

## **Need of social media policy in the legal industry today**

Social media is the latest networking tool for LPO's and Law Firms to market their services and practice. It is the great tool for capturing new clients and maintaining the business relationship with existing clients.

Attorneys of law firms and lawyers of in-house legal departments of corporations are increasingly reading blogs and are actively involved in social media these days. They will be interested to find latest information, new development in the legal industry within less time.

Blogs are the best way to convey LPO's and law firms expertise, point of view. More and more lawyers today are blogging. The ABA Journals web sites Blogw Directory links to over 6500 Legal blogs in more than 100 categories.

According to lexblog.com "eighty two of the 2008 AmLaw 200 firms are blogging, publishing a total 228 Blogs".

According to Technorati's state of the Blogosphere 2008 report, the number of blog readers grew to 60.3 million in 2008.

Employees presence in the social media also helps the clients to understand LPO's and law firms in detail. It will also enhance visibility and search engine ranking.

However, there is the need of social media policy in the legal outsourcing sectors, law firms and in-house legal departments of corporations when the employees or lawyers use the social media during office hours. Lawyer's activity in social media shall also comply with particular state bar rules and ethics.

A decade ago, when I was having political science lecture at the college, our professor used to say us. A night watchman was hired for particular bank. He was well liked for the faithful performance of his duty. One evening, president of

the bank came to bank at Eight O'clock, greeted the watchmen and explained that he was going to get some papers from his office, for he had been called to London and planned to take Ten O'clock flight. As watchmen listen to employer words, watchmen said "don't take that flight. I had a dream about that flight last night. I say it crash to earth and all were killed". Following his suggestion, the president cancels his trip. The next day there was news on the flight that it had crash to earth and all the people aboard were killed. The president rewarded him with \$1000 and dismissed him from the duty. You can argue that since he had saved his president's life, he should be given more reward and should be promoted. Do you think the night watchmen have business of dreaming at night? Don't you think he is supposed to be awake on duty? When he is hired as night watchmen his duty is to watch and not to sleep. Hence he was dismissed.

Similarly when a person is hired to discharge some functions, his duty is to discharge such functions for what he is being hired. In many companies and firms, when the work is not properly monitored, employees are found in playing games on the system or through social networking sites applications. They are also found in chatting with their friends for long hours. They can also go to an extent of watching videos online or search for new jobs, passing inadvertent comments through social media or using office mail for personal use, sending inadvertent mail/comments to the people who they dislike etc and they use their time in unproductive work. Although these things make them free from stress, valuable time required for the completion of the work would be wasted. There would be no quality in the work they perform. No one would restrict their freedom of chatting for long hours, playing games, watching videos etc. An employee can use his spare time and weekend days for this. But it should not be the office platform or office hours for this purpose.

Suppose an employee/lawyer who has been assigned a work of reviewing contract, if he uses the time in unproductive work and review the work hurriedly, even the misplacement of a single comma can cost a client millions of dollar.

In legal research work, if a lawyer uses wrong citations, provisions or gives a wrong legal advice or misses out an important dates for filing, it may land him or the firm in legal malpractice suits.

Although few law firms and companies have its own social media policy, many of the LPO's and law firms are far behind it. Companies like IBM, Microsoft etc have its own social media policy and updates it regularly. Employees are bound by its policy and breach of it ranges from warning to their removal. Recently Infosys announced its decision to come up with new social media policy.

Most of the appointment letters from companies and law firms does not speak about social media policy, although an employee adhered to confidentiality agreement.

A study from Trend Micro shows that many employees around the globe are using social network while in the office.

Many of the companies and law firms are concerned about the productivity. Whether employee use of social media at work is productive or unproductive is a debate that has been raging for many years.

Some studies shows that use of social media during office hours lose productivity. Some studies show that it will increase the productivity. Many of the firms, companies do not allow employees to visit social networking sites for any reason while at work as they believe that it make them to "social not-workin, in the office".

Blocking is not the right method unless the company or the firm has proper social media policy. An unproductive employee still find many ways to be unproductive without using the internet.

Many LPO's do not provide an access to the internet to its employees working on the LPO project.

However, internet is required for better understanding on the project they are working on. When the legal research work is involved access to the internet provides more answers and quick response to the issues involved in the legal research. A lawyer can go through the recent changes in the legislation and quick answers to the questions posted on many social networking sites. Through this the lawyer can build up the case research by using legal databases.

Finally use of social media in the legal industry during working hours has its own merits and demerits. It depends on the employees how they use it. If they use it for productive work it could be productive and if they use it for unproductive work it could be unproductive. There is a need of social media education to employees how it can be used it in a productive manner. Legal industry needs to come up with its own social media policy in the coming days.