

Reflecting on the above, ask yourselves the following questions when thinking about using social media (and it is important everyone considers themselves content creators and engagers for the Union):

- Who is the target audience?
- What is the purpose of the communication?
- Is the timing right? Does it fit with other key planned Union activity?
- When is it too much?
- What is the desired outcome?
- How can you Link activity across our networks?
- Keep it relevant.

## Further information:

Step-by-Step Guide to your Social Media Success

<http://www.simplybusiness.co.uk/microsites/guide-to-social-media-success/>

Best time of the day to post

<http://www.thebrandmechanic.com/best-time-of-day-week-social-media-marketing/>

Social Media Planning

<http://outspokenmedia.com/social-media/social-media-planning/>

Getting started with Social Media

<http://garethcase.com/a-guide-to-getting-started-with-social-media>

and finally.....

## Social Media Fails

We've also seen them. We've all laughed. Let's make sure they don't happen to us!

<https://econsultancy.com/blog/63901-the-top-16-social-media-fails-of-2013#i.1x05ygpe3emrxo>

Looking at the BA example, we are not a 24 hour corporate business, but it does show the importance of responding quickly if even simply a holding comment until you can respond fully.

The British Gas example shows the importance of timing and also what you're asking – you can be assured if you were to ask 'what would you like to see in the Union' – amongst helpful replies you'll get responses such as 50p drinks and strippers so bear this in mind when thinking about what you're asking.

## That escalated quickly!

This excellent example shows how social media can escalate, and quickly!

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/alisonvingiano/this-is-how-a-womans-offensive-tweet-became-the-worlds-top-s>