

In the modern age that we live in, social media plays a pivotal part, whether that's to find the next step in your careers, connect with family and friends, sharing opinions and views, or to document your personal lives through posts and images. As a business, we understand the integral part that social media plays in our lives and use it in our own business activities, from promoting our company initiatives to advertising vacancies (Bottorff and Wong, 2023).

As employees of ABC Ltd, you have a duty to be mindful and aware of what you are posting and that it doesn't fall outside of the Company's code of conduct or internal processes. ABC has a social media policy in place to clearly highlight what is acceptable behaviour and considered to be appropriate.

Even though your social media profile is personal, you still have to be mindful of the content you are posting and that it is appropriate, respectful and does not discriminate or contain derogatory terms. This includes images, written statements, animations, news articles and jokes. Also, the content that you associate with through reposting and 'liking' needs to be of an appropriate level. The Company's bullying and harassment policy still applies where an employee feels discriminated against or victimised due to a colleagues social media activity (Rowland, 2023).

Social Media Usage at ABC Ltd: An Employees Guide



Employees at all levels have the right to feel comfortable to come to work, without fear of discrimination, bullying or harassment. ABC Ltd takes allegations of this very seriously and fully investigates any complaints that are received, which, if proven, can result in disciplinary action being taken. Our social media and bullying and harassment policies work together in situations such as this to reinforce our position of zero tolerance and to promote a culture of dignity, safety and inclusivity.



According to CIPD (2023), rates of cyber bullying have increased over recent years, with one in ten employees reporting that an incident has happened. This correlates to the increase in social media usage overall. Given the nature of the online environment, individuals may not be aware for a period of time that they are in fact being bullied or harassed due to content potentially not being visible to them. The effects of online abuse can have higher impacts through increase stress and anxiety levels that face to face bullying (Vickers, 2022).

Bullying and harassment is a serious offence and is covered by multiple pieces of legislation, namely the Equality Act 2010 and the Employment Rights Act 1996 (Citizens Advice, 2019). There have been several cases where comments and actions, seen by some as 'banter' have resulted in serious implications for employers. An example would be in the case of Austin v Samuel Grant (North East) Ltd, whereby a heterosexual male employee, Mr Austin, was asked if he liked football by another colleague, to which Mr Austin replied that he did not like football. The colleague said to Mr Austin 'you're gay then'. This was followed up with several other homophobic comments over a period of time by the same colleague. Mr Austin raised a formal grievance through the Company's internal processes, which resulted in the grievance not being upheld. Mr Austin then took his claim to the employment tribunal and succeeded in his claim and was awarded a substantial compensatory award (Redmans solicitors, no date).

A further case law example that went to the Employment Appeal Tribunal, Game Retail Ltd v Laws, highlighted that the employer's decision to dismiss the employee was within the 'range of reasonable responses' and was sent back for a fresh tribunal hearing. This was following a claim by Mr Laws that his employer unfairly dismissed him following a disciplinary process into allegations of offensive tweets relating to people with disabilities, the police and football supporters, among other things, being linked to his personal Twitter account. There was no direct link that Mr Laws was employed by Game Retail Ltd, but several branches of the employer followed his profile which allowed customers to see the offensive tweets and that they were associated to the employer through branch Twitter profiles (Menzies Law, no date).

As part of our social media policy, employees should refrain from highlighting on any platform that they are employed by ABC Ltd. This is to protect both the colleague and ABC and strengthen confidentiality (Peninsula Group, HR and Health & Safety Experts, 2024). An exception to this is LinkedIn, due to the nature of that business-focused platform. For your own security, adjusting your privacy settings is highly recommended so your profile is only visible to those you have specifically approved to view your content.



Along with the impact on employees that damaging and offensive social media use can have, there is also the damage that can be made to ABC's reputation and brand image (Morris, 2020). In the company's disciplinary policy this is known as bringing the company into disrepute and is determined on whether an action by an employee has caused the Company reputational damage and/or resulted in financial ramifications.

At ABC Ltd, our aim is to have a happy, positive environment for our employees, which includes one free of discrimination and any form of bullying or harassment. As part of our training programme, all employees will receive training around inclusivity in the workplace and the impacts that bullying and harassment can have on individuals. To build on an initiative that we started last year, we will be increasing the number of networking groups we currently have to include more topics for colleagues to meet in order to learn and discuss, these include woman's health and LGBT+. If you would like to be a champion for any of our groups, please contact the human resources team (ACAS, 2023d).

Line Manager Guidance

Managers at ABC Ltd have a duty of care to the workforce by ensuring they foster and encourage a safe, inclusive and open working environment within their teams. This duty does not stop when you finish work, it carries through to social media activity as well. As a manager, if you notice any activity that does not fall under our code of conduct by any ABC Ltd employee, this must be reported to the HR department. This also applies to manager's own social media activity in the form of leading by example in the type of content they associate themselves with, and ensuring that it is of an appropriate nature and would not be seen as discriminatory.

