

# Compliance & Ethics Professional

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# What's a meme?

## Understanding online content

Recently, a coworker attended a conference at which a highly credentialed presenter discussed people “twittering on tweeter.” It quickly became apparent to the audience that the speaker lacked a firm grasp of social media.



Haase

Many people were so taken aback by his blunders that it discredited the rest of his presentation.

One of the most confusing parts of the social media landscape is the language of social media. In many cases, the language changes as rapidly as the technology itself. Being out of the loop can make you ineffective at analyzing content and appear out of touch.

### Online jargon

Most people are familiar with the concept of online jargon. This year, the beloved acronym LOL turned 25. “Laugh out loud” has enjoyed a rich history of being misunderstood as “lots of love.” Mistakes like this are avoidable by looking up slang terms and acronyms on sites like Urban Dictionary and The Online Slang Dictionary.

### The hashtag (#)

Hashtags were originally created to facilitate Twitter discussions. Today, many social media sites use hashtags to categorize content, including Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr. They are also used in social media content for light-hearted humor. Sources like What the Trend and Hashtagify can help you identify what hashtags mean.

### Memes

My supervisor describes memes as the inside jokes of the Internet. Each joke (meme) has a unique structure. Memes are typically comprised of a photo with bold text on the top and the bottom. Both Know Your Meme and Reddit contain a wealth of content you can leverage to understand any memes you encounter.

### Staying current

My key to understanding content is the same as how I got started in online research: I spend inordinate amounts of time on the Internet. Truly, the only way for you to fully understand social media is to immerse yourself into online communities. This can be done in a variety of ways from online gaming to chat rooms to social media usage. You should also read online content related to social media and technology. I enjoy *Ars Technica* and Kashmir Hill’s blog, *The Not-So Private Parts*.

Ultimately, it does not matter how often you currently use social media for compliance. Many authors now assert that social media is changing the ways we use innocuous words and phrases. As these changes seep further into our lexicons, understanding these new meanings will be the key to identifying future compliance issues. \*

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