

TOPIC H: EMAIL AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Electronic mail—E-Mail—has become a part of everyday life in business, as well as in our personal lives. As a result, the etiquette associated with e-mail is still in development as to appropriate and inappropriate practices. Below are the most common tips for proper and professional use of e-mail.



1. Carefully review the content of your message for spelling and grammar. Your message should be brief, but informative. Make sure the content supports the title or reference of your message. Don't write a novel!
2. Don't use e-mail to avoid personal contact with someone. Address personal, negative, or potentially upsetting messages face-to-face.
3. Be careful in responding to an e-mail. Be sure to double check to who you are replying and including in a response! Many times people have "clicked" send and inappropriately included or excluded key people! Additionally, use BC, or "Blind-copy" carefully and only when necessary for ethical reasons.
4. Use proper sentence case! CAPITAL LETTERS indicate that you are SHOUTING! Use the same sentence structure as you would in a letter or professional document. Tone and meaning cannot always be determined through e-mail, so you should proofread carefully to ensure there is no wrong assumption for the recipient.
5. E-mail at work is not private! Using company equipment and services is just that, the company's property. E-mails and documents are subject for review and/or use as legal documents regarding company business. People have been terminated for inappropriate use of e-mail.
6. Do not send chain letters, photos, jokes, or other non-business content at work. It is space/time consuming and can be construed as misuse of company equipment. This includes inappropriate language or content that may offend someone and result in a HR violation in an addition to misuse of equipment! Encourage your friends and family to forward to your home e-mail instead of your work.
7. Make sure that you include contact information in your e-mails, so that the recipient can contact you by letter, phone, or fax if needed.
8. Be careful with the use of abbreviations or slang in your e-mail. Not everyone understands "BCNU" and "ROTFL"! (BCNU-Be seein' you and ROTFL-Rolling on the floor laughing ☺).

Remember, e-mail represents you on their monitor, so make sure that it is an accurate reflection!

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SOCIAL NETWORKING

“Social Networking.... the way the 21st century communicates today “

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision, if you will. Although social networking is possible in person, like book clubs, hobby/interest groups, etc., it is especially prevalent online for groups with common interests such as school or work.



The Internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about cooking, golfing, gardening, developing friendships or professional alliances, finding employment, business-to-business marketing and even groups sharing information about their favorite sports team or highly controversial political topic. The topics and interests are as diverse and rich as the story of our world.

When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites function like an online community of Internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This access may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them.



The friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits to social networking online. Another benefit includes diversity because the Internet gives individuals from all around the world access to social networking sites. This means that although you are in the United States, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Europe or Asia. Not only will you make new friends, but you just might learn a thing or two about new cultures or new languages and learning is always a good thing.

As mentioned, social networking often involves grouping specific individuals or organizations together. While there are a number of social networking websites that focus on particular interests, there are others that do not. The websites without a main focus are often referred to as "traditional" social networking websites and usually have open memberships. This means that anyone can become a member, no matter what their hobbies, beliefs, or views are. However, once you are inside this online community, you can begin to create your own network of friends and eliminate members that do not share your common interests or goals.

There are dangers associated with social networking, including data theft and viruses, which are on the rise. The most widespread danger often involves online predators or individuals who claim to be someone that they are not. Although danger does exist with networking online, it also exists in the real world, too. Just like you're advised when meeting strangers at clubs and bars, school, or work -- you are also advised to proceed with caution online.



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USING SOCIAL NETWORKING IN JOB SEARCH

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics has reported the U.S. economy continues to heal in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The current employment rate is at 5.0 percent, this sure looks better than 10.0 percent in 2009. The U.S. had job gains over the past few years and especially this past year. In December 2014 alone 252,000 positions was added. Employment levels are improving, but remain below prerecession levels

Social networks are increasingly becoming part of the criteria that both hiring managers and college admissions officers are using to weed out applicants. One in five hiring managers conduct background checks using social networks (primarily Facebook™), while one in ten college admissions officers do the same.

It's time for us to become open-minded and to think differently about how you're going to get your next job and keep it. Continue to submit your resume to job banks, corporate websites, **vertical job agents** or when attending job fairs. Using social networks will broaden your chances and opportunities to get that preferred job!

Reference: *Dan Schawbel is the author of Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success, and owner of the award winning Personal Branding Blog.*

Popular Vertical Job Search Agents

Include:

1. *indeed.com*
2. *sangajob.com*
3. *careerbuilder.com*
4. *dice.com*
5. *monster.com*
6. *simplyhired.com*
7. *linkup.com*
8. *us.jobs.com*
9. *jobing.com*
10. *net-temp.com*
11. *theladders.com*

A **vertical search** engine focuses on a specific segment of online content.

The vertical content area may be based on topicality, media type, or genre of content. Common examples include jobs, legal, medical, patent



USING SOCIAL NETWORKING IN THE WORKPLACE

We live in a world where technology has changed the way people communicate, the way they are informed and how they do business. Traditional social networks have expanded from a few dozen acquaintances to hundreds of friends, friends of friends, connections and followers. We live in a world where people would rather communicate by sending a text message from their mobile phone, post comments on their favorite online network or send a short Tweet to inform all their friends that they have just got out of bed or they are out to dinner.



The growth of social networking platforms has been phenomenal. Millions of people around the world with access to the Internet are members of one or more social networks. They have a permanent online presence where they create profiles, share photos, share their thoughts with friends and spend hours catching up with what their hundreds of friends are doing with their lives.

Give most people access to the Internet and they will spend the next hour checking their email, their Facebook profile, updating their Twitter account, and their LinkedIn account. And it doesn't happen only once a day. The time spent using social networking applications is one reason why many businesses are reluctant to allow employees to use sites like Facebook and LinkedIn during office hours. Add the time spent on non-work related browsing, and employers have a point. At the same time, however, businesses are starting to appreciate that social networking has its advantages, and there are many companies that have adopted social networking as another vehicle to gain a better presence online and a wider audience.

The Benefits

Expanding Marketing Opportunities

Social networking sites give businesses a fantastic opportunity to widen their circle of contacts. Using Facebook, for example, a small business can target an audience of thousands without much effort or advertising. With a good company profile and little in terms of costs, a new market opens up, as do the opportunities to do business.

Personal Touch

Social networks allow organizations to reach out to select groups or individuals and to target them personally. Businesses can encourage their customers to become connections or friends, offering special discounts that would be exclusive to online contacts. This personal touch is not only appreciated but may give the business access to that customer's own network of contacts.

Improve Your Image

Building strong social networks can help a business to improve its reputation with as little advertising as possible. Social networks can boost your image as competent leaders in their specific industry and customers/contacts will then recognize your business as reliable and an excellent source of information/products that suit their requirements.

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Low-Cost Marketing

Once social networks have become established and people become familiar with the brand, businesses can use the sites or applications to implement marketing campaigns, announce special offers, make important announcements, and direct interested people to specific web sites. It is mostly free advertising, and the only cost to the business is the time and effort required to maintain the network and the official web site.

The Concerns



Social networking sites are applications and, as such, are generally not a problem for organizations. It is the people who use them that are a cause for concern. Social networkers, if one can call them so, are the root of five problems (listed below) for an organization that allows social networking at work.

Productivity

One reason why organizations frown on social networking in the workplace is the fact that employees spend a great deal of time updating their profiles and sites throughout the day. If every employee in a 50-strong workforce spent 30 minutes on a social networking site every day, that would work out to a loss of 6,500 hours of productivity in one year! Although this may be a generalization, organizations look very carefully at productivity issues, and 25 hours of non-productive work per day does not go over well with management. When you factor in the average wage per hour you get a better (and decisive) picture.

There is also an effect on company morale. Employees do not appreciate colleagues spending hours on social networking sites (or other sites) while they are functioning to cover the workload. The impact is more pronounced if no action is taken against the abusers.

Resources

Although updates from sites like Facebook or LinkedIn may not take up huge amounts of bandwidth, the availability of (bandwidth-hungry) video links posted on these sites creates problems for IT administrators. There is a cost to Internet browsing, especially when high levels of bandwidth are required.

Viruses and Malware

This threat is often overlooked by organizations. Hackers are attracted to social networking sites because they see the potential to commit fraud and launch spam and malware attacks. There are more than 50,000 applications available for Facebook (according to the company) and while Facebook may make every effort to provide protection against malware, these third-party applications may not all be safe. Some have the potential to be used to infect computers with malicious code, which in turn can be used to collect data from that user's site.

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Social Engineering

Social engineering is becoming a fine art and more and more people are falling victim to online scams that seem genuine. This can result in data or identity theft. Users may be convinced to give personal details such as Social Security numbers, employment details and so on. By collecting such information, data theft becomes a serious risk. On the other hand, people have a habit of posting details in their social networking profiles. While they would never disclose certain information when meeting someone for the first time, they see nothing wrong with posting it online for all to see on their profile, personal blog or other social networking site account. This data can often be mined by cybercriminals

Employers must be on the lookout for information that their employees may post, as this may have an impact on the company. People often post messages without thinking through what they've have written. A seemingly innocuous message such as "I'm working this weekend because we've found a problem in our front-end product" may be a spur-of-the-moment comment but could raise concern among customers who may use that system, especially if the company handles confidential or financial detail.

Reputation and Legal Liability

At the time of authorship, there have been no major corporate lawsuits involving evidence from social networking sites. However, organizations need to watch for employees who may be commenting publicly about their employer. For example, one young employee wrote on her profile that her job was boring and soon received her marching orders from her boss. What if a disgruntled employee decided to complain about a product or the company's inefficiencies in his or her profile? There are also serious legal consequences if employees use these sites and click on links to view objectionable, illicit or offensive content. An employer could be held liable for failing to protect employees from viewing such material. The legal costs, fines and damage to the organization's reputation could be substantial.

To Ban or Not to Ban? There is no simple solution to any of the above issues. While internal controls and technology can be used to an extent to control employee use of social networking tools, it is impossible to control what they are posting at home.

And this is the dilemma that many businesses face today: They feel the need to change and adopt these new methods of communication but they are greatly concerned that the disadvantages and possible repercussions are too serious to ignore. Every action, every minute spent online (and on social networking sites) may expose an organization to numerous security threats. While the subject of productivity increase is debatable, the security issues are not – they are all too real. Where does that leave businesses?

They have three options:

- Ban access to social networking sites (and access to Internet as well).
- Set limits and restrictions on use.
- Allow unmonitored access.

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Banning access to social networking sites may be an optimal solution for some organizations, and one can see banks and government departments particularly keen on keeping the status quo. However, many smaller organizations may feel that taking a heavy-handed approach could be counterproductive, indicate a lack of trust in employees (probably justified to an extent) and is too restrictive.

On the other hand, you certainly do not want to give unfettered access to social networking sites. The best option may be to allow access to social networking sites while imposing limits (when these can be used, for how long, and by whom). Regardless of which option an organization may choose, they must ensure that the basic safeguards are in place:

- Up-to-date anti-virus software firewall
- Ability to monitor the use of the Internet in general
- Ability to monitor social networking sites in particular.

Striking a Balance

What is worrying about social networking sites is that they encourage people to give as much information about themselves as possible. Even the most prudent and well-meaning individuals can give away information they should not—the same applies to what is put online via company-approved social networking platforms. At the same time, nearly everyone today (even senior managers) has their own online profile on a social networking site and like the idea that they can keep in touch with contacts and friends (and their employees) via that interface.

If a business is going to allow access to social networking sites, there are some basic tips to follow:

Restrict access. Give employees a breather and allow them to access social networking sites during their lunch break and/or before and after office hours. Web filtering software gives administrators the ability to implement time-based access to these and other sites.

Educate and train staff. This is very important. Most employees are not aware how their actions online can cause security issues for the organization. Tell them in a language they understand how a simple click on a link they receive or an application they download can result in malware infecting their machine and the network. Additionally, tell them not to click on suspicious links and to pay attention when giving out personal details online. Just because employees are clever enough to have an online profile does not mean they are technically savvy or that they have a high level of security awareness.

Set security and usage policies. Have all employees sign any policies related to the use of the Internet at work, access to social networking sites and what they are allowed to say or do during office hours. Monitoring of all Web activity is important, and employees should be aware that their actions are being recorded and that failure to adhere to company policy can result in disciplinary action and/or dismissal.

Source: Kelleher, David. *5 Problems with Social Networking in the Workplace*. Information Management Special Reports, October 6, 2009