

by Donna Obstfeld

Social Media

Love it or hate it, social media is a reality and here to stay. Many businesses are now embracing social media as a core element of their marketing mix and although take up has been higher within SMEs larger companies are quickly catching up.

In this article, we are reflecting on the HR implications of social media for businesses, firstly as a recruitment tool, then as a work tool and finally when things go wrong.

The use of LinkedIn specifically, and social media generally as a way of attracting the right candidates has grown significantly over the last couple of years. With candidates updating their CV on line with work history, achievements and recommendations, recruiters are able to find out a lot more about people than the candidate might want to give away i.e. who they are connected to, books they have read, groups and discussions that they have joined.

LinkedIn enables recruiters to post jobs into groups so even people not actually job hunting will have the opportunity to see the advert and may decide to find out more.

Other tools such as Facebook and Twitter can also be used to raise the company's profile or awareness of the vacancy.

As a work tool, the most effective social media site for your business will depend on the nature, products and services of the business. In the majority of cases it will not be the managing director or the chief executive who are making use of the tools. Therefore a high element of trust is required as staff are allowed and required to post on behalf of the company.

A further complication is when staff are using their own accounts and perhaps expressing views which are not those of the company. There are a growing number of employees who have been fired as a result of comments posted on their own social media accounts that managers, colleagues and even customers have found offensive. While the comments of MPs and celebrities make it into the headlines, the normal employee and their employer are finding themselves in front of an employment tribunal.

As an employer, make sure that you have a policy with respect to social media, use of sites for work purposes and use of sites for personal use both during the day and in the employees own time.

As an employee, you must be aware of what you say online. It is not a private letter, your comments are immortalised forever and can be held against you. Just because you can make comments about people online, doesn't mean you should.

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