

Should you allow social media in the workplace? 5 Pros and 5 Cons.

By Anthony Hughes | Sep 5, 2016 | [Staff Retention](#)



Social media in the workplace; to ban or not to ban... *that* is the question.

[A survey](#) from 2012 showed that employees spend an average of 1.5 hours a day at work, on social media.

So that's 7.5 hours a week, over 30 hours a month and 390 hours wasted a year! And that's not taking into account other common distractions like co-workers, tea-breaks and personal emails/calls.

So should we allow social media in the workplace? (*Surely not..?*)

Let's take a look at the pros and cons...

5 Pros of Social Media in the Workplace

1. Morale and employee engagement

Allowing your staff to use social media at work *can* boost morale and actually improve employee engagement for a number of reasons...

- It shows that you trust them (boosting morale and happiness).
- It will make them feel valued (it's like a little perk of the job).
- Taking short breaks throughout the day will boost mood (and productivity).
- Connecting with loved ones will boost their happiness.

Basically, being able to check social media can make your employees happy (for a variety of reasons). If your employees are happy, they're more likely to be productive, friendly and loyal. Win-win!

Those are some pretty strong reasons to allow social media in the workplace.

(Of course, social media can also make employees sad, but more on that later...)

2. Employer branding

Social media is a great tool for building a positive buzz about your company.

If you encourage your employees to utilise it day-to-day, posting fun, friendly things about the company, sharing interesting articles and posts and just generally showing off how much they love their job, it'll really (really) boost your employer brand.

What's more, their posts will naturally convey your (real) company culture and attract employees who'll fit in well.

If you ban social media altogether, it's impossible for any of that to happen.

Recruiter Pro Tip

Ok, yes, you can hire a social media team to do all of the above for you...

But (in most cases) the *genuine* article will be so much more real and believable.

And you'll also gain the added benefit of encouraging your staff to feel involved in the company, and as a valuable part of something bigger. See point 4 below.

For more advice on how to boost your employer brand, check out [this blog post](#).

3. Branding

In the same vein, it's a great tool for impressing clients and potential clients.

We all like to hear from *real* people – not just salesy social media robots and if your staff publicly display the happy company culture, showing off fantastic customer service and engaging with people on a personal level – others will warm to them and your brand.

They're certainly much more likely to remember the company whose employees are always posting interesting things, funny photos and who reply to comments, promptly and professionally than a company lacking a social media presence at all.

4. Internal communication

It's great for improving communication across your company too, particularly if you have multiple offices and/or remote workers.

If you encourage your employees to connect with each other via social media, it will actually make it easier for them to get to know each other and build relationships.

Everyone will be easier to contact and when someone needs help, they just need to post their query on social media and await a reply.

All of the above will improve team-work, employee engagement and make people a lot happier and loyal to your company; they'll feel like a part of something bigger – part of a community.

5. Personal development

I genuinely believe that social media can help (dedicated) staff members to develop their skills.

Take a glance across LinkedIn, how many different articles are there on how to be better at X, Y or Z? News stories and debates about your industry? Studies and stats about business?

Sure, there's some rubbish out there as well, but the dedicated employee can cut through the clutter and immerse themselves in information in a bid to grow and flourish!

5 Cons of Social Media in the Workplace

1. Misuse

No matter what your thoughts are on social media in the workplace, it's pretty safe to say that if you do allow it there *will* be a certain amount of time-wasted.

It's just too tempting for employees to have a quick glance, reply to a quick

comment or say happy birthday to someone they'd forgotten about...

For most people, this time-wasting will be minimal, but some may take advantage.

In fact, in a [recent study](#), “70% of businesses reported having to take disciplinary action against employees for social media misuse.”

It's just a matter of weighing up the pros and cons and whether you think your staff can handle that temptation.

2. Viruses

Of course, there's always the technical risk to worry about too!

Hacking, viruses and scams are so common these days and a huge proportion of them originate on social media.

If you don't have strong security, and/or your employees aren't particularly computer-savvy, it can be a pretty big risk to take.

3. Mistakes

Of course, where social media can boost your brand, it can also completely destroy it.

Over the years, I'm sure you've seen some of the “[social media fails](#)” that have been made public – often even going viral.

Recruiter Pro Tip

Some of your employees will be great at handling social media; others may need some training to get the hang of it.

But at the very least, you should make sure that everyone is aware of your company guidelines, for example, “no posts that reveal confidential information” or “no negative posts about the company” or “no argumentative language.”

Remember; the internet never forgets!

And it's not always a case of an employee making a mistake and posting something stupid; the very act of posting on social media could annoy your clients.

Consider this; your client has been waiting for something to be done for longer than expected. Their Account Manager has apologised and said that they've been 'swamped.' When your client goes on LinkedIn, they see that their so-called “swamped” Account Manager has been liking, sharing and posting for the last hour.

Doesn't look great, does it?

4. Malicious intent

And of course, you *could* always end up with a disgruntled employee who attempts to sabotage your business (hopefully not, though).

I once worked for a company who set up some special, sector-specific Facebook groups for their 'prestigious' clients; enabling them to put questions to staff members (and other clients) about business (great idea for engagement).

Unfortunately, one staff member had to be let go...

And before the Social Media Manager even thought to remove them, they'd wreaked havoc on the Groups, posting horrible pictures, posts and rants.

This creates a terrible vibe, atmosphere and impression of your business.

5. Bullying and harassment

Social media has a very dark side.

Knowing intimate details about each other's lives (some people will post anything and everything on Facebook) can encourage and lead to more bullying – or “trolling.”

It's an open forum for people to pick on others and although your staff members might not do it so blatantly (for fear of getting caught), they may use what they find to harass and ridicule people in the office.

I guess, at the end of the day, you've just got to hope you don't have that kind of person working for your company in the first place.

What's the verdict?

Like most things in life, I think balance is the key.

You don't want your employees wasting hours of the day, but if you ban social media altogether, you *could* come across overly-cautious.

And to be fair, your employees will probably find a way to access it anyway (mobile phones...)

Recruiter Pro Tip.

Whether you decide to allow social media in the workplace or not, it is a good idea to outline your policy, so everyone is clear on what's expected (and not expected) from them.

- What kind of things would you like them the post?
- What kind of things will lead to disciplinary proceedings?
- Can they use a professional account (like LinkedIn)?
- Between what hours can they access social media?
- Whose job is it to respond to customer complaints?

And so on... as you can see, there's quite a lot to think about!

[Click here](#) to check out Ford Motor Company's Guidelines, as an example.

There's no right or wrong answer; it all depends on your company!

But, if you're unsure whether you employees are using social media in the workplace, check out [this blog post](#).

Turns out, a lot more people than you'd believe are actually using social media at work (even when they shouldn't be).

If you'd like some more advice on employee engagement, management and staff retention – [click here](#) to subscribe to this blog post.

Want to read more?

Check out these interesting articles...

- [How to Reclaim up to 150 Hours of Work Productivity Every Month](#)
- [The 8 Crucial Benefits Of Social Recruiting.](#)
- [Employees waste 759 hours each year due to workplace distractions](#)

Good luck.