

The Pros and Cons of Social Media in the Workplace and the Need to Create a Policy

Social Media use in the workplace has become a fact of life for employers. Although there are many business purposes for the use of social media, the use by employees both inside and outside the workplace remains a double edge sword for many employers. A solid first step in managing the risks is adopting an appropriate policy for social media use.

The most prominent problem that companies face when employees use social media during work hours is decreased productivity, along with the legal risks that are inherent to using web-based applications, such as release of confidential and proprietary information, use of discriminatory comments when posting or blogging, and even criminal conduct. This is where having a good social media policy would make it clear to employees what the employer expects with regard to social media use, both on and off the job.

54% of CIOs ban social media in the workplace as it relates to decreased productivity and IT infrastructure to handle the additional traffic and security issues for non-related company business. Nearly 24% of Facebook users say they access the site “all the time” while at work, with 35% admitting to accessing it occasionally. Keep in mind that social media isn’t just Facebook access, but internet access to different applications such as twitter, blogging, email, text messaging etc.

Whether companies like it or not, social media is part of your employee’s lives the same way as texting and checking personal emails is. Social media is also part of your business. Just because you’re not engaging in it, doesn’t mean your brand isn’t being talked about. And just because you can (theoretically) keep employees off it during “office hours” doesn’t mean they can’t go home and get your brand/company in trouble from the safety of their home computers.

It has been said that instead of completely banning social media from the work place begin to educate your staff on appropriate usage. By educating them on the PROPER use, you grow a team of knowledgeable employees instead of creating an environment where folks don’t hesitate tweeting about things that could get them and/or the company in trouble! You should define social media and talk about what can and cannot be discussed. Creating a concise policy written with your specific industry in mind gives everyone clear expectations and boundaries to work in.

The key for companies is finding the balance in how much web usage is good for the company without using the web too much or not at all. Harmony can be difficult to achieve but the need to find it is there.