

Addressing an ethical issue – social media assignment



Addressing an Ethical Issue Elizabeth Garcia Garcia @superficiality. Du Ethics and Enterprise us 4801 Professor Scott June 14, 2013 Companies today are faced with the ethical issue of how “ social media” makes business decisions more complex. Many companies will look at benefits that social media brings to the corporate world, but businesses certainly face risks as well. In today’s evolving technology, a complicated question each company faces is how to manage and balance ethics with social media. Should you or your employees talk about work via personal social media accounts?

Should you connect, follow or friend clients, employees or co-workers? What about competitors? There are benefits but there is risk and this is an ethical issue that companies need to address. Many companies are looking at this issue on a daily basis and trying to put together a policy that will reduce the risks involved as well as protect the company. There are many advantages that Social Media provides a company. It allows businesses to connect and engage with prospective, past and current customers, employees, suppliers and other stakeholders like never before.

Mediums such as Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, video sharing, photo sharing provide companies the opportunity to share key messaging, strengthen relationships, and a way to build a community as well as an avenue to handle customer service issues. So, there is a very positive upside as long as you avoid the pitfalls. The Kansas City Journal published an article addressing this ethical issue back in March of 2012 in which it stated that, “ Companies need to have a solid written corporate social media policy. (Ross, 2013) As much as we understand that there should be a written policy companies also need to realize that unprofessional employees will act unethically regardless

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of whether they're plugged in to social Edie. If employees misbehave on social media, your problem isn't social media. It's hiring and management. (Ross, 2013) There are many current legal issues at hand surrounding the issue of Social Networking. One case that was fascinating in 2011 was around a Twitter account and 17, 000 followers.

John Biggs explains in his article about one such case in litigation: " The question is: Can a company cash in on, and claim ownership of, an employee's social media account, and if so, what does that mean for workers who are increasingly posting to Twitter, Faceable and Google Plus during work hours? " In October 2010, Noah Gravity quit his Job at Phoned. Com, after four years. While employed at Phoned, Gravity began writing on Twitter under the name Phoned_ Noah, eventually amassed 17, 000 Twitter followers.

When he left, Gravity said Phoned told him he could keep his Twitter account in exchange for posting occasionally about the company. However, eight months after Mr.. Gravity left, Phoned sued, saying the Twitter list was a customer list, and is seeking damages of \$340, 000. (Biggs, 2013)

Companies need to see that as social media becomes a integral part of our daily lives, it creates a avenues to protect themselves and their takeovers. Many new issues come up when the door of Social Media opens.

Whether it's a question of who own a Twitter account, service of a subpoena through Faceable, or ownership of a social media account after an employee resigns, even the dollar value of a Twitter " follower," or any number of other issues, companies, corporate attorneys human resource managers and even

trial consultant need to be aware of all issues and address on how to handle all these matters that have can turn into a nightmare for any company if not addressed correctly. Every day, we make numerous ethical decisions; although most are so minor that we do not even IEEE them as such.

Examples of these are when we violate the speeding limit while driving on the highway or side street, when we decide to leave the shopping cart right by the parking stall instead of bringing it to its designated spot. None of these decisions are really important and make an impact, but some can lead to undesirable consequences. According to an article entitled " Ethical Decision Making in Today's Engineering Classroom", the authors state, " The more you practice analyzing day-to-day decisions from an ethical standpoint, the easier it will be for you to make good decisions when the results of a poor choice may be catastrophic.

In very general terms, there are two reasons people try to make ethical decisions. " * They wish to make the world a better place for everyone?? in a single word, altruism. * They wish to avoid unpleasant consequences, such as fines, incarceration, or loss of Job. " (Dry. Elizabeth A. Stephan, 2012). We can say ideally the second reason does not need to exist, but every company and even nations do not solely rely on people making decisions to see if they are acting ethically or not.

Because of unethical decisions that can be made rules, laws and policies have been placed to guide us on what is acceptable behavior ND what is not, as many of the decisions can lead to a negative impact on societies. As we utilize the 12 questions to help us address ethical dilemmas and identify the

problem, these questions provide an opportunity to have group discussions, helping understand the responsibilities in getting to the root cause of the ethical dilemma.

These discussions can also lead to understanding where a company stands on a certain issue, as well as any inconsistencies that are not as evident. The questions as developed by Laura Nash were meant to help in the goal of making a decision and determine whether the decision is ethically correct. In reviewing the Five Ethical Decision making principles as well as analyzing John Rally's theory Justice as Fairness, it is your personal belief, your experience and overall values as well as religious upbringing that will guide you in which decision making principle you will use.

In relating these to the ethical issue of how far a company can go when it comes to managing the social media of its employees and what they can express as well as convey through these meaner can be very challenging on which principle to use when making the decision on what is ethically correct. In today's society we are insistently collecting, handling and distributing information, there are millions of computers exchanging this information every single day.

The ethical question comes as Richard Mason states in his article, "Information is the meaner through which the minds expands and increases its capacity to achieve its goals, this, information forms the intellectual capital, and the intellectual capital is vulnerable in many ways." (Mason, 1986). This lead to the ethical dilemma as to what is private information, what in this information is accurate? It also questions as to the ownership of

the information, and the accessibility. When is it right for an employee to utilize information on their private social media outlets?

Reviewing the Five Ethical Decision Making Principles, I believe that to make a ethical decision with respect to managing an employee's social media use, would be the Universalism (Duty) would be the one to use to help in the decision making process. As stated by Joseph Weiss, Mimi would have to determine the extent to which the intention of an acts treats all person with respect. It would also include the requirement that everyone would act this way in the same circumstances. " (IPPP)

As an employee my decision would be based on how I use social media would follow the Ethical Virtue Perspective and I truly believe that my individual virtues, and characteristics, upbringing, beliefs would reflect on how I use social media to portray myself and my company. If we take a look at John Rail's Theory of Justice and Fairness, his overall theme on this theory was that Moral authority is determined by the extent of opportunities, wealthy, and burdens which are fairly distributed among all (Weiss, 2009). Rails suggests that you " imagine yourself in an original position behind a veil of ignorance.

Behind this veil, you know nothing of yourself and your natural abilities, or your position in society. You know nothing of your sex, race, nationality, or individual tastes. Behind such a veil of ignorance all individuals are simply specified as rational, free, and morally equal beings. You do know that in the " real world", Justice as Fairness). Understanding the Theory of Justice, could we say that in the dilemma of Social Media we could use this decision

making principle to help us create an environment that would be safe for the employee to make the right decision?

I believe that this yep of principle would cause more concern for what is right and wrong, because the use of wealthy, status, education would impact the decision making process. Overall utilizing the twelve questions and as a company using the Universalism decision making process would allow for the stakeholders to understand ethically where the company stands with respect to the use of social media. As an employee I would rely on my experience and values to make sure that I make the right decisions on how I am going to use that medium to convey whatever messages I want to share that would not compromise my company or my Job.

Understanding the important role that Social Media will continue to play in our society, it is critical that we implement a Social Media Policy to protect the Company, the Brand and the Stakeholders. Social Media has created an environment in which companies need to protect themselves and their stakeholders from situations involving harassment, cyber-bullying, and privacy violations which have highlighted the challenges surrounding social media usage related to the workplace. It is important for us as employers to take steps to ensure compliance and mitigate risk in this area. There are many reasons for implementing a Social Media Policy.

By monitoring social media sites, employers can discover what is being said about the employer, the employees, and the workplace. As Jason Habiting states in his article, “ The law in this field is changing rapidly, however, employers should be careful when disciplining employees based on social

media activities. Having a social media policy in place does not always allow the employer to dictate how the employer's image is presented online. It permits the employer to have some control over the employer's image, however, and it could prevent employees from posting inappropriate messages online" [(Habiting, 2013)

In addressing the policy someone needs to be monitoring the social media networks as well as the policy needs to be communicated and enforced. The Human Resource Department along with the Legal Department overseeing HER will be the keeper of the monitoring as well as the enforcement and communication of the policy. It is critical that we communicate to our employees in our policy that our employees should think carefully before posting online, because most online social platforms are open for all to see. Despite privacy policies, employees cannot always be sure who will view, share or archive the information that is posted. Before posting anything, employees should remember that they are responsible for what is posted online" (Habiting, 2013). Our policy should include the following points to ensure we protect the interest of the company, the brand and our stakeholders. * All Employees must identify themselves with their name and, when relevant, their role as the company has few people in the company that are official spokespersons for the company and its brand image. They are personally responsible for all the content they publish. * Use common sense and If they publish something that makes them even the slightest bit uncomfortable, they should think twice before posting it. * " For internal use only" is exactly what it meaner and it is absolutely not meant to be forwarded to anyone who is not employed by our company. * It is perfectly

fine to talk about your work and have a dialogue with the community, but you cannot reveal specific detail that fall under the confidentiality agreement. Advise employees that all forms of communication on company-owned property may be monitored * Respect their audience * Train employees on the policy * Think about the consequences The bullet points are a few key things that need to be incorporated into our Social Media policy understanding that you can restrict employees' use of social media on work computers and during work hours. On the other hand, they should be free to use Social Media sites on their breaks and time off. Let us not forget the benefits of social media.

Social media can act as a customer service tool allowing consumers to interact with businesses about their products. Social media marketing campaigns can be very inexpensive and, when successful, can increase brand awareness. Having a policy in place can protect the company and monitor how our brand is perceived and hold our employee accountable. The key to a successful Social Media Policy is in the manner we communicate it to our employees. Many organizations fail to properly communicate a policy change by using an employee acknowledgment as a safe bottom line.

Our social media policy is critical to your organization, so it would make it makes sense that the corporate social media policy that can affect our organization so swiftly should require more than a single employee signature. The following is a strategy that has been successful in many other organizations and can be successful with our organization if executed properly: * Our CEO will send a memo explaining he importance of our policy as well as the consequences for not only the company and our stakeholders <https://assignbuster.com/addressing-an-ethical-issue-social-media-assignment/>

but the consequences if we as employee fail to follow it. Every Manger Position should be the first ones to get exposure to the policy and provide them an explanation that is clear as to what the specific corporate policy is as well as explain to managers the expectations, and the boundaries for themselves as well as their employees, if needed provide social media training. * Initial Social Media Training for all employees and review of policy along with an acknowledgement form signed and training revisited every year. HER and legal teams will advise us on the right use of the acknowledgment form.

All employees should receive annual social media training or classes to remind them of the guidelines, pitfalls, and suggested practices. * Social Media Training and Policy review done at every New Hire Orientation. Including social media guidelines in the new hire training is key to set the expectations right from the beginning. In respect to executing the Social Media Policy ensuring that employees understand and are in compliance is critical to a company's brand image.

Sharply Lobby states in her article, owe ethics plays a part in the social media circle, " Whether you choose to incorporate ethics into your social media policy or handle the topics independently, there's agreement that setting expectations, conducting training and holding people accountable is necessary' (Lobby, 2013). She shares some practical advice on how to ensure employees are in compliance with corporate ethics, but it really applies to any policy, including social media. " First of all, read the policy.