

SOCIAL MEDIA & BUSINESS:

5 REASONS WHY EVERY COMPANY NEEDS A POLICY



Almost every workplace has policies that guide employees with regards to vacation time, sexual harassment and health care benefits, just to name a few. However, according to a recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center, 51% of employees reported having no social media policy at their places of work. Considering how improper social media usage can lead to numerous safety, legal and ethical issues, it's surprising that social media use in the workplace isn't more closely examined. There are great perks to doing business in the age of social media. Apart from the incredible reach that it provides, social media allows employees to network more efficiently and to build stronger relationships even with their own coworkers. However, having mixed with explosive results in the past, it isn't all roses for social media's relationship with business. A history of these ill-advised marriages has forced many companies to pursue strict social media policies for employees. Yet, with an outright ban on social media being an impossibility, and with so many varied notions of propriety, the need for such policies is clear. Here are 5 reasons why you absolutely need to institute a social media policy.

PREVENT TIME WASTAGE – It's no secret that social media is a giant time-waster. In fact, this is one of the first things that comes to mind when anyone mentions social media in the workplace. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with their never-ending scrolling are very successful at sucking users into their voids. The result is drastically-lowered productivity that creates a ripple-effect throughout the company. On some level a little social media during the day is a positive thing. It helps break the monotony of work and allows workers to recharge. However too much of a good thing serves as a distraction and productivity-killer in the workplace. For this reason, employees must be made aware of how much social media is too much.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE CONTINUES TO GROW – Not only is social media here to stay, it's a fantastic tool when properly harnessed. Business demands social media usage. You need employees to build relationships. You need employees to keep track of your competition through their social media postings. It's part of the cost of doing business. The downside of social media is that although employees can lift you up, they can also sink you. Opinions that were once closely-guarded are now broadcast on social media with little regard for the fallout. Consequently, any brand or company associated with such individuals risks finding themselves locked in a battle with public opinion. With more employees spending time on social media platforms, there is an increased risk of inappropriate usage that may threaten your company.



TO ADDRESS CONSEQUENCES – Going viral is the dream of every business owner except when going viral means gaining publicity for all the wrong reasons. Whether it's the unhygienic practices of a few fast food workers, unkind remarks from an unauthorized spokesman, or an employee ranting about a customer, going viral on Facebook or Reddit seems inescapable. For this reason, a complete social media policy must make employees aware of how their posts can hurt the company. Considering the ease with which users can take screenshots and share questionable posts, it isn't enough to limit the visibility of such posts to close friends and associates. Employees must be taught to consider the consequences of their actions before pressing "send".

More than reigning in that employee with a Pinterest addiction, having a social media policy is a crucial step in protecting your company and your employees from financial or legal woes. With it, disciplinary matters become much easier to adjudicate since it puts everyone on the same page. Keep in mind, however, a social media policy isn't just a list of restrictions. It can also be a guide for how employees raise the company's profile and attract visitors to the company's website and social media accounts. It is a roadmap for how social media can best be harnessed for the good of both the individual and the company.

