

Pros and cons of social media at work

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Social networking platforms such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and LinkedIn have grown phenomenally and many employees maintain an almost permanent online presence. It is easy to spend hours checking and updating internet accounts. When one considers the fact that access to the workplace internet facilities also allows employees to indulge in non-work related browsing, it is easy to see why employers may be hesitant to grant unrestricted right of access to their workplace internet facilities.



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Irresponsible use of the workplace internet by employees can dramatically reduce their productivity. In addition, the sharing of data such as video files uses up large amounts of bandwidth which compromises the efficiency of the system for business purposes. Further, there is an increased threat of infiltration by viruses or malware. When employees make inappropriate comments or spread offensive material via the internet, the employer may even find itself liable in terms of civil or criminal law.

However, technology has changed the way people communicate with each other, how they stay abreast of developments and share information and how they do business. There are therefore unprecedented advantages to be obtained from allowing employees access to the internet and even social networking platforms while at work. In addition, employees have rights to privacy, which must be respected and many have an expectation of access to the internet as a workplace perk.

It is thus crucial that employers know how to balance the needs, rights and interests of the business as well as those of the employees.

Discussions around social networking at the workplace will be canvassed in detail at this year's 28th Annual Labour Law Conference, taking place at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg from 4-6 August 2015. This annual conference is jointly facilitated by the Institute of Development and Labour Law at the University of Cape Town, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of Witwatersrand and the School of Law at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in partnership with LexisNexis South Africa.

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