

A Guide

for Learning and
HR Professionals

USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORKPLACE

WHITE PAPER



Security can't just block the use of social networking sites any more. The benefits, including low-cost ways to recruit employees, distribute marketing materials and enable employee networking, are simply too great.

(Security for Business Innovation Council, 2009)

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The power of social media is undeniable – it can build brands like Zappos and Whole Foods, facilitate revolutions as we saw in Egypt, and connect us with our high school friends! It is also becoming a very important employee engagement tool. Social media provides a platform that allows your employees to share knowledge, collaborate, build community, and strengthen your company culture. It facilitates ongoing education and provides a communications vehicle for employees to receive real-time updates.

Productivity concerns, harm to brand reputation, harassment claims, and breach of privacy may cause companies to hesitate in addressing the social media culture. Don't let this happen to you - social media can be a critical part of your HR and learning strategy. The time to get on board is now.

As HR, Learning, and Organizational Development Practitioners, we need to understand the implications of social media on our business and work with our leaders to embrace, not restrict, this technology.

Employees with the most extensive personal networks were 7% more productive than their colleagues.

(MIT, 2009)

THIS WHITE PAPER WILL HELP YOU EXPLORE:

- Whether social media is right for your organization
- How to use social media for employee engagement and learning
- What policies should be in place to protect your company
- How to approach writing and implementing social media policies

HOW DO YOU KNOW SOCIAL MEDIA IS RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Social media works in environments that encourage collaboration, innovation, and embrace transparency. It is critical to have a clear strategic objective and implementation plan before you attempt a rollout.

Some things to consider:

- Is your strategic objective clear?
- Do you have the full support of leadership?
- Do you have the appropriate resources to maintain the system(s)?
- Do you have a core of early adopters in your company who will be ambassadors for this new strategy?
- Do you have a positive social climate in the pilot community?
- Are you positioned to develop appropriate training tools?

If you've answered yes to these questions you're off to a good start!

HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

As technologies continue to emerge, this list will grow. But here are a few easy ways to get started using social media in your company:

- Engage with employees / users to gauge their level of potential commitment
- Source a pilot group of users / champions
- Identify an opportunity to use social media to solve a workplace challenge (the problem should be manageable. Don't select a problem that is difficult to solve for the pilot).
- Select the social media tool the group feels is most appropriate. Launch one tool at a time.
- Decide how the tool is going to be used but welcome creative uses as the project progresses.
- Seek feedback often throughout the process.
- Celebrate use through analysis of social metrics (use, #posts, "likes", etc)
- Report positive experiences to rest of the organization.
- Gauge success using ROI and Social Analytics.

27% of executives regularly discuss how to best leverage social networks while mitigating risks.

(Deloitte Ethics & Workplace Survey, 2009)

ADVANCED STRATEGIES FOR UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Create a blog for your key leaders to talk about important happenings at the company. Rotate accountability for the blog to give exposure to different areas of the business.
- Implement a social networking tool, like Yammer, and encourage them to use it! It can help anchor your culture, ease communication across multiple locations, provide visibility to colleagues, and create an easy communication forum. It will also give leadership insight into what's on employees' minds.
- Use wikis to empower employees to share best practices, work collaboratively, and facilitate ongoing learning.
- Post video training updates via YouTube so employees can access them easily.

52% of employees surveyed said that a company's use of technology was a major factor when selecting an employer.

(Accenture, 2009)

WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICES ARE NEEDED?

Your employees are already using social media including blogs, wiki's, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and the like. To protect employees and your company, it is wise to establish and maintain a **social media policy**, whether or not you are utilizing these tools for internal communications. Policies should be drafted in a manner consistent with the company culture and strike the right balance between protecting the company and respecting the personal rights of employees.

Approach:

1. Have a stand-alone social media policy, even if the tenets of this policy are included in other policy documents. This is an evolving area but you'll see in the cases referred to later in this paper that the courts are trending toward the point of view of "if it's on the web, visible to the public and it hurts the company, its clients or employees, it may be acted upon." The policy should address the following:
 - Employees should not have an expectation of privacy for information transmitted over company assets or for information posted on the web where others have been granted viewing rights or where the post is public. This includes personal blogs and social media accounts.
 - Employees are responsible for the content they post, even if it's off-hours and not posted using company-issued equipment. They should be conscious of what they say, how it may be perceived differently than what was intended, and could potentially lead to policy violations or damage to the company brand.
 - Employees must comply with company policies against unlawful harassment and discrimination.
 - Employees are responsible for protecting the intellectual property, copyright and trade secret rights of the company, its clients, and vendors. In most cases they've already signed a Code of Conduct or Confidentiality policy that clarifies this.
 - Client materials should never be posted without authorization regardless of where the material is posted (personal or professional networks).

Approach Cont.

- The same code of conduct rules apply to blogs just as they do with formal communications channels. It is highly recommended that before blogging your employee share the topic of their blog with the company's legal or communications department to ensure there is no conflict
 - Provide guidelines to employees about how to best use social media without inadvertently creating liability for themselves or the company:
 - Communicate in a professional manner and use good judgment and common sense when posting
 - Employees should ask themselves a few questions before posting:
 - Am I sharing confidential or proprietary information?
 - How does this reflect on the company's (clients, co-workers) brand, image, or reputation?
 - Am I negatively impacting the company or my co-workers?
 - Will I be comfortable if my clients, colleagues, or boss sees this post?
- 2.** Reference the use of social media in all company policy documents, including:
- Anti-harassment policies: state that content added by employees to social media sites, blogs, and other locations are covered in your anti-harassment policy and could subject them to the same disciplinary actions noted in the policy.
 - Confidentiality/proprietary information: include that sharing confidential or proprietary information while blogging, posting on websites, or joining discussions is strictly prohibited and is subject to the same disciplinary actions noted in the policy.
 - Code of conduct: make sure that respect of others, confidentiality, and protecting the company's reputation are included in your code of conduct, and the code of conduct must be followed while participating in social networking and using social media sites.
 - Privacy policy: there should be no expectation of privacy when engaging in social networking activities on company machines and especially with a social network supported by the company. Furthermore the company views information on social media sites as public information subject to the company's code of conduct policies.
 - Employee reference policy: your company's reference policy applies to social media as well – if you don't allow references, they aren't allowed on sites like LinkedIn.
 - Vendor relations policies: if your company has policies dictating how employees should interact with vendors and handle vendor related information, be sure they include social media guidance as well.
- 3.** Create a social media etiquette guide that fits your company's culture to help employees understand your expectations.

Whether you call it Web 2.0, the social Web or any other neologism, the new network economy is about communities, collaboration, peer production and user-generated content.

*(Ross, Joshua Michele. "A Corporate Guide for Social Media."
Forbes.com, June 2009)*

Clarity from government agencies and the courts are in their infancy. Having comprehensive policies will help you to balance the rights of employees and protect your business. Continued monitoring and policy updates will be important.



Workers who engage in “Workplace Internet Leisure Browsing” are 9% more productive than those who don’t.

*(Department of Management and Marketing,
University of Melbourne, Australia, 2009)*

WHERE DO YOU START?

As stated earlier in this paper, it is critical that your strategic objective for utilizing social media is clear and supported by leadership. Once you have nailed that down here’s our guide to creating a social media policy:

- Consult with your leadership and legal counsel to ensure you are capturing all of the different ways your company is using social media.
- Update your already existing policies as stated above.
- Add missing polices including a policy that specifically addresses social media. Sample polices can be found at such HR sites as SHRM and other HR-related blogs. Labor law attorneys and HR consultants can also help you draft your policy.
- Since social media polices are so new we recommend you collaborate with other HR professionals in your industry when drafting your policy to identify best practices.
- Engage your communications, legal, and HR/OD teams to ensure your policy is written in the voice of your company and to assist with the rollout.
- Education is key – once the policy is written don’t just post it to your intranet or send it in an email. Distribute it and offer some education sessions so your employees have full understanding of how to best use social media while remaining compliant.

The benefits of using social media for training, collaborating, and employee engagement are clear. As HR, OD, and Learning Practitioners we can help our companies get ahead of the curve by embracing social media while safeguarding the company. While certainly not all-inclusive, this whitepaper is intended to point you in the right direction around social media governance. Individual polices should be reviewed by an attorney before implementation.

Happy connecting!

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Notable court cases and links:

City of Ontario V. Quon Supra

Supreme Court determined that a search of police pager messages was reasonable therefore there was no violation of the officer's 4th Amendment rights.

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/09pdf/08-1332.pdf>

Dible V City of Chandler

A Summary judgment was issued against Dible who was claiming that his first amendment rights were violated when he was discharged from the Chandler Police Department after it was discovered that he operated a sexually explicit website with his wife.

<http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2007/09/05/0516577.pdf>

Pietrylo V Hillstone Restaurant Group

A manager violated the Stored Communications Act to gain access to comments about their manager and their employer posted on a social networking site by employees.

<http://www.employerlawreport.com/uploads/file/Opinion%209-25-09.pdf>

Sears Holdings Advice Memorandum

Questions about if Sear's social media policy infringed on their freedom of expression or "section 7" activity.

<http://www.nlr.gov/case/18-CA-019081>

TEKsystems V Hammernick

Newly filed complaint alleging breached the non-solicitation provisions of an employment contract by connecting with TEKsystems clients and customers through LinkedIn.

<http://georgiabusinesslitigationblog.typepad.com/files/complaint.pdf>

LET'S CONNECT

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