Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by latonm - 2009/07/14 09:29

Several organizations including The Wall Street Journal have recently initiated rules restricting Facebook and Twitter use in order to maintain "professionalism" among employees. Two questions: Are such guidelines needed and are they enforceable?

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by jrajani - 2009/07/14 10:23

Employees can create a fake account on any of these networks and communicate any ill feelings they have about the company. The bottom line is if the company culture fosters loyalty and trust than there should be no reason for team members to be anything less than professional and on message in these social communities. Additionally, why would anyone want to burn future career bridges by spreading unprofessional content about their employer anyway.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by ronkost - 2009/07/14 14:59

This strikes me as an example of an "old world publisher" trying to deal in the new reality of a Web 2.0 world. The Wall Street Journal has much to fear I'm afraid, especially since they continue to struggle with reinventing themselves to become relevant to a new generations and a totally new audience. Companies need to understand the ideas Mr. Rajani just put forward. You need not try to stick your head in the sand and pretend the world isn't moving forward. Entreat your employees to go forward and engage with their peers, your customer base, and the world at large. It's been said before; by doing so you win as a company, they learn more as employees. Additionally, your customers, distributors, and their customers all gain from the experience.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by epearlman - 2009/07/21 15:15

Organizations that restrict employee use of social networking tools make a grave mistake. The message they give their employees is -- "We don't trust you." And while their baby boomer workers might not be as sensitive to this type of restriction, GenY employees will not stand for it. This reminds me of how some companies in the '90s refused to give Internet access to all their computer users because they were concerned that they would spend too much time surfing the Web. Now that seems positively out-of-touch.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by jurali - 2009/07/28 05:57

Well, there are two point of view on it.

First one is that employees could share with other Facebook users negative information about the company or confidential information. I don't think that's the case. This is more about understanding of situation be employee. If he would like to share something, he could use privat Internet access from home or using mobile phone. Strict rules could not help in this case.

Second one is time, which some of employees spent on this social networks. And this is really interesting question. If someone would like to spend working time with social network, will he work during this time, if this Facebook or whatever will be closed for him? This is a question for psychologist :)
Most part of companies in Russia prefer to use webfilters to close websites like Facebook.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by sediga - 2010/03/12 14:26

I am ALL for blocking any and all social sites â€“ including LinkedIn which is not even a social site. Not giving Internet access in the 90s was a good move as well. When something is this â€œnewâ€•, it is exciting to people. It is addictive. People would be on Facebook all day, and productivity would plummet.

If you recall, when Internet was spreading like wildfire, many organization had no idea how to manage it. There were no tools to, for example, disallow a download from your personal Yahoo email. Viruses would spread. Disaster! Cost companies billions. Now, we have a better handle on it.

SN is the same thing. We have no idea how to contain it. I donâ€™t want hear that it doesnâ€™t need to be contained â€“ beca it does. I think these sites need to be blocked until we have the proper tools, etc that can handle the usage pattern; or control it.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by latonm - 2010/03/12 14:42

I'd respond to this but I'm on Facebook at the moment. Actually there are some tools emerging that might be useful in this regard, specically text analytics software which can capture, interpret and analyze Facebook, twitter and the like.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by tomhoff - 2010/03/17 10:54

This represents just one company's approach to the issue but it's worth mentioning. BT allows its employees to visit social networking sites within the confines of its Internet usage policies. They view this as an opportunity for employees to deepen relationships with existing customers and to build relationships with new customers.

To help stem security threats such as the potential for data leaks through mashups. BT began using URL filtering and security technologies. The filtering technologies can help BT determine if a URL might represent a business productivity site such as LinkedIn or sites that might be deemed as improper, such as Web pages for a hate group. The software can be used to either notify an employee when they're in violation of the company's acceptable-use policies or to block access to certain sites.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by Ben Satchwell - 2010/03/18 05:10

If you're new to text analytics then my company is a specialist information provider in the area... you can view our free news and information portal http://social.textanalyticsnews.com/

We also do an annual meet up in Boston if you're interested aptly named the Text Analytics Summit :)

http://www.textanalyticsnews.com/text-mining-conference/

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by Bill Gerneglia - 2010/03/18 14:58

Thanks Ben for Sharing this perhaps I will attend.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by latonm - 2010/03/18 15:34

There's a new reseacrh study just up on the Accebture website on how the so-called Milennial generationjump the boundaries of corporate IT largely by using social networking and routinely bypass corporate approval proceedures in doing to.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by raprgz - 2010/03/18 17:26

It seems as though you guys are forgetting the greater impact of social media usage in the workplace. I am not here to disagree about positive interests and social opportunities that are able to be built through social media sites and peer to peer communications but even 5 years ago those media relations were greatly created outside of the work place.

Today every business is loosing a great deal of in office productivity because everyone is too busy collaborating on their myspace, facebook, twitter, fantasy football, etc. pages to pay attention to what their responsibilties are to the business. I believe two months ago there was a study that on average employees spend roughly 2 hours a day on social media sites while at work, I know we hire marketing people for this specific purpose but if you take a medium sized buisness of 100 employees and you average out 480 hours per year at $10.00 an hour you end loosing approximatly half a million dollars in lost productivity in one year. (I know that the vast majority of computer savvy people are making a great deal more than $10.00 an hour but its a random ~realistic figure)

Im not saying your going to recooporate that time into productivity by shutting down social media sites within the workplace either but that time could be used for team meetings and so forth that would bring employees focus back into the workplace and add some value to the company.

I think of it as the same principle as trying to keep people at work for their breaks and lunch times. If you leave the office it is going to take you 15 minutes to get where your going, 45 minutes for lunch and 15 minutes back and in most cases another 15 minutes to get focused on your job, however if you stay at your office you spend 15 minutes gossiping and preparing food, 15 minutes eatting and 15 minutes getting back to work which gives your employer potential for an additional 30 minutes of productivity.

I can go into greater detail of open source technologies that can be implimented to track employee usage of URLs and you can go into more detail to find out how much time they are specifically spending interacting within a site (such things as farmvill). For the last company that I consulted for I implimented a solution which said that 6 out of 8 hours a day the vast majority of employees (all but developers really) were on facebook. A more detailed look at the data showed that their operations department was spending almost half of that time playing farmville where as the management branch of the company was interacting with friends, coworkers and family members.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by epearlman - 2010/03/18 21:06

It's hard to understand how a company could still be operating if the majority of its employees were on Facebook for 6 out of 8 hours. Clearly there is some abuse of social media but I also think that such great abuse is indicative of other problems in the workplace.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by srw134 - 2010/04/20 22:51

I think that abuse has existed in the workplace for a long time, the availability of the Internet to the desktop certainly gives a number of different screw-off options but these people tend to stand out if the management is at all capable.

-sean

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by latonm - 2010/04/21 11:26

Last night on one of the network news programns, the anchor cited a study showing that highschool kids tweet between 300 and 400 times a day. Just wait till this generation enters the workforce.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by epearlman - 2010/04/21 13:33

Do you think they'll have trouble staying focused? :-)

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by raprgz - 2010/04/21 14:42

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they were actively on facebook 6 out of 8 hours, that doesnt mean they were actively involved with talking to people and playing games, they had a connection to the site and active cookie.. This particuler company has alot of management problems, which is why I choose to leave.

If you look at some of the more professional companies out there they find solutions to ensure there employee's are staying productive. Calls centers use ACDs with agent monitoring solutions to force people to continue to do there job. Development teams have agile systems to directly show employee productivity (if used appropriatly) but you still have to use these technologies correctly and have defined acceptable use policies that are clear on punishment. If policies are in place but management chooses to ignore there punishment then its their own fault for going upside down and I believe we all can agree that productivity does equate to dollars in the bank.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/04/21 15:29

It might be easier and more useful to guide employees' social media use than to stop it or control it with rules and policies. For example, rather than trying to keep managers from talking about a potential layoff, a company can set up a secure site for managers to exchange messages among themselves. This can produce the benefits of networking -- by watching message traffic and content execs can identify critical issues -- while limiting damage caused by loose, public lips.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by latonm - 2010/04/21 15:50

There are "private" Facebooks for internal use by a select group of people coming on the market. Salesforce has an offering like this. As for guiding social media use, for many users this has become an addiction.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use
Posted by srw134 - 2010/04/27 02:59

The bottom line is that every company will have to vary their policy depending on the level of knowledge and the environment itself. The best solution will be found for each company eventually, but it will most likely take a couple attempts to refine it to the best use.

-sean

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by sediga - 2010/04/29 10:30

The problem with social media is that the â€œdataâ€• is real-time and controlled by the individual. â€œclassicâ€• internet had s restrictions on who published, and where. The new portals allow anyone to publish and everyone to read. This creates a challenge on how to control the flow of information. Blocking internet sites will not do any good since the readers can be â€œdistractedâ€• via their cell phone, etc.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by srw134 - 2010/05/05 22:19

I think that these are two issues, I have less of a problem in allowing employees to use these tools then I do with these same employees using these tools over the companies networks. If the employees are irresponsible and post subjects which are intended to be private or secret then that is a separate issue.

-sean

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by sediga - 2010/05/11 13:15

True â€“ I think you are focusing on the security aspects of this more than I am (at least for this thread of communication). All and all, I am not sure if these tools can be blocked. Some argue that it shouldnâ€™t. To your point, using a phone and not your companyâ€™s network, you can still post to Facebook. You are not using companies resources â€“ is that ok? Maybe we just have to accept that it is.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by ciony - 2010/05/15 10:28

Try as we might to govern and guide social media use, it will never be foolproof; that's why an important part of a social media policy needs to be active monitoring of what is being said about your firm in these channels, whether it is originated by employees or competitors.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by srw134 - 2010/05/21 18:40

Well my perspective on this is that I don't mind the use of these sites in the workplace as long as the companies network is not being used. However, there should be an understanding and possibly a training program which ensures that employees know the boundaries of what is not to be posted publicly.

-sean

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by sediga - 2010/06/22 14:58

I am not being pessimistic here, but I really would like to see the effect of training on such issues. I simply do not know the answer. Does the training help? Or does it simply provide the employers a way to prosecute if need be by pointing to the training and saying, â€œI told you soâ€•.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/06/25 13:41

I'd like to know why companies don't or can't use technology to block employees from browsing social networking sites on company computers. This would seem effective. And it could help employees too. Just ask the California nurses facing termination for sharing patient treatment information via social networking.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by srw134 - 2010/06/25 16:18

It is actually not that hard to block the common social network sites from being used on corporate networks. The question is whether the company should be blocking these sites (I say yes, many say no).

-sean

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/06/25 22:10

That's my point. Why not just block them and that's pretty much the end of the problem? It's not like corporate environments are havens of tolerance for personal indulgences as things are now. Locking them out of Facebook is not qualitatively different from locking them out of the liquor cabinet in the executive conference room. If it will improve productivity and profitability long-term, there's no reason not to do it.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by sediga - 2010/06/28 14:39

I tend to agree with you that blocking any all of these sites would be a way to go, but I am afraid that it wont solve the problem. These days, anyone can access these social networking sites from their cell phone, WWAN, etc. If you block the access from work, it would make it more difficult but certainly not impossible. There needs to be a couple of alternative approaches to this, one of which is blocking access from a work computer.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/06/30 12:01

Absolutely, there is no way short of, say, a Faraday cage, to make it impossible for an employee to access social networking from work. It's all about guiding people, through the use of policies and barriers, to do what's appropriate.

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by srw134 - 2010/07/05 14:26

The thing about it for me is that I am not concerned about there usage in general, I just don't want them to be used on

private company networks. My concern is the security of these resources. If an employee wants to check their facebook during the day then I don't care, now if they abuse that privilege that is another HR issue not a technical issue.

-sean

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Re:Rules for Facebook, Twitter Use

Posted by sediga - 2010/08/30 12:17

I am in the same camp that the best things you can do and hope are: 1) do not use workâ€™s network to access social sites, and 2) do not abuse and talk about work confidential information. I believe that informing your employees about the dangers and side effects of improper use of social media sites will be key; even if you block them.

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