

**SOCIAL NETWORKING: HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?** ©

**Veterinary Business Advisors, Inc.**  
**Flemington, New Jersey**  
**(908) 782-4426**  
**www.veterinarybusinessadvisors.com**

*At just past 6pm on an undisclosed date an employee wrote on Facebook: "OMG (oh my god) I hate my job! My boss is a total \*\*\*\*\*, always making me do \*\*\*\* stuff just to \*\*\*\* me off!! \*\*\*\*\*!"*

*An older man who is pictured wearing sunglasses, wrote to her at 10.53pm the same day: "Hi, I guess you forgot about adding me on here?"*

*He added: "Firstly, don't flatter yourself. Secondly, you've worked here for 5 months, Thirdly, that \*\*\*\* stuff" is called your 'job', you know, what I pay you to do. But the fact that you seem to be able to \*\*\*\* up the simplest of tasks might contribute to how you feel about it."*

*"And lastly, you also seem to have forgotten that you have 2 weeks left on your 6 month trial period. Don't bother coming in tomorrow."*

Unfortunately, conversations like this are happening quite frequently these days, due to the influx of social media sites, like Facebook and Twitter. Status updates and blogging about personal lives, daily activities, politics, social gatherings, and news topics are becoming a staple in the daily routines of many people. While simply posting information about an event you attended or how sick you may feel one day, may not be anything to be concerned about, it is when people speak disparagingly about their job, their boss, customers or co-workers that it could cause irreparable damage.

In the past, businesses did not have to worry about monitoring social technology like this for means of employment. Those days are gone. With the average adult spending 17 hours a week online<sup>1</sup>, social networking accounts for 10% of all internet time, and is constantly increasing. The increase in the amount of time people spend on these sites is changing the way people spend their time online and has ramifications for how people behave, share and interact within their normal daily lives<sup>2</sup>. The implementation of mobile applications for social networking has made visiting these sites numerous times on a daily basis even easier.

So as an employer, have you thought about protecting your practice, your goodwill, and yourself from libel commentary or defaming remarks through social networking? Implementing a Social Media Policy within your practice can mitigate the risk of that happening. If an employee makes

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eweek.com/c/a/Midmarket/Internet-Users-Spend-an-Average-of-13-Hours-a-Week-Online-Survey-Finds-485147/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/nielsen\\_globalfaces\\_mar09.pdf](http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/nielsen_globalfaces_mar09.pdf)

disparaging remarks about you, your business, its employees or even its clientele, that person can be held accountable and depending on your policy, immediately terminated.

Please below a sample of the language you could include in your hospital's social media policy:

- Unless specifically authorized by (insert name of hospital) to do so as part of employee's position, employees are not permitted to blog, tweet, or use other forms of social media or...
- If an employee makes disparaging remarks about their employer, co-workers, or even its clientele, that person can be...
- Blogging or other forms of social media or technology include but are not limited to video or...
- The following guidelines have been established to provide a clear line between you as the individual and you as the employee...
- (insert name of hospital) respects the right of its employees to use blogs as a medium of self-expression and public conversation and does not...
- Employees cannot use blogs to harass, threaten, discriminate or disparage against other employees or anyone associated with or doing business with (insert name of hospital). Negative statements about...
- Employees cannot post on personal blogs the name, trademark...
- (insert name of hospital) reserves the right to use content management tools to monitor...
- If contacted by the media or press about your post that relates to (insert name of hospital) business, employees are required to...

If you would like additional information regarding Social Media Policies and what is best for your practice, please contact us at (908) 782-4426.