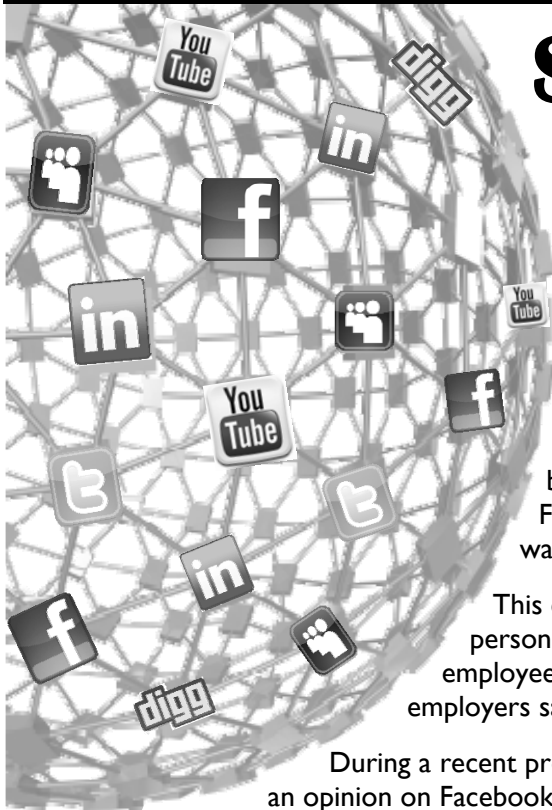


SOLUTIONS

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Social Networking and Your Job

Are you one of the millions that belong to Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace to keep up with or find old friends? Do you use these or others to feel connected in a way that meets the needs of a busy world? You are not alone.

You may have heard recently about the waitress in North Carolina who was fired for her Facebook post. She was disgruntled by a patron who left a bad tip. Like many people today, she expressed her irritation on her Facebook page. In this case, she probably got an unexpected response—she was terminated.

This case and others like it show the influence social networking may have on a person's job. The latest statistics show that 8% of companies with 1,000 or more employees have fired someone for their social media actions. Twenty-two percent of employers say they use social networking sites when evaluating job candidates.

During a recent presentation on "Harassment in the Workplace" an attendee asked, "If I post an opinion on Facebook, can my employer use it against me?" My answer was, "Yes." I have seen situations where people post jokes or comments that would be deemed offensive/derogatory if it were said verbally in the office. I have also seen people bashing their coworkers, ex-spouses, and family members on posts. This is not much different than taking out an ad in the newspaper. It is basically a public forum. If someone you work with is offended by your comments and it is related to sensitive areas (race, religion, age, politics, etc) they could have a legitimate complaint, as it may create a "hostile working environment."

Consider these boundaries when engaging in social networking:

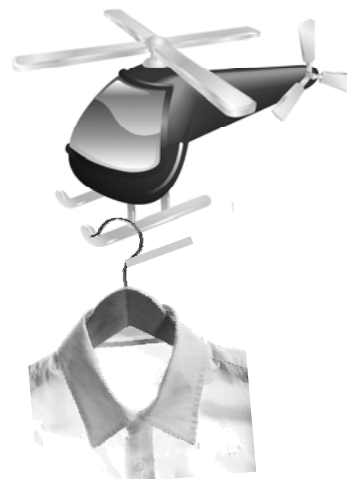
Be choosy about who will be your "friends." Have rules about who you will or won't let in so you don't have to feel guilty when you decline a friend request. If you have hundreds of "friends," it can get really difficult to keep in mind who is reading your posts.

Only post what you would say or do if you were speaking **on camera** to a **large crowd** mixed with your **close family, friends, and perfect strangers**. Would you really hold up a risqué photo of yourself for all to see? Would you publicly defame your boss or your company's policies? Would you really want your children to hear you making lewd comments or jokes?

Remember, you are an adult. Posting opinions or airing out your "dirty laundry" is not an effective means of addressing issues. It only creates more stress and drama.

We could have a debate about whether this is a violation of free speech., but let's not do that. Instead, ask yourself why people feel more "free" to say or do outrageous things via social media. Most of us can enjoy social networking as part of our social lives while recognizing that it is not just "social" if it is on the internet. Companies have always had expectations about how they want their employees to behave publicly, so that part hasn't changed. It is like anything else: with more freedom and technology comes greater responsibility, so use it wisely!

Parenting Styles to Avoid



It seems that today's teachers are often dealing with two kinds of parents: the "helicopter parents" and the "dry cleaner parents." Helicopter parents hover. They float around their children and live vicariously through their offspring, taking an exaggerated part in their lives. They fight their children's battles, do their children's homework, and frequently call their children's teachers about miniscule matters.

Dry cleaner parents, on the other hand, drop their children off, pick them up when they are finished, and that's the extent of their involvement. They fail to show up for parent-teacher meetings, don't supply their children with lunch money or school supplies, and generally expect the school and the teachers to raise their children to adulthood, whereupon they will produce a slip of paper to retrieve their child.

Where are the parents of the "olden' days" who backed up the teacher, who automatically suspected their child when the teacher called, and who generally supported and trusted the school and the teachers? Sociologists have studied today's generation of parents (sometimes called Generation X) and found a disconnect between this group and former generations of parents. Generation X parents are highly educated, technologically savvy, accustomed to instantaneous feedback, and media-wise. The majority of them (helicopters) have scheduled their children into organized sports and activities (think play dates at the age of 18 months), spend the majority of their "quality" time with their children in the car, and want for their children what they may have missed in their own growing-up. As a result, the children of these helicopter parents are highly dependent, have been over-protected, have been rewarded just for showing up (i.e. every member of the soccer team gets a trophy), and have had the range of their activities severely restricted.

Of course, the children of the dry cleaner parents have been allowed to grow with little parental guidance and no one in their lives to say "no." These children have been allowed to be home alone more (parents take their own vacations), to experiment with age-inappropriate activities (less supervision), and to grow up with few guidelines (the one directive: have fun).

What do these two groups of parents share in common? It is the unreasonable demands that they put on teachers. Teachers report that parents demand changes in grades, exemptions from school rules, escape from consequences or even acknowledgements of misbehavior, and special treatment. Parents and teachers must be clear on what expectations each group has of the other. This will modify and improve the relationships between the two groups, and ultimately benefit the child.

What should parents expect of teachers?

- Quality instruction
- Order and discipline in the classroom
- Fairness
- Individual consideration of their child
- Updates on their child's progress
- Communication of problems
- Presence at school activities
- Bang for their bucks

What should teachers expect of parents?

- Support for school policies
- Support for teachers' decisions
- Help with homework and assignments
- Responses to teachers' notes and messages
- Presence at school activities
- Provision of school supplies, lunch or lunch money, appropriate clothing for their child
- Accountability for their child's whereabouts



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