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Does Your Business Have a Social Media Policy?

The most common social media are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, blogging, and YouTube. Millions of people use these websites or send tweets or watch videos every day. Do your employees spend time on these websites during the business day? Do you care whether they tweet about what is happening at the office or play Farmville during the hours that they are supposed to be working?

Social media can be a positive force for your business. You can use different social media sites for your marketing, thereby utilizing free avenues to let the public know what you want it to know about your products or services. You can make special offers for your products through sites like Groupon or Yelp or your website or Facebook page. You can monitor tweets about your business made by happy or angry customers and quickly respond, turning an angry customer into a satisfied one and a happy customer into a raving fan.

However, you don't want your employees to tweet about how unhappy they are with their supervisor. Or post information on Facebook about products that are in a testing stage. And you don't want employees spending hours looking at YouTube and then sending emails about a great video they saw to everyone they know. To avoid all of these issues, you should have some policies in place that your employees must follow about their use of social media. You want to make sure that they are not saying anything slanderous about your company on any social media site. You want to ensure that no one violates a copyright or trademark by publishing an image that they have no right to use. You want to make sure that your employees do not post any confidential information. And you want no one to follow all FTC guidelines that require disclosure of relationships when your company endorses another company's service or product.

To avoid legal problems, you should create a set of policies about your employees' use of social media. Have your lawyer review your policies to ensure that they comply with the law and that you have not left out any policies that your company should have. Each employee should be given a copy of the policies and should sign a form that they have received and read the policies. That way, no one can say he/she didn't know what the policy was when that employee violates the policy.

Social media is changing how we do business. You should consult with legal counsel that is knowledgeable in social media law so you can make informed business decisions in deciding how to use social media for the benefit of your company without getting burned by its misuse.

Email Robin Gronsky at Rgronsky@Gronskylaw.com to find out how she can become your trusted legal advisor, helping your business stay out of legal trouble and thrive.