

## **Social Media: What's all the buzz about?**

We've all heard about them, and some folks can't seem to live without them: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, to name a few of the more easily recognized social media outlets. These sites have become such an integral part of today's society that anyone has the ability to search for another person and find out a variety of information about that person. If you have a smart phone, an Ipad, a tablet, a laptop, a computer or a soon to be Apple watch, you have access to all of these sites and more. The information you can find out about someone includes their hobbies, who they work for, who their friends are, pictures and videos of that person, their points of view on many topics, religious and political beliefs, as well as who and what one follows, just to mention a few.

### **Why Social Media?**

Social media sites certainly make it easy to keep in touch with family and friends, keeping you in loop of what is going on in the lives of those you have "Friended" or those you follow. Easy accessibility is key, as well as the cost – most social media sites are free to use. For many, this is one of the only forms of communication they have to the outside world, especially in areas where climate (think harsh winters here) play a role in keeping folks indoors.

### **The Pros and the Cons of Social Media:**

Proponents of social networking sites say that online communities help promote increased interaction between friends and family; they offer teachers, librarians, and student's valuable access to educational support and materials; they can help facilitate social and political change; and they spread (useful) information rapidly.

Opponents of social networking say that sites can hinder face-to-face communication; they waste time and promote frivolous activity; they have the potential to expose users to predators like pedophiles and burglars; they expose user to the risks of identity theft and the spread of false and potentially dangerous information.

### **Social Media and The Workplace:**

Although there is no clear line of demarcation when it comes to the use of social media in relation to your employees, as a manager/supervisor you should use your best discretion when thinking about "friending or following" the people who work for you. Keep in mind that if you friend or follow your workers, they are going to be able to make judgments and decisions about who you are based on the postings they see about you, and they most definitely will. Postings can be taken down, but once they have been seen, they can't be unseen. All people perceive things differently, so keep that in mind as well. What you think is a harmless post could be okay for some but offensive to others.

Some consumers come under the notion that if they follow a worker they will be able to see what that worker is doing in their life that could possibly affect their work performance. That might be true, but the other side of that coin is that the worker can also see what you, as their supervisor, are doing in your life and that can get sticky: Boundaries start to blur, workers view themselves as friends and the manager/supervisor – worker relationship falls apart. And again, what a worker posts could be offensive to you, and that will most likely have an impact/change on how you treat that worker going forward.

So when it comes to social media and the workplace, our suggestion is to keep it out of the workplace. If you maintain the boundaries you have set from the beginning of a workers employment for you, you will be better able to keep the respect between you both and a healthy, working relationship can continue.