

# Tip of the Month

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*Tip written by David Siebert, Assistant Vice President, Professional Solutions Insurance Company/Attorney Shield.*

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## Responding to Negative Social Media Comments

**Q:** A disgruntled former client recently posted an angry rant about me on my firm's Facebook page. Should I simply ignore the post?

**A:** Before you decide to ignore the post, keep in mind that social media complaints are available for the world to see and may negatively affect your reputation. Moreover, negative publicity from credible sources can result in a profound decrease in business.

### Here are a few tips to help minimize the damaging effects:

- If it is possible to respond to negative criticism without violating client confidentiality, immediately correct any factual statements and provide a brief explanation to clarify misunderstandings. Respond directly or use specially trained staff to let the person know you are aware of the concerns.
- Sometimes, it is not what you say but how you say it. Make sure no statement of empathy could be interpreted as an "admission" if the client ever sought to bring a board action or lawsuit.
- Take the high road. If the person is angry, do not engage in an argument. Your goal should be to calm the unhappy person and bring the situation to an amicable resolution. However, you also want others who view the post to realize that the client may not have provided a fair review.
- Offer to go offline with the unhappy person if the discussion escalates or becomes unmanageable.
- Ask your clients to post about good experiences with your firm. Several positive reviews will tend to offset any negative ones. If your site has the ability to filter comments, point readers toward the positive sections.

For the future, it may be best to require people to identify themselves on your social media sites or firm blog so there is a line of credibility. Add a statement that anonymous comments will be removed.