

Time to "Friend" Your Social Networking Policy

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Now why on earth would I be writing about social networking in the Newsletter instead of on my blog? You all know I have a blog right? You know you can find it at <http://negotiumlex.wnj.com/> right? (How's that for a shameless plug?) So why? Why not blog or tweet or post an update on Facebook about this topic? After all, that seems more appropriate, doesn't it? Of course it does. But here's the deal. The people who read blogs or post on Facebook or "tweet" probably are already up to speed on this social networking stuff. It is the rest of us, the old codgers that don't tweet regularly who we want to talk to today. You know who I am talking about. There is a bunch of you out there (me included, by the way) who hear "tweet" and think of a little yellow cartoon bird and a cat named Sylvester. And even more of you who are asking, "When did "friend" become a verb?" I'll tell you what my kids tell me: "Dad, get with the times."

Why you ask, why do I have to get with the times? Good question. You see, if I don't get with the times at home my kids think I'm "lame." Let's face it, nothing I can do to fix that so why bother. But if you don't "get with the times" at work, it could cost you. And maybe cost you big.

First of all, use of sites like Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and others can seriously affect productivity at work. According to one survey simply surfing the Web by employees costs U.S. companies about \$63 billion each year and use of social networking sites at work costs U.K. companies about \$2.5 billion each year. That's right, that's BILLION with a big capital B. See <http://mashable.com/2009/10/26/social-media-productivity-cost/>. And don't think the U.S. and U.K. are alone. The Time of India calls social networking sites a plague on "India Inc." see <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Social-networking-plagues-India-Inc/articleshow/5429382.cms>; and even New Vision, which bills itself as "Uganda's Leading Web site" says: ". . . the 'majority' of corporations 'effectively lose close to 12.5% of total productivity each day since their employees keep accessing social sites.'" <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/220/705325>

As if that wasn't enough, hackers are now using social media sites as an entry into your company's confidential information.

http://www.expertclick.com/NewsReleaseWire/How_to_Hack_a_Corporate_Networkwith_Facebook,201030121.aspx

So what should you do? Have your IT department deny access to these sites to employees while at work? Maybe. That is your call and it will surely cause you some employee relations issues if you do. One thing I am sure of though is you need a social networking policy. A couple of things to keep in mind as you are doing one. You want to make sure employees know they have to protect confidential information. If employees are going to post to social networking sites from work or by identifying you (their employer)

they should include a disclaimer. All posts, whether from work or home, should be respectful of coworkers and not violate your EEO or harassment policy; and finally, time on social network sites should not interfere with productivity at work. You might also want to have some rules regarding blogging, especially if employees have blogs as part of their jobs. If you want to know more about social networking policies call any member of the WNJ Labor Practice Group. By the way, did I mention I have a blog?