

Avoid Getting Fired Over Facebook

Every now and then you will read about someone who lost a job over a Facebook post.

Some of them made us laugh because we wonder how could someone actually think they could keep their job after doing that? But they did it anyway. It was almost as though the fact that there might be possible consequences never even entered their mind.

Besides losing a job, one thing that is probably never revealed is the fact that the person may have had to wait a long time before he was able to get another job, too. This is because another potential employer read the headlines that had gone viral and now they also are going to be very hesitant to hire someone who had openly abused their employer—and had fun while doing it.

For some reason, some people simply feel that it is their right to blast anything and everything just because they have a Facebook page. They also think that they need to post pictures of every stupid thing they do—like the guy who got drunk, ran across Wrigley Field naked, got arrested and posted pictures of himself doing it!



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What Employers Say...

Surveys have revealed that a minimum of 30% of employers have turned away applicants simply because of things they discovered on their Facebook accounts, or on other social networks. The number of people who get fired because of inappropriate material is rapidly growing. Proofpoint, an email security firm, says that 7% of organizations have fired people because of activity found on social media websites. It was also reported that as many as 20% of companies have had to take some kind of disciplinary action against an employee (or boss) for the same reason.

Things To Avoid

Facebook can be either a powerful tool to help you move forward in your career—or cripple it. Here are some things to remember:

Posts are not private. Unless you understand the ins and outs of selecting who can view your posts, it should become a rule of thumb not to post anything you do not want everyone to see. Sometimes, even though one person may not be able to see a post directly, by knowing someone else—a friend of a friend—they may still be able to see it. This is where caution and common sense should tell you not to post pictures online of you doing embarrassing things at a party. Unfortu-

nately, you may not be able to keep your friends from posting their own pictures of you, too.

Your boss is not your friend. Another mistake is posting about your bad day at work, or worse, if you write about how your clandestine job search went that day. Since your boss is your friend, she will see everything that you have posted—every day—if she is an avid Facebook user. Belonging to a group that you do not want your boss to know about is another problem—if she is your Facebook friend. Obviously, she can see what groups you belong to, if she simply conducts some basic searching.

Updating too often. Letting others know everything that you are doing through Facebook can be a bad thing. When done at work, your boss will wonder how you are getting any work done in between your posts. She may also wonder if you are getting paid (from someone else) to post.

Don't drink and post. You arrived home half plastered and felt you just had to let the world see you making a real fool of yourself. Unfortunately, when you sent it, you included your boss, who is very concerned now about the reputation of the company—which could mean you are going to suddenly be very concerned about finding a new job.

Selective viewing. Even if you are careful about what you post because you want a more business-like focus, you must beware of friends who are not so selective. Material from other people can get you in trouble, too. Fortunately, you can control which friends can make posts to your wall, and you can also control who can see your wall.

A potentially serious problem came after a new head had been selected for the British Intelligence service. While this is normally a rather highly secretive position, it was not long before it was dis-

covered that the man's wife had been posting pictures of their children on Facebook, along with other information that could have enabled readers to identify where they lived.

Criminal intent. Police regularly look through Facebook postings in order to see what someone will post in order to brag about their crimes (or, at least mischievous actions). It's as though they actually thought it normal and acceptable to steal or vandalize, take pictures of the crime and post them on Facebook.

Stay out of trouble. Probably the best tip for keeping clear from trouble while using Facebook or any other social media is to just stay away from saying or doing questionable things. If you would be embarrassed if your family, friends, or boss, saw what you said about _____ or about what happened at _____, then you probably should not say it at all. One teacher, June Talvitie-Siple, found this out when she referred to her students as "germ bags." Unfortunately, she did not know that Facebook had changed its settings, which reset privacy settings to public until the user manually changed them back to privacy. She also said she was not looking forward to another year in the district—so it was no surprise that she suddenly found herself without a job.

Don't mention your company. Even if you are not in some way bad-mouthing the company, talking about your company can get you in trouble. Even if you defend it, you have to realize that unless you are the duly appointed public relations spokesperson, you probably are not authorized by the company to make public statements.

Avoid getting personal. Comments can be personal, but don't cross the line. The public does not need to know about troubles in your personal relationships, how you hate your spouse or ex-girlfriend, or how you feel about tasks that you perform at work, or people you meet while socializing. This includes pictures that make you look less than professional—which are sure to be career-killers.

Promote your career. Instead of treading on thin ice with your postings, you can (and should) create a professional profile in Facebook, and then use it to build your career. Post things on it that show what you are doing to grow in your career field, and use it like a resume.