

# How should social networks be utilized in the workplace?

Sociology, Social Networking



How could these social networking sites be a threat to a company's security?

In today's world it seems the human race could not live without information technology in the workplace. More importantly, social networks like Facebook and Twitter are becoming very popular tools for business development in today's world. There are dozens of social network sites and more popping up every day. It is astounding the number of hours that people waste on such sites.

Updating, checking in and sending out bits and blurbs about every little aspect of one's life seems cheap. More astounding than individuals wasting time on these things is that businesses are also wasting time on them. Actual megabuck businesses are in on the whole social networking shtick. The challenge for the business world is how to utilize these social networks effectively and safely. The value of social networks and how they can benefit businesses has been in question recently.

Also in question is do these social networks create a security risk with employees conveying possibly privileged information to a friend or relative through Facebook or Twitter. How does a company prevent potential security risks? They have to block social networking sites or grant limited access to specific departments. Metro Business College prevents students from accessing social networking sites on school computers but allows faculty and staff to access from their desk computers.

Metro's reasoning is students should be at school to learn, not stare at Facebook all class period. The question then is not are these sights a security risk but rather are these sites a huge time suck for employees which creates

a reduction in productivity? The biggest risk a company a company faces is how employees that utilize these sights can make their company look and what effects it could possibly have on their reputation. How social networking can tarnish the reputation of a company or enhance it. Unfortunately, there is a downside to social networking.

It is essentially an open forum and anyone can say and post anything on a company's page. For the most part, it is potentially dangerous to a company's reputation. Due to this fact, a company's networking site should have limited access when it pertains to posting information. Take, for instance, a recent report on The Springfield Brewery in Springfield, Missouri. The social media specialist posted a humorous joke to its Facebook page and unfortunately it was met with several disgruntled comments. Several customers stated they would never "step foot n the restaurant again". [ (Pettit, 2013) ] It is bad press such as that over such a small comment that could potentially destroy a company. On the other hand there are companies like Tupperware that use social networking internally to boost the pride employees have for the company, the attachment an employee feels and fun an employee has while at work. [ (Huy, 2012) ] After adopting these social media concepts the turnover rate fell by fifteen percent and a webcast created new sales of \$700, 000 in just three days. (Huy, 2012) ] Sometimes social media can create opportunities for companies that they normally would not have and it is the companies that are willing to evolve and understand the importance of social networking that will survive. Another company that utilizes social networking site is Metro Business College they found that websites such as Facebook and Twitter can be excellent recruiting

tools and also they are useful to keep track of their student body and possibly help them if they have issues with homework or even personal problems.

Social networking can be an invaluable tool to an organization if utilized properly and monitored by administrators to prevent potentially damaging posts or comments. How to make social networking work for the greater good of the company LinkedIn can be a valuable tool. Resumes can be posted there which can be utilized by human resources departments for recruiting purposes. Potential employees post their profiles there, which also can be utilized by the human resources department to check the character of a potential recruit. Slovensky, 2012) Some companies are requiring potential employees to provide human resources access to their Facebook pages so they can see the character of the candidate. Companies post jobs on networking sites like LinkedIn and Facebook which can benefit other companies to view how their competition is doing, if they are posting new positions then that company is most likely in a state of growth. People looking for jobs are on these sights and they provide all the information a potential employer needs to make an informed hiring decision.

When it comes to professional social networking, LinkedIn is the most successful site of its kind. It is better than Facebook or Twitter because it eliminates the everyday social aspect, including the posting of how one's morning breakfast made them feel and the LOLs. Another benefit of LinkedIn is that all discussions and groups are moderated. Nonsense is kept to a minimum. Rarely does one have to deal with spam or irritation there. It is a

safe haven for serious social networking, for serious business connection building and for serious relationship building.

However, there are benefits to using networking sites like Facebook as well. After all, Facebook does have 175 million members according to an article called Inside Facebook written in 2009. Maintaining the strategic advantage through e-business and social networking The questions a company must ask are: To how many social networks do you belong? How valuable are they to you? If they went away tomorrow, would you feel any impact to your business? A simple answer is that individuals should choose one or two professional networks and farm those like any other social networking situation.

Leave the shot gunning to the amateurs. Make connections that count. 10,000 “ Likes” do not mean anything if they are not buying, reading, recommending or influencing. Companies should not waste your time with such pursuits. The return on investment is not high enough. Mass mailings do not work. Certain types of advertising just do not work for some businesses. Building relationships with clients is the most important aspect of any business and that is best done through human contact not a mass email.

Do not rely on flash-in-the-pan online social networks to build your business. Clients and potential clients like to know that there's a 98.6 degree hand on the other end of those messages and not a piece of software. It might sound old-fashioned and outdated but there is nothing like true social networking to build a business. A company builds a business through building relationships.

Studies have shown that relying on social networks to create strong ties actually has the opposite effect and instead weakens them.

Facebook is a good example of a social networking site that creates weak ties (Jennifer, 2010). Instead of creating direct networks among its participants, the social networking site creates sub-networks. With no direct link to the company or the issue at hand it can create weaker ties and a customer that does not show as much company loyalty. (Slovensky, 2012) In the end it does not matter how the company views social networking but how the customer base views that company's use of these social networking sites.

If they are well monitored and provide password protected use for a limited amount of employees then it can be beneficial. However, the biggest issue most companies face is that one instance when something is posted that causes a security breach or something is posted that hurts the company's reputation. They then have to answer the question, what do we do next? Social networking is not going anywhere in fact it is growing everyday with new sites popping up all of the time and companies that want to survive will need to get on board.

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