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Connections

The Magazine of the Human Resources of Central Ohio

UPCOMING EVENTS

TUESDAY, April 13th

8:45am – 10:00am

HRACO In Transition Meeting
– Guest Speaker
Location: The Fawcett Center

10:00am – 11:15am

HRACO Networking Event - FREE
Location: The Fawcett Center
Topic: The 10 Commandments of
Networking a Mixer

11:15am – 1:30pm

HRACO Monthly Member Lunch Meeting
Location: The Fawcett Center
Topic: Social Networking in HR:
Headaches or Neadway?
Presented by Sharon DeLay, SPHR
1.0 HRCI Credits (general) have been
APPROVED

1:45pm – 4:45pm

Afternoon Workshop
Location: The Fawcett Center
Topic: Social Network Recruiting: Bringing
it all Together
Presented by Sharon DeLay, SPHR &
Karin Combs
3.0 HRCI Credits (general) have been
APPROVED

Thursday, April 22nd

Compensation & Benefits Special
Interest Group Meeting – FREE!

8:30am – 10:30am

Location: M/I Home – Easton
Topic: Essential Steps to Designing a
Winning Wellness Program
Presented by Dr. Kathryn Bennett
1.5 HRCI Credits is currently
PENDING

Tuesday, April 27th

HRACO & Littler Employment Law
Update

9:00am – 12:00pm

Location: The Fawcett Center
2.5 HRCI Credit is APPROVED

In Transition Group Happy Hour

Event - 4:00pm – 6:30pm
Location: 678 Mohawk Street
APPROVED

Don't forget:
HRACO's Annual Diversity Conference in May!
HRACO's Annual Golf Outing in July!
Please visit our website at www.hraco.org
for more information.

SOCIAL NETWORKING: managing versus controlling the conversations

BY: SHARON DELAY, SPHR, MBA

Employers are using social media sites to source candidates, check out their cyber-backgrounds prior to hiring them, and even to build a passive pool of candidates to fish in once hiring opportunities present themselves. At the same time, surveys indicate that three-quarters of American adults over the age of 18 are on the Internet, spending about one in every 16 minutes on a social networking site.

Mix in employees' tendencies to share frustrations and, potentially, confidential company information with their friends, the fact that online computer games can be a huge time-waste, and the employer's ongoing need to "control" the situation, and it's clear that social networking is gearing up to become the perfect storm for human resource professionals.

The reality of controlling or managing the conversations on social networking sites is a monumental task. Four lawsuits (Pietrylo v Hillstone Restaurant, Konop v Hawaiian Airlines, Snyder v Millersville University, and Stengle v Office of Dispute Resolution) and two Acts (Wiretap Act and Stored Communication Act) currently define the guidelines and recommendations for what companies should put into place as some

level of warning and protection. However, there are some proactive things a business must do, as well, to work with social media, rather than against it.

Understand your business. This may seem like a no-brainer, but understanding your employer's short- and long-term goals is critical to your approach to social networking in your workplace. What are your employer's short- and long-term goals for business growth, innovation, and brand? What are your key demographics of your workforce? What are your industry and your customer expectations? Understanding all of these, and more, will help you understand the reality of where social networking fits into the expectations and lives of all of your stakeholders.

Stake your claim. HR cannot be a passive participant in the social networking discussion. Right now, the IT function, and in some cases the Marketing function, own social networking. At minimum, HR needs to become an active participant, if not the owner-driver, of the company's social networking initiative. Social networking, by nature of what it is, involves your people. HR is responsible for the company's people. The argument for a strong relationship is there.

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CONTINUATION OF THE COVER STORY

Protect your company. This is a pretty tall order and one that will continue to evolve as precedent is set and as we begin to understand this new frontier. In the meantime, conduct a social networking audit of your current employee practices and understand where you can make changes.

- Introduce a new policy to your employees that outlines the following. Ensure you get acknowledgement that they have received and reviewed the policy.
 - o Confirm the company's non-disclosure and trade secrets expectations.
 - o Remind employees of company's Internet Use policy regarding acceptable use of company equipment, acceptable time at work spent on non-work sites and resources, etc.
 - o Reinforce company's position and rights on monitoring Internet and e-mail usage and include a statement here about monitoring publicly-available websites (including social networking-related sites) as part of this monitoring.
- Develop a progressive discipline policy, or incorporate violation of the policy above into your progressive discipline policy, and apply it consistently.
- Clearly identify which employees have a business reason to be on these sites. It is likely that many will or should be on these sites to help evangelize the company brand, recruit, market, and interact with the public. Work with the functional areas to develop training and expectations related to how these employees should and should not interact on these tools.
- Train your recruiters and managers about access and use of information gained from social networking sites. Help them understand terms of use, password protection, private versus public information, and misuse of information.
- Establish agreements for your interns, seasonal workers, etc. that clearly define your company's professional protocols. A lot of times these populations of workers are overlooked because they are short-timers or because they do fly under the radar.
- Establish (or revise as necessary) your company's background check process for all new hires to include that you will be reviewing publicly-available information on the Internet as part of the process.
- Work with a cross-representation of your employees to develop and define your social networking policies. Buy-in at all levels is critical to the acceptance and success of your efforts.
- Model best practices. Develop branded information for all key stakeholders who are interfacing with the public and for your leadership. Make the information available

for other employees to adopt and add to their profiles, as desired. "Shop" your own profiles to ensure you're practicing what you preach.

- Don't misrepresent why you are asking for permission to your employees' sites. Better, yet, separate business and non-business and avoid friending, fanning and linking with employees.
- Learn about privacy settings and use them. Understand terms of use and adhere to them. Recognize that you realistically can only respond to information that is publicly available.
- Balance the advice of your attorneys (they are there to protect you, but sometimes they're overly protective) and the morale of your employees (they are there to enjoy their workdays, but sometimes they might take advantage) to come to a place that meets the reasonable needs of everyone.

As an HR professional, it comes down to whether you can manage or control your employees' activities on the various social networking sites. Short of adopting a NO policy (no tweeting, no blogging, etc.), control is likely not an option. Your best bet is to employ management policies and engage in the conversations with your employees for a more successful approach.

About the author

Sharon DeLay, SPHR, MBA, owner of BoldlyGO Career and Human Resource management, is a Career Transition Coach and Human Resource Consultant. In addition to her professional experience in Employee Relations, HRD, and recruiting and on-boarding, she has been recognized for her expertise on utilizing LinkedIn as a career transition, sourcing and small business marketing tool. Sharon has presented and keynoted on LinkedIn and other social media tools at several Chambers of Commerce, in educational settings, for HRACO's In-Transition group, and Scioto Ridge Job Networking Group. She was recently selected as Examiner's Columbus Personal Brand expert. Sharon co-authored the recently-released e-Cruiting: Using social networking to build your recruiting muscle, not bust your recruiting budget with Karin Combs.

