Social Media and the Workplace

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As the use of social media platforms are increasingly influencing the workplace, organizations are finding themselves having to write and re-write organizational human resource guides and ethical and behavioral polices to address the never-ending development of social media platforms . Additionally, organizations are now having to determine how to effectively interact with and appropriate apply newly discovered employer-employee information outcomes to various circumstances impacting human resources and ethical decision making legally (Reinsch, Ross & Hietapelto, 2016). According to Hunt and Kessler (2013) "as the use of new technologies continues to rise in the workplace, conflicts between the interest of employers and the privacy rights of employees are inevitable" (p.45). While information sharing and disclosure are normally, the primary objectives related to most social medial platforms, both employers and employees have to begin to become more thoughtful regarding the potential implications on other aspects of their professional career outcomes (Raad, Bouna & Chbeir, 2016). According to Reinsch, et al (2016), "many employees maintain multiple social media profiles that can provide quite a comprehensive picture of one's personal and professional life. Therefore, there may be legitimate business reason for looking at social media sites in order to discover information" (p. 154). However, information discovery and legal ramifications must be adequately considered before these business practices largely begin or continue (Reinsch et al., 2016). According to Whitfield (2013), "the divide between work and play, social media raises difficult questions as to whether and how rules regarding workplace confidentiality, loyalty, privacy and monitoring apply to these new forms" (p.843). Subsequently, the aim of this assignment is to evaluate the implications of using social media platforms in the workplace, in a case study scenario regarding

employee lifestyle discovery, ethical and behavioral policy development and potential employee advancement possibilities.

Organizational management should only legitimately consider an employee's lifestyle information discovered from social media platforms, when it is in relationship to an organizations legitimate business interests related to that particular employee or potential employees association with the organization. Therefore, in the case study of "Is Harry Too Social to be promoted?" Martin Findley should consider Harry's Facebook post and their potential impact on the organization and his promotion. According to Hunt and Kessler (2013), "employers are justifiably wary about the risks inherent in employees' use of social networks, including disclosure of confidential information, bad publicity resulting from employee comments or unseemly behavior and lawsuits resulting from harassment or other unlawful conduct" (p. 67). However, defining and developing a clear line between an employee's off-duty lawful lifestyle activities can be very difficult at this current time, because of the explosion of social media usage and platforms worldwide and the relatively slow development of laws and statutes to adequately address them (Hunt & Kessler, 2013). Additionally, having or establishing clear guidance regarding organization values can also be problematic in relationship to application and discrimination laws already in existence. According to Shockely-Zalabak, (2015)," generally speaking, values refers to the relative worth of a quality or object. Value is what makes something desirable or undesirable. Values are attitudes sets, which are subjective assessments about the relative worth of a quality or object" (p.108). In other words, Martin Findley's value assessments regarding Harry's lifestyle activities during non-working hours, at an offsite location, in consideration of his potential promotions should be based upon already established polices and guidelines beyond Martin's sole subjective assessment (Whitfield, 2013).

Subsequently, all information obtained during the collection of the social media materials that were used to help management make a legitimate and valid business decision should be kept in confidentiality and protected to ensure the credibility and trust is maintained within the organization to its leadership; in addition to help minimize any potential lawsuits. Therefore, in the case of Martin and Harry, Martin should not discuss the promotion with Harry, if Harry was not selected due to the potential risk associated with this conversation in an emerging area of litigation (Shockely-Zalabak, 2015).

All employees should think seriously about the link between their personal and professional image being presented on social media platforms and its related implications both personally and professionally. According to Hunt and Kessler (2013), "because users often interact with social media in the physical privacy of their own homes, they can easily forget that their communications are shared globally and instantaneously" (p.68). Consequently, employees can easily forgotten that once personal or professional information is shared on mostly any social media platform, the employee no longer control where that information goes, how it is used or where it ultimately may end up. Employees are usually unaware to the extent they do not control their own personal or professional data, nor are they aware who can use their data and for what purposes. According to Reinsch et al. (2016), "at any time and often without users' knowledge, social networks can mine, copy or archive personal information. Besides social networking, sites have complete control over users' data and may intentionally or accidentally leak its content" (p. 174). In the case study involving Harry, he should considered all the factors mentioned above when using social media platforms of any kind.

Organizations should strongly consider changing their current ethics and behavior codes of conduct to be inclusive of new and emerging social media platforms. Whitfield (2013)

suggest, "employers should regulate the use of social media by amending current employee handbooks to dictate acceptable use of social-networking sites" (p. 872). Additionally, organizations should ensure employees have received, read and agreed to internally developed social media agreements regarding usage and conduct (Whitfield, 2013). In the case study involving Harry, Merton should definitely have writing guidelines and policies in place to address lifestyle conduct both inside and outside the workplace, during and after hours. According to Hunt and Kessler (2013), "employers are justifiably concerned that their employees use of social media on and off-duty can present risks to their economic interest" (p. 48).

The author of this writing would advise organizational employees and leadership regarding social media usage and ethical and behavioral codes of conduct to always be extremely cautious and mindful of the potential impact of all social media activity to the organization and upon your personal and professional career. Employees should strive for value congruence with their employers and organizations. According to Shockely-Zalabak, (2015) value congruence is described as "similarity between individual and organizational values between employees and their organizations has a significant effect on organizational commitment, employee work satisfaction and turnover" (p. 111). As social media platforms continue to be developed, moral and ethical value alignment between organizations and employees will become increasing important due to the two-way dialogue afforded by social media platforms and will be demonstrated in mutually agreed sign lifestyle conduct agreements (Whitfield, 2013). Subsequently, employers should only search for information related to legitimate business related interest of the organization and never become fishing expeditions, thereby creating litigate concern and cause for lifestyle discrimination cases to be commenced (Whitfield, 2013).

In conclusion, "the current undisputed king of social media websites is Facebook.com with over 1 billion active users. In fact, Facebook has so many users that if it were a nation, it would be the fifth largest in the world" (Hunt & Kessler, 2013, p. 47). Due to the overwhelming popularity and usage of social media platforms throughout the world both professionally and privately, organizations must give careful attention to old, historical professional conduct guidelines and lifestyle agreements for the workplace. Organizations must creatively design lifestyle agreement policies that reduce potential negative social media outcomes, while protecting the overall legitimate interest of their organizations (Reinsch et al., 2016). The issue of social media usage and employee privacy is not going away anytime soon and should be expected to grow in importance as new social media platforms are continually being developed.

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