

Social media at work

Introduction and thanks

Social media is here to stay, and more importantly, its use is growing. The dividing lines between work and home are no longer clear and employers who do not take account of this growing wave of influence are at risk.

This report is a snapshot of the current situation and looks at how employers are managing social media in their businesses.

We know our inboxes are overloaded with requests for information, so our thanks must go to the those who responded to our 2014 survey request either directly or via LinkedIn and Twitter.

We would also like to thank the organisations who kindly asked their members to help – the Fresh Produce Consortium, the Food and Drink Forum, the British Frozen Food Federation, the Artisan Food Trail and Tastes of Anglia.



Social media at work

Overview

Social media is a growing part of the communications mix. It is by its very nature 'social' and one of the first things organisations need to realise is that they cannot 'control' it. They can however engage with it and have conversations with their current and prospective customers.

Whether an organisation decides to have a large or small social media presence, guidelines should be set in place and this year's survey shows an increasing number of companies implementing them.

Using own devices at work is an increasing trend, but this blurring between home and work brings its own risks. Not all employers are addressing them.

Policies should not, however, be so restrictive as to blunt a brand's personality. But at the very least sensible guidelines should be in place and your staff and social media 'champions' need to know the ground rules. After that, it is about trust and enthusiasm.

Social media policies



■ Yes (57.0%) ■ No (43.0%)

Do you have a social media policy?

With the increasing use of social media it is surprising that over 40% of firms do not have a social media policy.

Some reports state that half the population of the UK has a Facebook account, and 10m Twitter accounts based in the UK.

If a business does not have some form of guidelines about what people can say on those accounts they are exposing themselves to risk.

All firms should consider a social media policy. How restrictive it is will depend on the organisation, but having a baseline in place makes good business sense.

Social media policies – additional comments

Selected additional comments – Do you have a social media policy?

“Verbal advice rather than a formal written statement.”

“Currently writing one.”

“Under review as we anticipate taking on others in the future who are not previously known to us, so the risk will increase.”

“All members of staff are expected to share appropriate content with appropriate wording, so to not damage the company’s reputation.”

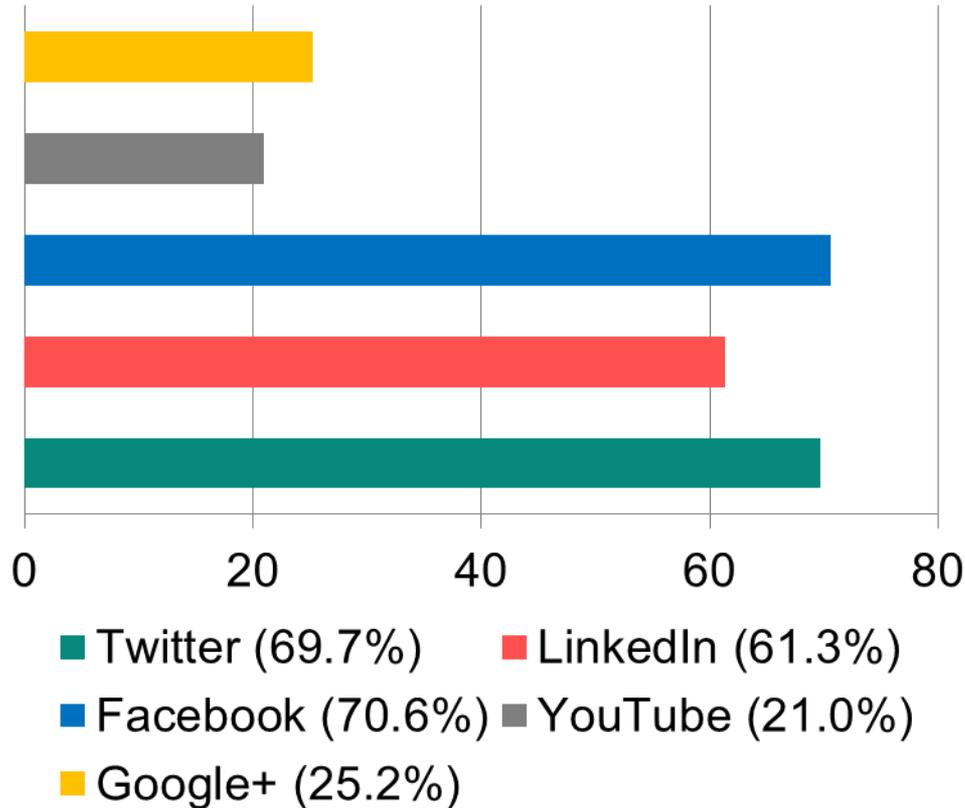
“All staff have to sign on commencement of job.”

“Working on it!”

“We have ICT security policies and social media guidance in place.”

“Not sure what the policy is exactly.”

Your online presence



Does your firm have an official corporate presence in any of the following social media channels?

As in previous years we see businesses with a presence in a number of different media channels.

This year sees slight growth in the number of firms using LinkedIn, with other channels remaining fairly stable.

Employers need to note that social media is about much more than just Facebook, and ensure their policies cover all channels.

Your online presence – additional comments

Selected additional comments – Does your firm have an official corporate presence in any of the following social media channels?

“Spur of the moment, managed by one individual, not by consultation with any others.”

“Think a page was created but never used on Facebook.”

“No but we know we need to have one.”

“No, it is not needed.”

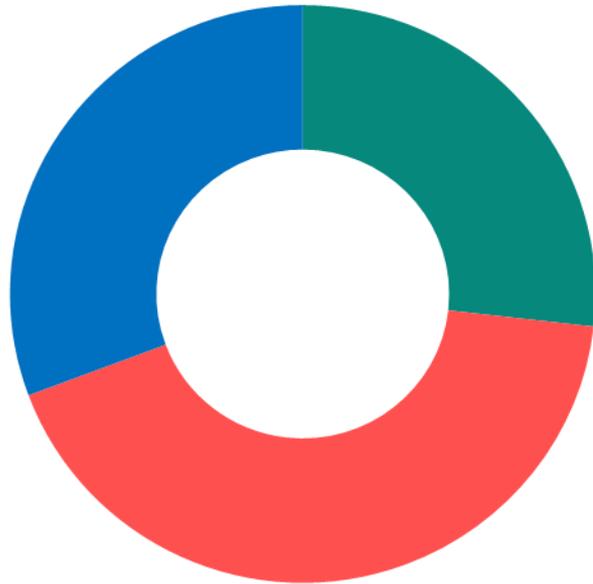
“We have a company profile on each of the platforms. We also try to maintain a certain amount of consistency between the individual profiles.”

“Company videos only and approved by the MD.”

“Very limited/under used.”

“Quora, Reddit, Tumblr, Delicious, Dilgo, Instagram etc”

Your online presence



- Yes - formally (26.8%)
- Yes - informally (42.5%)
- No (30.7%)

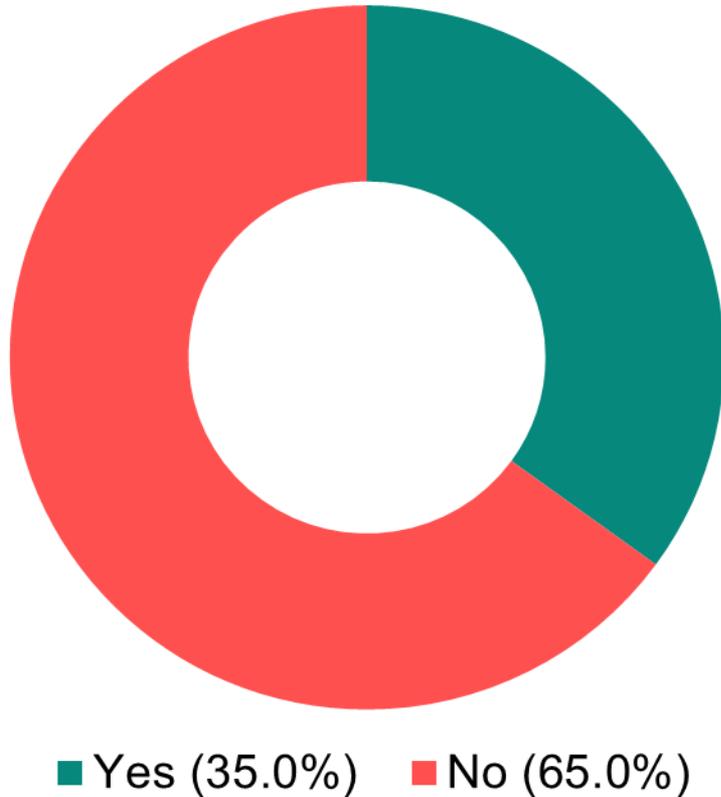
Do you monitor your on-line presence other than your own web site?

Despite the growth in the use of the internet as part of daily life, our results show that over 30% of businesses do not monitor what is being said about them.

Reputations can be built and destroyed on line, and all businesses would be well advise to spend a few minutes a week seeing what people are saying.

Whilst there are agencies who will do this for you, a good start would be typing your business name into Google – you may be surprised at what you find!

Social media and your employees



Do you monitor the use of social media amongst your employees in the workplace?

The proportion of firms that monitor the use of social media in the workplace has marginally increased on 2013.

But just under two-thirds of businesses still do not monitor staff use. With some firms this may be a positive decision. If not, businesses would be well advised at least to let employees know as part of their policy that they may monitor social media use.

Software exists to block, limit or monitor the use of certain sites and for some businesses this could be a worthwhile investment.

Social media and your employees – additional comments

Selected additional comments – Do you monitor the use of social media amongst your employees in the workplace?

“Social media sites are blocked in the workplace.”

“To ensure adherence to the firms policies on social media.”

“Only high levels of usage flagged by IT.”

“Staff do make comments on Facebook, some of which do require a talking to! (there is a mole account active). One person has been dismissed and comments on Facebook were a factor in their dismissal.”

“Employees are allowed to use Facebook during their lunch break, we trust our employees not to abuse this at any other time.”

“Informally and only in terms of their usage during work time.”

“Only monitor social media relating to the company. Networks used for personal use are not monitored by myself.”

“Not very often.”

“Facebook and Personal Twitter access is blocked by IT. However we have access to corporate accounts.”

Own devices



Do you allow staff to bring their own devices in to work and use them for work purposes?

2014 has seen a dramatic increase in the proportion of businesses that allow staff to do work on their own devices.

This may be a knock on effect of having a mobile and flexible workforce, but it does not reduce the risks businesses could be exposing themselves to.

Whilst there are many positives to staff using their own devices, there are also dangers. Our next question shows how firms are tackling them.

Own devices – additional comments

Selected additional comments – Do you allow staff to bring their own devices in to work and use them for work purposes?

“This is a sackable offence as we are a bank. However we are allowed to use bank devices for appropriate personal use.”

“Limited access via secure remote access portal only.”

“Employees are expected to use company equipment only, but allowed to access email on personal phones out of hours.”

“Generally no, but some personal smartphones can access emails depending on requirement. Access to home webmail etc is prohibited.”

“Yes some do and we are thinking about the potential impact of that.”

“Approved device list in place.”

“Certain departments – only phones and laptops.”

“Will provide smartphone to staff but some prefer to use their own. Use of social media by staff is not known but not believed to be widespread.”

Own devices - restrictions



■ Yes (38.3%) ■ No (61.7%)

If so, do you have restrictions on their use/data download etc.?

With an increase in the proportion of firms allowing staff to work on their own devices, there has been no increase in the proportion of firms that have guidelines on how to use them.

This is a dangerous 'gap', and firms without guidelines should at least draw up measures to specify aspects such as virus protection standards and passwords.

Data flows very easily between devices and not having safeguards in place could cause significant problems.

Own devices – restrictions - additional comments

Selected additional comments – If so, do you have restrictions on their use/data download etc.?

“At certain times of the day. Some lifted at lunchtime, but not all.”

“Employees are not permitted to publish or circulate photographs or company information including personal messages or jokes without a Director’s knowledge.”

“Not formally.”

“Only in the office – nowhere else due to specific restrictions imposed by the nature of the work the charity is involved with.”

“Not found it to be an issue so far.”

“No finance data. Only use on firewalled private Wi-Fi network set up for external devices.”

“Smartphones are not allowed on the secure network, but allowed access on our open Wi-Fi.”

Additional comments

As is often the case, it is the additional comments which reveal how people are really feeling, and our thanks go to those who supplied the selected comments on the following two pages.

“Social media is part of modern life and companies must embrace it. There will be some personal use but only as there is on the photo copier, telephone etc. Let’s not get hooked up on it as the next serious problem for companies to tighten up on – relax and it is not a problem – anyone over doing it is warned exactly as for any other infringement.”

“It’s an area that is constantly changing and our approach to this needs to be flexible.”

“Excessive personal use will be disciplined. So far this has not happened due to positive company culture. Engagement is encouraged.”

“Social media in the workplace can have very positive effects as well as negative ones if not controlled or monitored.”

“Good to have social media to inform people about certain events/information in a less formal and more personal manner – must ensure messages are consistent across all networks being used.”

“Like a lot of things in business it’s one more thing to try and monitor within the workforce. We all have one and we all keep looking to see who’s texted/emailed or whatever else they do! How are you going to monitor that when you have staff covering the country? We are going to allow positive comments (i.e. a nice photo of your lorry that you keep clean) and make derogatory, negative opinions a gross misconduct matter.”

Additional comments - continued

“This is such a rapidly evolving area it is difficult to know what is best. Quite often allowing a more relaxed use of IT can be a great benefit to the organisation.”

“The organisation has not fully understood or embraced social media. It is used out of a belief that it “should be” rather than with any specific objectives in mind.”

“Incorporation of social media in employment contract referring to policy for full scope of the policy and consequences.”

“It is a time sink of still unproven utility/benefit for our business, so use is informally logged by marketing. Social media marketing still has far too many snake oil sellers IMHO.”

“I don’t believe staff should be accessing their Facebook/Twitter accounts whilst at work, and when adding information should be aware that the ‘boss’ may check to see if any negative information is being added. In my previous role, this was the reason for someone being dismissed.”

“I don’t use social media personally, but it does worry me!”

Your policy

Defining your social media policy

All organisations should consider implementing a social media policy. Without ground rules in place there is nothing to gauge employees use (or abuse) of social media in the workplace and the detrimental effect it may be having on a business in terms of lost productivity and reputational damage.

How strict the policy is depends on the organisation but some form of guidelines should be in place. It should not restrict (some users) from using the medium to promote the business in what is a cheap and affordable channel to market if it is right for your business.

Affordable technology certainly exists to monitor the usage of the internet on network computers. The same technology usually allows certain sites to be blocked or restricted to particular users. If you monitor your employees' use of the internet and e-mails, you must let them know. This can easily be done as part of the daily log-in process.

If policies do not place an outright ban on social media, they may contain a 'fair use' clause. What is 'fair use' is a subjective measure but at the very least it puts a safety net in place for the business should problems arise.

The growing use of own devices in the workplace can also be tackled in a policy – you can specify what can and cannot be done on the device, what level of virus protection needs to be in place, and who is permitted to use their devices for work purposes.

Whether you believe social media is a 'flash in the pan' or here to stay, you need to take action to control its use in the workplace.

Used correctly social media can enhance communications and help businesses grow, but you should bear in mind that abuse often remains unseen until major problems arise and damage can be hard to repair.

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Details of our work on social media policies and other resources can be found [here](http://bit.ly/1smvaBY). (<http://bit.ly/1smvaBY>)

If you would like to be added to our employment law bulletin list, please send an e-mail to markdodds@roythornes.co.uk.

For discussions about employment law issues including social media policies please contact one of the employment law team

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