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### **9 Tips for Handling Trolls on Social Media**

**1. Establish a policy**

Most social networks have community policies for “being respectful.” [Create one of your own](https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-policy-for-employees/), too, as a reminder of acceptable behavior for posts, comments, and shares within your community. Then, if someone acts unbecoming or dastardly, point them back to your policy.

**2. Ignore them**

Trolls provoke negative reactions in others because they want attention. So:Just. Ignore. Them. Don’t fuel them.They want you to get upset. Don’t give them the satisfaction. Deprive them of their life force, so they’ll go dig elsewhere. This works. It will be the hardest thing to do, but the easiest.

**3. Respond with facts**

Are your trolls spreading rumors, wrong information, inaccuracies, or outright lies? Then disprove any tales told by trolls with facts.

**3. Diffuse with humor**

Easy to say, harder to do. Done well, humor can humanize your brand and diffuse a situation.

**5. Block or ban them**

Most trolls, most of the time, are annoying and usually harmless. However, sometimes trolls take things too far, like escalating to threats or hate speech. When they do, you can use your social might to block or ban them. Also, check the standards for appropriate content for that social network. If the troll’s posts are in violation, submit a report.

**6. Correct mistakes**

Listen to what people say on your social media accounts. If you catch a mistake:

* Correct it
* Let the person know what you did
* Explain why

If they’re a disgruntled (and reasonable) customer, they’ll most likely appreciate it, because:

* You listened
* You responded
* You made them feel heard

Which is what we all want. And it can turn frustration into loyalty. Unless they’re a troll, they won’t care. Still, it’s all good anyway, because:

* Your community will hear it
* You showed that you’re listening
* You re-enforced your standards for appropriate behavior
* Everyone can see how professionally you handled it
* Other trolls will know not to mess with you

You *can’t control* what’s said. You *can* control how you respond to what’s said. All good things for your brand.

**7. Don’t be baited**

Similar to ignoring them, don’t feed them either. If they’re trying to be funny, your response could be just what they want for their pending punchline. If you don’t respond, there’s no joke. If you do respond, keep your cool with the ways, and for the reasons, we explained above.

**8. Don’t delete their posts**

Because that can escalate their bad behavior. Researchers say that taking extreme action against small infractions can heighten antisocial behavior. They also found that if two users wrote posts of similar quality, and one user’s post got deleted “unfairly,” that user would be more likely to write something worse in the future.

**9. Build a supportive, friendly community**

Trolls are a fact of social media life. Make them your friend. Remember, your community is waiting to see how you handle them. Think carefully and thoughtfully about your response to a troll. Then, post it. Others in the community will notice. You’ve given them a chance to combat trolls for you. They’ll most likely chime in to make trolls feel unwelcome. As Bradbury points out in his [Guardian piece](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/nov/18/assaulted-by-trolls-on-social-media-the-high-road-is-the-only-road-for-brands-respond), take the high road. Whether it’s a customer with a legitimate gripe, or a troll with no intention of a good outcome. Being responsive and responsible will help you build a supportive community of followers that will respect and stand by you. This will make life for trolls difficult. They’ll most likely move on to spill their digital bile elsewhere.

When hate speech is involved, move as quickly as possible to close comments and block trolls but first make a statement in support of the group being attacked. Here’s an example:

“Our store protects the privacy of our customers. In refusing to share information about which schools bought a particular LGBTQIA2S+ title, hate speech was posted here. In response, we are closing comments but first we want to say that we stand with our LGBTQIA2S+ community.”

Worst case scenario, consider hibernating your social media for a few days until the storm blows over.

All of this is based on our experience, research, and consultations with social media experts, but it’s an imperfect world. Be prepared for some of this to not go according to plan, but remain firm.