Social Media

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"Seriously, Chris! Do you know how much trouble I'm in over that Facebook photo? My boss saw it; my co-workers saw it. What were you thinking? I'm a manager, I can't be seen playing golf at midday unless it's with a client. Certainly not in the Club's event. Man, don't ever do that again."

"Bill, what are you talking about? It was a great photo of you hitting a tee shot off the first hole with a whole group of Members in the background watching. It was classic. I had no idea that you could get tagged and it would go viral!"

There are two issues at play in the dialogue above: the appropriate use of social media, and the appropriate way to apologize! Member Bill was clearly harmed by the posting of his photo and, understandably, upset about its effect on his professional reputation. Manager Chris had thought that it was a great photo and that putting it on the Club's Facebook page would make Bill feel good about himself and the Club. Chris didn't anticipate that there would be negative repercussions for Bill.

Social media at clubs can create a number of difficulties when it's not carefully deployed. For example, if the Club's social media output is perceived as "advertising," this can cause damage to the club's reputation and might complicate the membership selection process. Posting pictures of Members without their permission is another thorny issue. In the case above, Chris clearly did not have permission to use Bill's photo. Luckily, Bill was a good Member and did not press the issue any further than a verbal reprimand.

Photos can be set "private" on social media, but this does require a few additional steps beyond simply hitting "post." Many clubs believe that making the Club's Facebook page a "Private Page," accessible only to approved Members, will address all privacy issues. However, even with private pages, certain in-built Facebook features can cause photos to become visible in places where they weren't originally posted.

For example, an album posted comes with a "face recognition" feature. Members may be automatically tagged in photos through face recognition as an album is uploaded to Facebook. This is an important feature to be aware of. All tags should be manually removed from photos before you post them on the Club's page. This takes about two minutes, and it is well worth the time to ensure the privacy of our Members. Most Facebook users don't remove these automatic tags from their photos, because photos are such a big part of our entertainment and our social lives today, allowing us to preserve moments and share them with others. But if someone is tagged in a photo, even on a private page, the photo will appear in their friends' newsfeeds. That is how Bill's photo was seen by his boss and co-workers.

Members have the option of tagging themselves if they like a photo, which can be a great way for Members to share happy moments at the Club with their friends. After a competition, the club may post of photo of the winner holding the trophy. Moments after posting, the Member may choose to tag themselves in the photo and share the accomplishment. This self-tagged photo will then

appear in that person's friends' newsfeeds, allowing friends to "like" the photo and post congratulations. When the Member has control of their own privacy, the outcome tends to be much more positive.

When an accidental social media faux pas does occur, it's important to apologize promptly. According to Ohio University professors Roy Lewicki and Robert Lount, Jr. and Eastern Kentucky professor Beth Polin, there are six components to a good apology: an expression of regret, an explanation for why the offense occurred, an acknowledgment of responsibility, a declaration of repentance, an offer of repair, and a request for forgiveness. In the Club business, a fact who is "right" or "wrong" is of little importance. The GM is *always* wrong—always apologize! Chris should have responded with something such as, "Oh, no Bill, that's terrible. I thought you hit a great shot and just wanted to share it with the other Members. It's my fault entirely, and I am so sorry. How can I make this up to you? Please forgive me."

A bit of groveling, perhaps, but as we all experience, "GM" sometimes stands for "Grovel Master," What matters is that it works!

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