

# Limit social media for social activity

*Common sense key to savvy social media use*

**F**acebook. Twitter. Blogs. Commenting online. Before typing and posting, what's important to remember is how your work is impacted.

As a Winnipeg Health Region employee, you have obligations to protect the health and well-being of the public, and, of course, to use your time wisely to do the job you've been hired to do.

"Activity that may be of concern includes using social media during work hours, breaching your PHIA [Public Health Information Act] and privacy obligations, or posting statements that are inconsistent with the legitimate business interests of the employer," says Karen Clearwater, Senior Legal Counsel – Human Resources Department.

"What you post is in writing in an electronic, worldwide forum. Once it's out there, it's virtually impossible to take back," explains Clearwater. "It's not like having a private conversation in your living room. You cannot easily control distribution of information."

It pays to remember, however, that as the use of social media has increased, so to has its misuse. Disciplinary concerns related to social media are assessed

on a case by case basis. The nature, consequences and circumstances of behaviour are assessed when looking at consequences and potential discipline. Depending on your occupation, you may also have obligations to a professional regulatory body.

In a prominent case last year, an employee of a sports entertainment channel was fired over controversial tweets he made on the subject of same-sex marriage. In another case, an Apple employee was fired for negative comments he posted about the company, losing the argument that his comments were private. In other reported cases, employees have been fired for negative comments about their bosses, co-workers or clients. Posting or downloading inappropriate content is another way employees have landed in hot water.

Clearwater also suggests using a 24-hour rule to avoid "reactive" posting. "Sleep on it. Give yourself a chance to digest things before you respond or react," she says. "Think about the consequences of expressing yourself publicly and don't ever respond when you're angry."

Write a comment

## About privacy settings

Clearwater suggests many people don't have a clear understanding of how privacy settings really work. For example, our friends' privacy settings may not be as high as ours, making our information available for more people to view than we think.

It's your responsibility to be aware of online risks, pitfalls and how to protect your privacy. Educate yourself beyond general usage so that you can be confident about your online activity.

## Keep these things in mind with social media

1. Make work your priority at work. Put in an honest day's work.
2. If you're using Winnipeg Health Region property (a computer, laptop or PDA), your employer is entitled to view your history. This is not private.
3. Don't 'speak' on behalf of your employer unless you are authorized to do so.
4. Focus please. You're human – you can't focus on everything (social life and work life simultaneously) and expect to retain it all.
5. Don't use social media when you should be listening. In the field of health care, missing critical information could have life or death consequences.
6. For safety's sake, assume that everyone will read what you post. If there's the slightest chance your comment could cause problems, don't post it.
7. Respect – online bullying or harassment can negatively impact your workplace and may be addressed under the Respectful Workplace Policy.

For more information, please consult the Computer/Internet Usage Policy, Use of Portable Electronic Devices and Personal Computers, and Respectful Workplace (available on Insite).

## Using social media at work?

People versed in the social media genre are accustomed to getting their information immediately. Certainly, there are work-related advantages of social media and the ability to exchange professional information, opinions, research materials etc., but let's face it, Facebooking, tweeting or use of other social media for conversations with 'friends' is rarely a work-related activity. You wouldn't invite your friend into your boss's office, or during your work time to have a conversation. As a rule, leave checking your 'messages' or 'posting' for your breaks.

"We have an obligation to the public. We provide critical, time-sensitive services that you cannot afford to be distracted from," Clearwater says.

"Think before you do it."