

Social Networking at Office – Utility or Waste?

By **Iti Kumar ***

with inputs from **Shobana Sen**

Today the social networking websites have shrunk the world like anything. Geographical boundaries have no meaning now as they can no more hold people with same interests from interacting with each other. There are hundreds of social networking sites available on the web in categories such as General Audience, Personal, Contact Management etc. Almost all online users, especially the younger ones, are members and users of at least one or more networking sites.

General Perspective

Some companies allow their employees to access social networking sites during working hours, and some follow a restricted internet policy of filtering such websites. This concept has merits

as well as demerits.

'Social networking' or 'social connect' is the easiest way to get connected with your contacts. With the advent of the technological boom and new developments taking place in the world of internet, social networking or connecting with friends, family and colleagues has been made easier. The sites have provided a platform to people to communicate effectively without even meeting each other personally. These websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share a common interest such as hobbies, common thought process, religion, politics or daily activities. This socialisation may include reading the profile pages of other members

and possibly even contacting them. However, the word 'social networking' is not limited to only connecting on a personal level rather it has extended itself to showcasing of one's professional experience and expertise.

Websites such as 'Orkut', 'Facebook', 'My Space' and 'Twitter' are used by people at large to upload their profiles and pictures, send scrap messages to friends and join various community groups of their choice. A means to connect, interact and know people is what these websites offer as a package. These sites have become extremely successful and are most widely used by people of all age groups. An addition to this is the introduction of websites like 'Linkedin' which specifically give platform to help people make better





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use of their professional network. This initiative process has brought people closer professionally and helped them in sharing their resumes, connecting with HR professionals, recruiters, colleagues and people of the same profession. One of the biggest advantages that such social networking sites offer to organisations has been the wide opportunity to know the candidates well enough through their profiles, resume, interests, blogs, websites of candidates and social contacts. Recruiters derive personal information of the prospective candidates through these sites.

A few organisations believe in the benefits of allowing their employees access to such websites. An open access not only shows trust on behalf of the employer, but also gives people a break from day-to-day work, keeps them fresh, and allows them to better network with other employees, customers and suppliers. However, there are certain dangers which are associated with the usage of social networking sites and some of the

possible risks are as follows:

- Various competitors and unreliable sources use social networking sites as a medium to enhance their relationship with people and later end up stealing important information about the company. There is an enhanced risk of data theft from such sites.
- Virus attacks through downloads from such sites, if not from reliable sources, may adversely impact the entire organisation's infrastructure and the company's business may suffer a great manpower and business loss.
- One of the biggest challenges for corporations is the loss of productive man hours due to misuse of internet surfing by its employees.

In order to avoid some of the risks involved in providing access to these sites, companies could follow some of the below mentioned guidelines in order to avoid misuse and/or possible threats:

- Spreading awareness among

employees in terms of Dos & Don'ts;

- Monitoring of logs on regular basis to ensure there is no unwanted download or upload done by an employee;
- Having a defined business continuity plan in place to meet with any threat to business operations.

GlobalLogic Perspective

GlobalLogic is a company that believes in openness. We, at GlobalLogic, have not put any restrictions on web access to our employees. We believe in social networking sites as they allow our employees to create special interest groups which help them to learn various new things, be it related to personal life, professional life or even technology.

We also have an intranet-based social networking site which is commonly known as 'Confluence' where employees interact with each other. They even submit their articles for the blog. Similarly, there are various communities created on services and company practices. Employees raise their voice/concerns and management and respective stakeholders ensure they participate in such threads and respond.

Other than an internal social networking site, we also have a space in 'Minglebox' for our employees. One of our senior management persons — Manish Rathi — has his own website where he uploads his articles and many of our employees visit it.

We do understand the importance of such networking sites and we feel that providing such advantage to our employees helps us to maintain an open culture and also increase the employee engagement level within the organisation.

At the same time, we trust our employees and expect them not to take undue advantage of such facilities. We have defined IT guidelines to ensure a check on misuse of such benefits. ■

** The writers are from people development department at GlobalLogic.*