

DO NOT DO THIS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

6 Tips on Navigating the Online World

By Karen Wirsig

AS AN EMPLOYEE, YOU HAVE SOME obligations to your employer that don't always end when you leave the workplace. At the same time, it's in your interest to keep your life outside of work your own, as much as possible.

Here are some things to remember when you post to your favourite social media site (even if you're in the privacy of your own home, on your own time, and using your own personal account):

- Don't badmouth your employer or colleagues. The B.C. Labour Relations Board recently found that the "walled garden" of Facebook is not private. Everything you post on Facebook or Twitter is considered public, even if it's just between friends, and you may be subject to discipline for comments that appear to affect your ability to do your job (ie. "I can't work with that idiot, so-and-so," or: "I'm so bored/tired/sleepy/frustrated with work"). Don't even joke about it: the Internet is the place irony goes to die. The same is true for Twitter and any other site.
- Avoid being Facebook "friends" with your boss. In fact, avoid friending your supervisor and/or manager on FB. You're not friends, you're in a power relationship. It's not really necessary, or advisable, to expose the details of your private life to your boss in real time. If using FB is important in your work team, set up a work account.
- Don't identify your employer on your personal FB, twitter or blog. This is yet another strategy to avoid blurring the line between your personal life and your work. And it gives you some protection against potential claims that you are exploiting your employer for your own gain.
- You can blow the whistle on unethical behaviour, but not on Twitter (or any other site). Public criticism of your employer is risky business; you have a duty of loyalty under the law. If you have a concern about something that's going on at work, talk to a union rep about how best to resolve it. If you're bothered about the way your employer is handling something, don't vent online.



- Don't release info about your employer that isn't already public. If it's not your job to make public announcements, don't make them. You can get into trouble for revealing "proprietary" information.
- Your work computer is your employer's property. Don't assume that what you do on that computer (or mobile device) is private, even if you're using a non-work account. It's company equipment and the company can monitor your computer use.

Karen Wirsig is communications coordinator for the Canadian Media Guild. This is the first in a series of tips the CMG is publishing online for journalists navigating the world of social media, and they are good tips for everyone to know. (Our WebWork columnist would like to add: "Don't post photos of yourself naked, or doing anything that contravenes the Criminal Code.") Visit www.cmg.ca to see the next instalment. This article is published with permission from the CMG.

If you have any questions not answered here, or thoughts on the points covered, send a message to Our Times WebWork columnist Derek Blackadder, at derek.blackadder@sympatico.ca, or to the editor: editor@ourtimes.ca. We'd like to hear from you.

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