

## **SMALL BUSINESS GUIDES: SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK**

Social Media is a fact of modern life, but its use in (and out) of the workplace attracts much uncertainty and debate, fuelled by scandalous media stories about recalcitrant employees, corporate defamation and cyber bullying costing employers billions of pounds.

Social Media is a very broad term describing a wide range of internet-based tools extending far beyond Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, enabling anyone to publish and access information, collaborate, or build relationships.

So how can small businesses navigate their way around Social Media at work?

### **DON'T**

**1. Ban All Social Media** – It's just too simplistic to say all Social Media is bad and therefore should be banned during the working day. According to the 2013 Microsoft survey\* of nearly 10,000 information workers across 32 countries, experiences of social media are very mixed: 44% said that social media tools were a distraction, but 46% said their productivity had greatly or somewhat increased through the use of social media in the office.

### **DO**

**2. Develop Social Media Rules** – Agree the overall purpose for using Social Media at work and draw up a set of sensible principles regarding acceptable behaviour and effective usage.

**3. Communicate Social Media Rules** – Inform and consult with employees about the use, management and monitoring of Social Media, as well as consequences for misuse, to ensure everyone is kept up-to-date.

**4. Discuss Work Life Balance and Social Media** – The line between work and home is increasingly blurred by the use of modern technology, so extend the guidelines to include sensible usage of Social Media out of hours.

**5. Recognise Social Media as a Powerful Recruitment Tool** - Research from the Brighton School of Business Management showed that 94% of recruiters have used social media for job hunting and 73% of 18-34 year olds found their last job through a social network.

**6. Utilise the Marketing Power of Social Media** – Targeted use of Social Media as part of a company's marketing mix can help with brand development, market research, customer loyalty and promotion.

By balancing well-thought out guidelines, with a sensible level of trust, there's no reason why you can't let your employees help you harness the benefits of using Social Media for your business.

*If you would like help drawing up your own Social Media principles and guidelines, call me on: 01952 246612 or email: [kay@kayhealdhr.co.uk](mailto:kay@kayhealdhr.co.uk)*

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