

Five Key Components of an Effective Social Networking Policy

As social networking websites continue to grow in popularity, many employers are adopting policies that address how employees use such sites, attempting to encourage valid business purposes and prevent hours of wasted time and resources. While rules will vary based on a company's business and philosophy, here are five areas that every social networking policy should address:

1. What is “Social Networking?”

First, a policy should clearly define what it prohibits. It needs to identify specifically the types of activities covered but also be general enough to encompass both media forms and networking trends that have not yet emerged.

2. Productivity

Sometimes dubbed social “notworking,” employee productivity is usually an employer's most pressing concern. Start, then, with a simple statement that employees must limit their use of social networking websites so as not to interfere with job duties and performance.

3. Identity of User and Disclaimers

Employees should understand they are personally responsible for their social networking activity even when it is conducted with a company e-mail address, can be traced back to the company's domain name, or uses the company's assets. Employees should always identify themselves and make clear that comments made and opinions expressed are the individual's and not the company's; it is good practice to provide employees with language they can use for such a statement.


4. Social Networking from Home

Although employees enjoy more freedom when they use their own time and equipment, a workplace policy should address expectations about social networking off the clock. For example, exposing employer trade secrets, financial information, or other private information on public sites should be strictly prohibited regardless of time of day or whose equipment is used.

5. Other Company Rules Still Apply

In reminding employees that social networking comments can be traced back to them and the

company, reiterate that company policies about confidentiality, copyright and trademark infringement, discrimination and harassment apply to what they say on social networking sites.

TIP	Social networking is here to stay. Employers need specific, yet flexible policies that inform employees of the ground rules.		TIP Author – William H. Jordan Smith Moore Leatherwood LLP Labor and Employment Team T (864) 240-2431 will.jordan@smithmoorelaw.com
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