

Moderating Online Communities



All online spaces we manage require moderation. This is where we review the comments posted, and decide if they:

- can be left alone
- require light community engagement such as respond with a joke
- require customer support
- or require being raised to an issue to be escalated.

Knowing about these different ways of managing people can be really helpful for managing these online spaces. Some businesses might find that they get comments only once a week, so moderation is light, while other businesses require moderation three times a day. Some large businesses even offer 24-hour moderation, and work with external teams around the world to monitor this.

One of the easiest things you can do to help manage an online space is to create a set of Community Guidelines or Community Rules. This is where those who join the page or community agree to the rules, where the posts are removed if they don't meet certain criteria (i.e. no inappropriate language such as racism).

It makes it much easier to moderate if you've got a clearcut set of rules that everyone understands and abides by. In groups, these are added when people join, but there is no reason you can't add a set of rules which you add in your 'about' page, or link to a set housed on your website.

When you look at the pages for big corporations, many of them have Community Guidelines. There's no reason smaller organisations can't have a set of rules too.

BONUS TEMPLATE: [Social Media Community Guidelines](#)

Community Guidelines are great because if someone posts something inappropriate and you don't want it on your page, you can simply let them know it breaches your guidelines, link them to the guidelines, and remove their post.

If they clean up their language or phrasing, they could repost, but setting expectations first helps keep your community safe for everyone.

It's also useful to be aware that moderation is not a passive activity of posting guidelines.

It requires reviewing content daily and taking action such as:

- kindly remind people of the community guidelines with a link to them on comments which are questionable (such as bordering on breaching the rules).
- warning repeat offenders that they may be banned if they do not follow the guidelines.
- deleting or banning repeat offenders (depending on what the platform allows).

It can be useful to be aware of the moderation tools available for the social network you're on. Facebook has great moderation tools for banning users, but LinkedIn does not - be really mindful of what your options are in this case. If someone is out of line on LinkedIn (less common because people generally use their real name), then people cannot be banned from a page.

Always take screenshots of posts people make and the warnings prior to deleting. Sometimes, people who have been banned write to the business months later with a complaint about being banned, so having documentation recording what was posted and what actions were taken is critical in these instances. Often, people forget that an online space has rules so everyone can engage in the space safely, so it's our job as community managers to remind them.

Be aware that in some countries like Australia, businesses are responsible for the posts *other* people make on their social channels ([see the ACCC rules](#)) not just their own posts, so active monitoring and removal of misleading posts from other people online not just best practice in terms of maintaining a community, but it's the law.