The Social At-Work

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It was recently announced that more people use Facebook for networking than those who use the search engine Google. This is not too surprising given the fact that almost everyone seems to have an account with a social networking site, using them to electronically meet and interact with anyone and everyone.

While social media can provide new ways to interact and respond to customers, social media activities by employees can create numerous problems for employers. Employees spend the majority of their waking hours at work. They often date coworkers and may have peers that they do not get along with for one reason or another. The end result is that they frequently showcase their workplace issues – good and bad – with the world through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as various blogs.

Social networking can seriously impact the employer in a negative manner. A company can work for years to craft a positive image of itself to the public, and more importantly to its client base, only to have that well-crafted image quickly tarnished by negative postings from employees. This is not the same as the company bulletin board in the lunchroom. These sites can be accessed by literally millions of individuals, 24-hours per day, and cannot be effectively retrieved once posted to the web.

Recognizing this risk, many companies are implementing policies to directly address the use of social-networking sites so that employees know exactly what is expected of them. The use of social networking sites to air workplace grievances is a reality. Employers cannot afford to ignore this. With the right policies to govern such communications and an understanding of this new challenge, employers can position themselves to avoid future social networking-related problems.

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