

SOCIAL MEDIA – RESPONSIBLE USE – ABC LTD

Increased use of social media

During the last 10 years there has been a significant and rapid growth in the use of social media. Jo Dixon (2024) highlighted that the average time spent on social media was at 143 minutes per day, this has grown from an average of 104 minutes per day in 2014. Kemp (2023) reported that within the UK in early 2023 there were 57.1 million social media users which equated to roughly 84.4 percent of the UK population. Use of social media has meant the way in which individuals and organisations communicate has changed (Walker, 2023). ABC employees need to take all the necessary precautions when using personal social media accounts to keep themselves and their personal data safe. It would also be advised to refrain from making comments or posts which could be contrary the companies' values and behaviours. This behaviour could not only be damaging to the organisation's reputation but also the individual's employment with ABC. The same standards of behaviour and conduct should apply when interacting online as would be expected offline.

Privacy and legal considerations

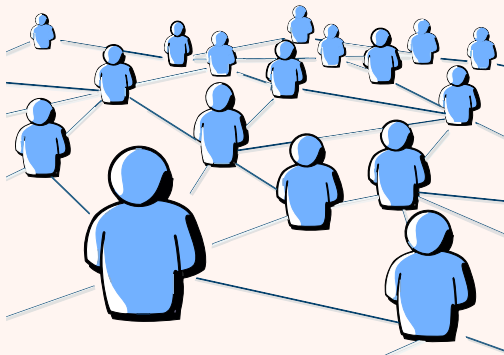
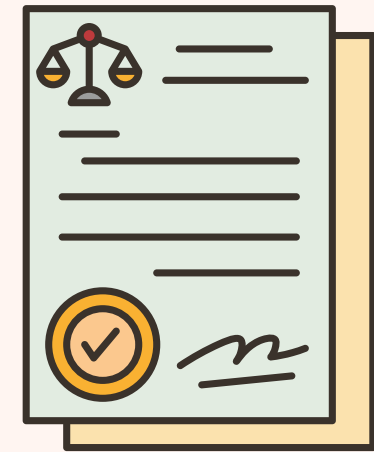
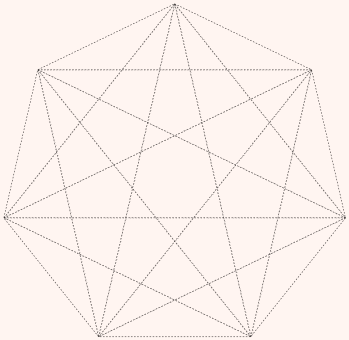
ACAS (no date) highlights that employees should regularly check privacy settings on social media as well as considering who can view their profiles. There are also legal considerations for employees and employers to be aware of such as The Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) & Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA). Rowland (2023) highlighted the possible policies and procedures to comply with these laws and what is and isn't acceptable social media activity. Koussari (2023) highlights two risks associated with social media activity, these were staff behaviour going against that of the organisations values and employees being subject to online abuse or harassment.

McCulloch (2021) reported that a manager working for estate agents Savills was suspended pending an investigation following racist tweet and insensitive jokes sent from the individuals twitter account. The individual said their account was taken over by a third party. The tweets were reported to the police and investigated as a hate crime. This example re-iterates the importance of personal responsibility associated with comments or posts sent from personal social media accounts and the detrimental effect this can have on the individual and organisation.

Social Media Policy

Due to the risks involved, having a social media policy to set out clear considerations that all employees need to be aware is essential, this means that the impetus is not only on the organisation but also the employees and their actions on social media. Nelson (2023) outlined social media policies within journalism, highlighting the risk associated to the use of social media and the how utilising employee views when developing policies of this nature should be considered. Hennessy, Story & Enko (2023) article highlighted the ramifications for healthcare workers in relation to misuse of social media. It also discussed that social media policies can be an efficient resource to address unprofessional behaviour online. Hirsch (2021) supported the above outlining engagement from employees in policy development and the need for social media policies to be clear with what isn't acceptable.

The above work shows the significance of social media policies and how they can support ABC and employees in relation to online activity and how this can affect the organisation. By engaging with employees during the development of these policies individuals will feel valued, it will also improve communication, which in turn builds employee voice and engagement.



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Inappropriate use – trust and confidence

As highlighted, increased social media usage can mean that at times individuals may post inappropriate content online this can potentially cause reputational damage to the organisation. Tompkins & Weaver (2020) highlight how this can cause a breakdown in trust and confidence between both the organisation and employee. CIPD (2024) report in relation to trust within the workplace highlighted trust is a crucial aspect and particularly key when trying to reduce mistakes in work. Employees who have high levels of trust will feel valued and have good communication channels with their line managers and teams. Whereas those who do not, may not speak up and possible hinder performance. Lauricella et al. (2022) highlighted that when employees feel together, they can be more productive and engaged. Ladika (2021) further highlighted the impact that lack of trust within organisations can have on employees and work-related performance. All employees of ABC will play a vital role in ensuring that high levels of trust and confidence are fostered at the organisation to ensure that good working relationships flourish, that will help maintain employee engagement and the company becoming an employee of choice.

Conflict and implications

Kalloniatis & Travieso-González (2020) highlight social media posts can have a detrimental impact on the individual who posts them due to possibly a lack of understanding and respect for ethical and moral perspectives. Individuals may post to social media sites without any thought as to how it can affect others. Individuals will have their own ethical values and if they differ then this can result in conflict. Watson & Gallagher (2005, p.221) highlighted that conflict is expected due to the way in which organisations operate and the method of problem solving by analysing the cause and identifying how to deal with the issue is key. Workplace conflict can have negative impact on performance and efficiency.

Bullying and Harassment

Misuse of social media can have repercussions for the individual as well as the organisation, their conduct may warrant disciplinary action if the content amounts to bullying and harassment. Any bullying and harassment should be taken seriously and not tolerated. Suff (2023a) outlines that bullying and harassment can take many forms such as unwanted contact, unwelcome remarks and personal insults. This could be against one or more individuals and may involve one off or frequent incidents. Under the Equality Act 2010 harassment because of someone's protected characteristic is unlawful. ACAS (2023a) highlights that to be harassment unwanted behaviour would need to either violate a person's dignity or create an intimidating or offensive environment for the individual, but it can be harassment if the behaviour has one of the above effects. It could also be harassment if it was meant to or intended to have the effect, but it did not have the desired effect. Further to this, protection from the Harassment Act 1997 can occur, this applies to harassment which is separate to the form of harassment covered under the Equality Act 2010. This would be behaviour which causes alarm or distress but not linked to a protected characteristic. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published Codes of Practice to provide support those who need to apply the law. Courts and Tribunals will take this code of practice into account when discussing discrimination during employment and work-related activities (EHRC 2019). The above highlights the seriousness and protection employees have from being subject to harassment. All ABC employees need to be mindful of their conduct and how this behaviour could amount to harassment. Bullying is another aspect in which individuals could feel subject to if posts on social media were considered offensive. CIPD (2020) reported that online bullying was more common than that at a social event. One in ten highlighting it happened via email, social media, phone, or text. ACAS (2023b) highlighted there is no legal definition to bullying but can be outlined as unwanted behaviour from an individual or group. By law under the Equality Act 2010, bullying behaviour can amount to harassment if it relates to the protected characteristics.



Consequences

Bullying and or Harassment can lead to individuals submitting a complaint. These complaints would be treated in the same way as if this occurred in the workplace. ACAS (2023c) confirms all complaints should be taken seriously and reviewed as soon as possible. These can be dealt with informally or formally, but this is dependant on the nature of the complaint.

Formal complaints would be dealt with following a formal grievance policy which could result in disciplinary action or suspension. Suff (2023b) highlights that these disciplinary procedures are to make employees aware of expectations around behaviour or performance. The Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance procedures are of particular importance employment tribunals will review if this code has been followed when considering cases.

Recent examples within the media show consequences of social media misuse on individuals and organisations. Wilson (2024) reported that two British Airways cabin crew were fired after sharing racist videos on TikTok. Highlighting how damaging this was for the airline's reputation.

