

Publications

Hosts and Sponsors of “Twitter Parties” Must be Aware of Legal Risks

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Social Media Explorer

Whitney Gibson, a partner in the Cincinnati office and the leader of the firm's internet defamation group, authored an article for Social Media Explorer about “Twitter parties.” According to the article, Twitter parties involve a time period in which Twitter users partake in discussion with a brand or company by submitting tweets using a predetermined hashtag. Gibson says that because Twitter parties often involve contests or giveaways there is a potential for brands to directly or indirectly violate the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) rules.

The article states:

“The FTC has long required advertisers and endorsers to disclose these material connections (financial relationships, essentially) and, in 2009, the FTC extended its published regulations to encompass online activity. Twitter party hosts tend to be highly followed/highly influential Twitter users, meaning any endorsements have the potential to reach large numbers of people.

In short, the rule of thumb for brands giving away free products or otherwise getting free publicity is: disclose, disclose, disclose. If you provide someone with money or free products as compensation for hosting a Twitter party, it is essential that he or she discloses that fact.

For example, September 16, 2014 was apparently ‘National Play-Doh Day.’ At 3:00 p.m., Hasbro sponsored a Twitter party, featuring a chat about toys and prize giveaways. Just minutes into the Twitter Party, host @MomSpark wisely tweeted the following: ‘DISCLOSURE: I received compensation for hosting this Twitter party. #PlayDohDay’

That tweet could not disclose @MomSpark’s compensation any more clearly, and should satisfy the FTC’s standards. By now, most brands sponsoring Twitter Parties should be familiar with the FTC’s rules and presumably would require a host to make a similar statement.”

To read the entire article, visit the Social Media Explorer [website](#).

