

The war between information and privacy: public life in the internet age article ...

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



In today's information age, more and more details about people's personal and professional lives are available than ever before. To that end, many people have concerns about how that might affect their lives and futures; how much do we want others to know about us? In Erin Moriarty's "Did the Internet Kill Privacy?", the journalist discusses the dangers and pitfalls of having personal information about yourself online, and how it affects one's academic and work lives. Meanwhile, Rhonda Savage's "Facebook: Fired Up or Just Fired?" takes a more even-handed approach to the Internet, showing both the positive and negative things about using social media in a business setting. Despite the very real concerns that Moriarty brings up in her article, Savage's reasonable arguments and practical advice for using Facebook and other Internet applications in professional life make its arguments more valuable.

Erin Moriarty's news story is intended as a piece of journalism, which lends it a different audience and tone than Savage's academic, advice-centric approach; however, both talk about the same issue of the risks involved when social media activity is involved in the workplace. In the case of Moriarty, she uses the example of a schoolteacher whose photos of her holding alcohol on her vacation leading to her losing her job to illustrate the problems with social media and the workplace. Moriarty makes the point that teacher Ashley Payne used her privacy settings to avert that kind of controversy, but it still did not work, showing that our sense of online anonymity is not as clear as we think it is. This decision is also voluntary, Moriarty painting it with a sense of urgency: "we're not losing that control we're giving it away - every time we buy with credit cards, use cell phones

which signal our location, or post pictures on social networks like Facebook. Just sending an e-mail may make public private information” (Moriarty, 2011). Moriarty’s journalistic arguments are strong, using the words of her primary subject (Payne) and various authors and experts to demonstrate an expert understanding of the subject.

Moriarty links this danger to the phenomenon known as data mining – “companies collecting our private information, packaging it, using it, selling it” (Moriarty, 2011). This is what Moriarty establishes as the true danger of releasing private information on the Internet: companies are paid to mine that data and learn about you in order to sell to you based on your wants and needs. While Moriarty admits that these kinds of privacy questions are not new, and have a long history of existence, this only serves to underline the urgency of the argument. Moriarty’s perspective on the world of social media in the workplace is one of complete negativity; the releasing of personal information is shown to ruin careers and reputations such as Ashley Payne’s, and paints a deep mistrust of companies that wish to collect potential information about consumers.

In comparison to Moriarty’s article about the loss of privacy in an online world, Savage’s perspective on the issue is much calmer and more practical, making it a more effective position to take. Her audience is the world of podiatry, framing the arguments about social media in the medical field, but its principles still apply to the overall theme of Internet privacy. Immediately, Savage establishes a positivity toward the issue that Moriarty lacks: “There’s no doubt that Facebook participation can be an asset to any practice” (53). There are many good things to social media that can help

someone in a work environment, says Savage: a social media presence allows potential patients and customers know the atmosphere and reception of a practice before going in, and it remains a powerful advertising tool (53). At the same time, Savage is still realistic about the dangers Moriarty discusses, including statistics about social-media-related firings: “ A recent study of companies with 1, 000 employees found that 8% of their employees have actually been dismissed for their behavior on sites like Facebook and LinkedIn” (53). Furthermore, Savage agrees with Moriarty that privacy settings do little to hide one’s personal information; however, instead of framing it as a severe violation of human rights, Savage provides pragmatic advice for avoiding potential problems: “ Employees need to avoid bad-mouthing a boss, co-worker, or anyone in professional life in such a public way on a public forum” (53). While it does not provide as sharp a sense of journalistic integrity as Moriarty, its aim and audience is different, and is more effective for said audience.

The establishment of Facebook as a ‘ public forum,’ and not the private arena that Moriarty likens it to, is the central thesis behind Savage’s more level-headed approach. This is further emphasized by Savage’s context being the establishment of a practice-wide Facebook presence, and the rules of conduct by which employers should expect their employees to abide. These guidelines include not posting anything that would be insulting to patients, keeping track of expectations that others have toward you, keeping patients from being personal Facebook friends, establishing policy manuals in the office, and so on (54). While these are chiefly for an office setting, the basic ideas apply equally for individuals in any workplace. This is a far more

appealing approach to the problem of Internet privacy, as it is much easier to adjust behavior than to expect different outcomes from a long-existing situation like data mining and violation of Internet privacy. While this may seem akin to censorship, Savage notes that social media is a public forum, and therefore you represent your company and their interests when interacting on those platforms.

Comparing the two articles, Savage's approach is the more effective one. Unlike Moriarty's investigation into the dark side of Internet privacy, Savage's arguments acknowledge the Internet as it is and attempts to provide helpful tips for preventing the kind of injustices Moriarty points out. Moriarty's arguments and central story are strong, but paint an overly dim picture of people's roles in Internet privacy. While Moriarty's position is that people are helpless against data mining and keeping their private life private, Savage runs with that situation and tells people how they should regulate themselves to avoid trouble. In the world of the Internet, privacy is often an illusion; people can lose jobs and detract from their business if they are not careful. Both articles understand that reality and report on it significantly; however, Savage's advice is more valuable to the reader, despite Moriarty's deeper investigation into the phenomenon itself. Savage's audience being employers and employees looking for practical ways to avoid the problems that Moriarty's subject suffers, it provides a more helpful and effective resource than Moriarty.

Works Cited

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