



By early next year there should be a full-fledged social media policy in place, with guidelines for order and professionalism in Government.

Minister with responsibility for Information, Senator the Hon. Sandra Falconer, made the announcement on September 27, while addressing a presentation ceremony for graduates who participated in an RO Communications e-Training course on 'Social Media Marketing for Businesses', at the Wyndham Kingston Hotel.

The Minister also announced that in a few weeks there will be the soft launch of a website for the Office of the Prime Minister. "We hope that when we unveil it finally, it will make our communication more interesting and it will bring the news that we want to disseminate to the people who want to see it, and that Jamaicans, not only here but from every nook and cranny in the world, will have access to their Prime Minister," she said.

She noted that some Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies are somewhat reluctant to use social media and have to be nudged along. "A social media policy will help to allay those fears," she said.



The Minister further said that she has charged the team within the Information Division of the Office of the Prime Minister, to actively seek out opportunities to promote the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in government.

She emphasised that in today's world it is simply foolhardy for any government agency or business that is serious about gaining competitive advantage to ignore social media.

"The world in which we live is changing and consumers, whether of private or government services, are demanding information on a constant and continuing basis.

She noted however, that while social media can serve to strengthen participation through the sharing of information and posting of content, "there must be policy guidelines governing responsible use";

The Minister charged the graduands to help write the procedures manual for their various organisations on how they can derive the most effective use of social media.

Valedictorian and Manager of Customer Care of the National Housing Trust, Donetta Russel,

lauded the programme, noting that it has "become a whole new world for those of us who participated in this course".

"Now we know that the social networks are fertile grounds where companies can meet new customers, diffuse tensions and engage people in ways they have never done before," she added.

For six weeks, participants received one day of face-to-face lecture time followed by lively and interactive online sessions using a special programme where they could log in from anywhere in the world and see and interact with their lecturers.

Principal Officer at RO Communications, Jamaica, Yvonne Nicholson, described the six week course as "an innovative way of teaching and learning", noting that this is exactly where the world is going now.

She explained that the objective of her company is to help communicators in Jamaica catch the wave and gain from the innovations from which communicators in North America and Europe are benefitting.