



Be Social, Not Liable

Navigating social media usage in the workplace

RLI[®]
DIFFERENT WORKS

RLI Design Professionals
DPLE 191
July 15, 2020

RLI Design Professionals is a Registered Provider with The American Institute of Architects Continuing Education Systems. Credit earned on completion of this program will be reported to CES Records for AIA members. Certificates of Completion for non-AIA members are available on request.

This program is registered with the AIA/CES for continuing professional education. As such, it does not include content that may be deemed or construed to be an approval or endorsement by the AIA of any material of construction or any method or manner of handling, using, distributing, or dealing in any material or product. Questions related to specific materials, methods, and services will be addressed at the conclusion of this presentation.



Copyright Materials

This presentation is protected by US and International Copyright laws. Reproduction, distribution, display and use of the presentation without written permission of the speakers is prohibited.

© RLI Design Professionals

RLI[®]

DIFFERENT WORKS

Disclaimer

Nothing presented herein is a substitute for actual legal advice that can only be provided in the event that an attorney client relationship is formed and agreed to by both the attorney and the client. Furthermore, the presentation may involve hypothetical facts and is no substitute for legal advice based on the actual facts and circumstances of a particular situation.



DIFFERENT WORKS

Course Description

“

‘Sneeze in Open, Spread the Virus’:
Engineer Detained in Bengaluru,
Infosys Terminates His Services

”

CNN-News 18, Article Headline
March 28, 2020

This course will review the use of social media by design professionals, the risks it poses, and what design firm employees and employers can do to manage and mitigate those risks.

Learning Objectives

Participants will learn:

- 1** Learn about the laws pertaining to the use of social media, how those laws need to be understood by design professionals, and the potential impact of those laws;
- 2** Increase their understanding of the liabilities posed by the use of social media;
- 3** Discover what actions employers can take with respect to such usage to mitigate the risk to design professionals and their firms; and
- 4** Study case law related to social media activity and how it applies to design firms.

Business Uses for Social Media



Benefits Include:

Advertising and marketing

Communicating with clients

Responding to a crisis

Statistics

70%

of employers use social media to **screen candidates** before hiring.

51%

used social media to **research current employees**

34%

used social media findings to **reprimand or fire employees**

Statistics

At least

80%

of engineers are **active on social media** sites (LinkedIn or Facebook).

At least

50%

of engineers **check social media at least once a day.**

Nearly

80%

of engineers ages **18-34 years check social media at least once a day.**

Screening Your Posts

3 Limitations to Consider:

Practical Limits

Not prohibited from posting but prudent not to post.

Legal Limits

Post exposes you or your company to legal liability.

Professional Limits

Post breaches code of professional conduct or a company policy.

Use common sense

Ask “if this post went viral, would I be embarrassed?”

Consider the damage to employer and co-workers of any negative press and/or whether the content could be used by a malicious actor to perpetrate a scam.

Does your post create a legal exposure?

Does your post expose you or your firm to either civil liability or criminal liability?

Other Rules or Regulations

Endorsements

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) requires disclosure of employment or other relationship when providing endorsements or testimonials of employer's/client's products or services.

- 1** Endorsements must reflect the truthful experience of the endorser;
- 2** You can't make claims that require proof you don't have; and
- 3** Clearly disclose any material connection between the endorser and the advertiser.

Discovery

If relevant, your posts could be sought as evidence in a lawsuit. Some parties have even been ordered to turn over their login information and password.



“[Social media posts] if relevant, are not shielded from discovery merely because plaintiff used the service’s privacy settings to restrict access, just as relevant matter from a personal diary is discoverable.”

Discovery

Case Law

In *Scott v. US Postal Service* the Court granted, in part, Defendant's discovery request where Plaintiff alleged continuing, severe personal injuries. The scope of request was limited to postings that 'refer or relate to the physical injuries Plaintiff sustained...; or reflect physical capabilities that are inconsistent with the injuries that Plaintiff allegedly suffered'.



Breach of professional code of conduct?

Might this post violate your professional code of ethics?

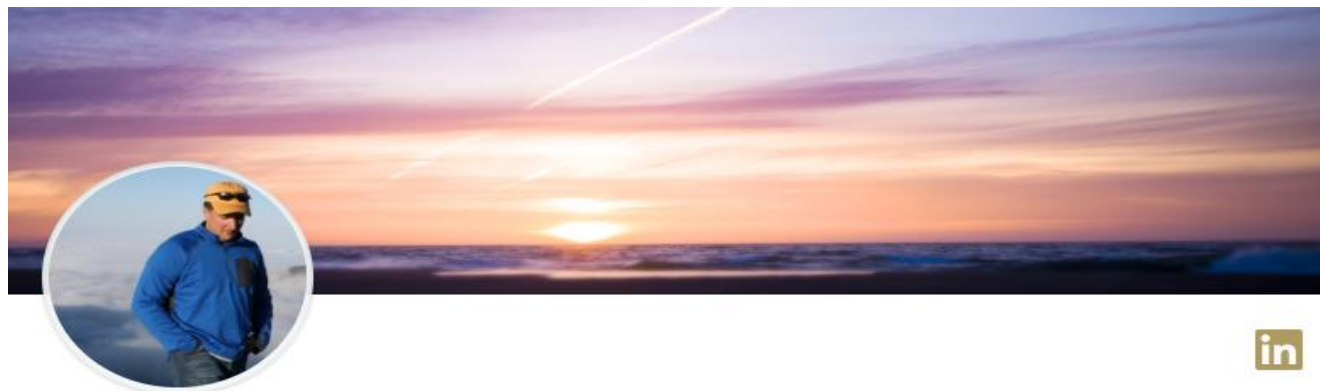
Duty to Employers and Clients

(American Society of Civil Engineers)

Updating LinkedIn profile a violation of Canon 4.

Canon 4 – Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees, and shall avoid conflicts of interest.

LinkedIn Example



Scott McClellan • 3rd


Responsible for technology strategy and architecture across all initiatives at PRGX.

Sacramento, California Area

 PRGX Global Inc.

 University of Iowa

 See contact info

 500+ connections

InMail



- Common/shared services: user management, key management, identity management & federation, authentication (incl. multi-factor), authorization, and auditing (AAA), billing/metering, alerting/logging, analytics.
- Website and User/Developer Experience. Future HP "cloud" website including the public content and authenticated user content. APIs and language bindings for Java, Ruby, and other open source languages. Fully functional GUI and CLI (both Linux/Unix and Windows).
- Quality assurance, code/design inspection processes, security and penetration testing.

Excerpt, Scott McClellan LinkedIn Profile

Duty to Members of the Profession

(American Society of Civil Engineers)

Disparaging comments about colleagues in violation of Canon 5.

Canon 5 – Engineers shall not maliciously or falsely, directly or indirectly, injure the professional reputation, prospects, practice, or employment of another engineer or indiscriminately criticize another's work.

Blog Example

Attorney used phrases such as:

“Evil, Unfair Witch” and
“seemingly mentally ill”
to describe a judge.

- Sean Conway

Duty to Colleagues

(American Institute of Architects)

Improper attribution of work in violation of Rule 5.

Rule 5.301 - Members shall recognize and respect the professional contributions of their employees, employers, professional colleagues, and business associates.

RLI's Professional Liability Policy

SUPPLEMENTARY PAYMENTS Provision 2(a)(ii)

In the event a Disciplinary Proceeding is commenced against the Insured, during the Policy Period and first reported to the Insurer in writing during the Policy Period, **the Insurer will reimburse the Insured for reasonable attorney's fees and expenses incurred**, with the prior written approval of the Insurer, in responding to such Disciplinary Proceeding. The maximum the Insurer will pay pursuant to this provision is \$5,000 per Disciplinary Proceeding for all Insureds. The Insurer will not pay Damages, fines, taxes, or penalties pursuant to his provision.

Such payments are not subject to the Deductible and are in addition to the Limits of Liability.

Does your company have a social media policy?

Is there a company policy or directive on the use of social media platforms in the workplace OR guidelines on what can and can't be posted?

Can your employer fire you?

Whether your employer can take disciplinary action against you for your online conduct may depend, in part, on the following factors:

- 1** Posting on company time using company resources/equipment?
- 2** Content of post - protected or unprotected?

Unprotected v. Protected Speech

Is your speech protected speech?

Subject to limited exceptions, an Employer cannot take disciplinary action against an employee for engaging in protected speech online.

Unprotected Speech

Generally, employers can fire employees for any reason so long as it's not for an illegal reason.

Protected Speech

Exception to the general rule: Employer cannot fire employees for engaging in protected speech.

Unprotected Speech

Confidential Information

Disclosure of trade secrets or confidential business information is NOT protected and is actionable.

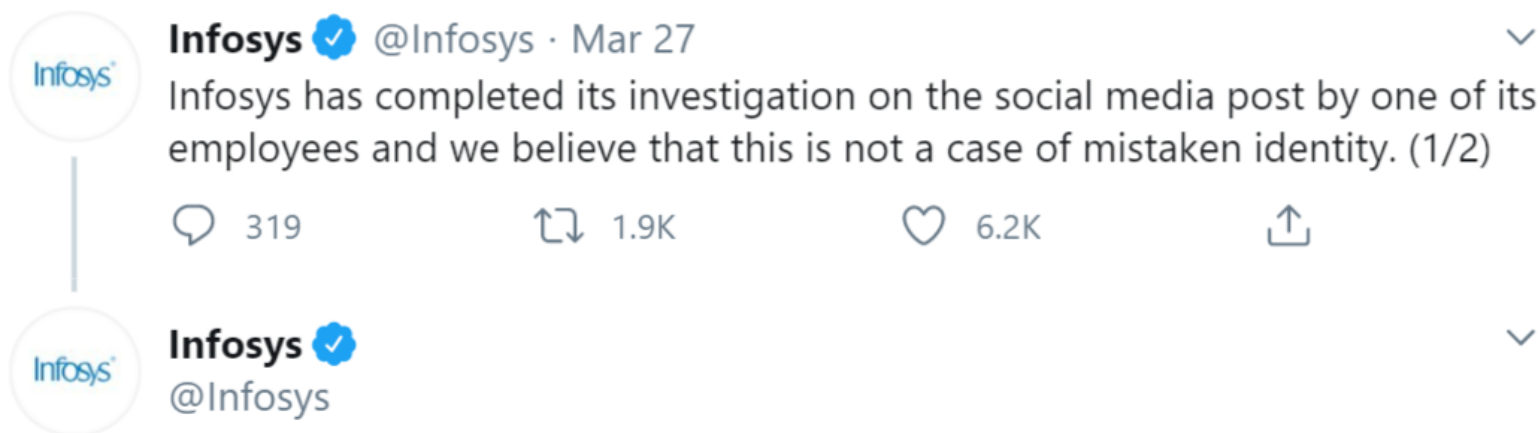
Discrimination or Harassment

Activities that harass, threaten, bully, or constitute hate speech is NOT protected and is actionable.

Compromise Business Interests

Comments that disparage customers or otherwise compromise legitimate business interests is NOT protected and is actionable.

Employer Response



The social media post by the employee is against Infosys' code of conduct and its commitment to responsible social sharing. Infosys has a zero tolerance policy towards such acts and has accordingly, terminated the services of the employee. (2/2)

10:55 AM · Mar 27, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Protected Speech

1st Amendment

Protection granted by the U.S. Constitution. Only applies to restrict action by public entities.

Protected Concerted Activity

Protection to engage in protected concerted activity granted by National Labor Relations Act.

Off Duty Conduct Laws

State laws that protect employee from adverse employment action for certain lawful, off-duty conduct.

Protected Concerted Activity

NLRA - National Labor Relations Act

“right to self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.”


NLRB Definition



NATIONAL LABOR
RELATIONS BOARD



Search Tools

[Home](#) [Rights We Protect](#) [What We Do](#) [Who We Are](#) [Cases & Decisions](#) [News & Outreach](#) [Reports & Guidance](#)  [eFiling](#)

[Home](#) » [Rights We Protect](#) » [What's the Law?](#) » [Employees](#) » [Non-union](#)

Social media

Even if you are not represented by a union, federal law gives you the right to band together with coworkers to improve your lives at work - including joining together in cyberspace, such as on Facebook.

Using social media can be a form of "protected concerted" activity. You have the right to address work-related issues and share information about pay, benefits, and working conditions with coworkers on Facebook, YouTube, and other social media. But just individually griping about some aspect of work is not "concerted activity": what you say must have some relation to group action, or seek to initiate, induce, or prepare for group action, or bring a group complaint to the attention of management.

 [Sign up for NLRB Updates](#)

News

[Supreme Court Issues Decision in NLRB v. Murphy Oil USA](#)

[NLRB Considering Rulemaking to Address Joint-Employer Standard](#)

[John F. Ring Sworn in as NLRB Chairman](#)

[Board Extends Time for Filing Briefs in Velox Express](#)

Off Duty Conduct Laws

Unlawful Prohibition of Legal Activities as a Condition of Employment

(1) It shall be a discriminatory or unfair employment practice for an employer to terminate the employment of any employee due to that employee's engaging in any lawful activity off the premises of the employer during nonworking hours unless such a restriction:

(a) Relates to a bona fide occupational requirement or is reasonably and rationally related to the employment activities and responsibilities of a particular employee or a particular group of employees, rather than to all employees of the employer; or

(b) Is necessary to avoid a conflict of interest with any responsibilities to the employer or the appearance of such a conflict of interest.

Protects Lawful Conduct

Case Law

In *Coats v. Dish Network, LLC* the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the termination of an employee for his off duty use of medical marijuana, even though such use was in accordance with Colorado State Law.

“[A]n activity, such as medical marijuana use that is unlawful under federal law is not a ‘lawful’ activity under section 24-34-402.5.”

Coats v. Dish Network, LLC, 350 P. 3d 849 (Col. Sup. Ct 2015).

Also Consider...

Anti Snooping Laws

Some States prohibit employers from requesting or requiring access to your social media accounts. Certain exceptions apply.

Also Consider...

Prohibitions of employer – requiring access to personal electronic communication devices

An employer may not suggest, request, or require an employee or applicant to

- (i) disclose account login information;
- (ii) provide employer access;
- (iii) add employer to contacts lists; or
- (iv) change privacy settings.

Retaliation for refusal is prohibited.

Exceptions for:

- (i) non-personal account login information; or
- (ii) to investigate claims of (a) non-compliance with applicable law or regulatory requirements or (b) theft of employer's proprietary data.

Should You Have a Social Media Policy?

Social Media Policy

Why have a social media policy? What's in one?
Curating a social media policy.

Crafting a Social Media Policy

Consider addressing...

- ✓ Guidelines for using social media networks
- ✓ Rules for using company name and logo
- ✓ Consequences for violations
- ✓ Notify employees no reasonable expectations of privacy at work

Goal – Provide Guidance

“Give every employee a sense of what they can and can’t share, whether they’re operating on behalf of the business or they’re in their own personal profiles.”

- Mari Smith

RLI Social Media Policy Example

RLI SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

POLICY OVERVIEW

RLI recognizes the value of social media as a means of communicating, recruiting, connecting, and marketing. It can be used to effectively facilitate communication through social interaction, dialogue, and by publishing information. Social media includes communication tools such as blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, and message boards; as well as sites including, but not limited to, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WordPress, and MySpace.

Social media sites and technologies may be used by RLI employees for business or personal purposes subject to the restrictions set forth in this policy to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory restrictions and privacy and confidentiality agreements.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline rules for business and personal use of social media by RLI employees, in addition to applicable provisions in the [RLI E-mail and Electronic Communication Policy](#), [Information Protection Policy](#), [Code of Conduct](#) and [Insider Trading Policy](#).

This policy is intended to protect RLI, its customers, and its employees' interests rather than to restrict the flow of useful and appropriate information.

Best Buy Social Media Policy Example

Best Buy® Social Media Policy *Be smart. Be respectful. Be human.*

Guidelines for functioning in an electronic world are the same as the values, ethics and confidentiality policies employees are expected to live every day, whether you're Tweeting, talking with customers or chatting over the neighbor's fence. Remember, your responsibility to Best Buy doesn't end when you are off the clock. For that reason, this policy applies to both company sponsored social media and personal use as it relates to Best Buy.

What You Should Do:

Disclose your Affiliation: If you talk about work related matters that are within your area of job responsibility you must disclose your affiliation with Best Buy.

State That It's YOUR Opinion: When commenting on the business. Unless authorized to speak on behalf of Best Buy, you must state that the views expressed are your own. Hourly employees should not speak on behalf of Best Buy when they are off the clock.

Protect Yourself: Be careful about what personal information you share online.

Act responsibly and ethically: When participating in online communities, do not misrepresent yourself. If you are not a vice president, don't say you are.

Honor Our Differences: Live the values. Best Buy will not tolerate discrimination (including age, sex, race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, disability, or marital status or any other legally recognized protected basis under federal, state, or local laws, regulations or ordinances).

Offers and Contests: Follow the normal legal review process. If you are in the store, offers must be approved through the retail marketing toolkit.

What You Should Never Disclose:

The Numbers: Non-public financial or operational information. This includes strategies, forecasts and most anything with a dollar-figure attached to it. If it's not already public information, it's not your job to make it so.

Walmart Social Media Policy Example

While you're with us, we hope you'll take a moment to read the following guidelines we ask you to follow when contributing to our Facebook or Instagram page:

- **Don't do anything that breaks the law.**
- **Be polite and courteous**, even if you disagree. Excessive name calling, profanity, fighting words, discriminatory epithets, sexual harassment, bullying, gruesome language or the like, will not be tolerated.
- **Stay on topic.** Keep the conversation relevant to the community and contribute to the dialogue. We reserve the right to remove content that is off-topic, out of context, spam, promotional or links to third party sites.
- **Keep it real.** All posts should come from a real person and a real Facebook or Instagram profile. Postings from fake or anonymous profiles will be deleted when discovered.
- **We are happy to help our customers and associates** through Facebook or Instagram, and look forward to hearing from you.
- **We reserve the right to remove content** posted to Facebook or Instagram that violates these guidelines.

Walmart Social Media Policy Example

If you are a Walmart associate, please follow these additional guidelines:

- **Know the rules.** Before engaging on Facebook or Instagram, or on any other social media property, make sure you read and understand Walmart's Social Media Policy and Walmart Information Policy. In any and all interactions, make sure that you don't share confidential or private information about the Company's business operations, products, services, or customers; respect financial disclosure laws; and do not say you speak for the Company without express written authorization from the Company to do so.
- **Remember that we have a dedicated team** tasked with responding to customer inquiries or criticism. Our official Walmart social team is responsible for engaging customers through our page. To avoid confusion, we ask that you not attempt to respond to customer inquiries or comments directed specifically to the Company or asking for an official Company response on this site.
- **Consider using company established channels** for job-specific issues. While we encourage associates to join our Facebook and Instagram communities and participate in conversations with our customers and other users, we encourage you to direct your complaints or concerns about your job or working environment to your store management team using the established Open Door Process or WalmartOne.com.

For Walmart managers: If you are a manager, please make sure you are familiar with our Social Media Management Guidelines, available on the Walmart Wire.

Other Liabilities...

Also, think about...

Be aware of the risks associated with using social media in the hiring process, and to track current employees.

Remember

“

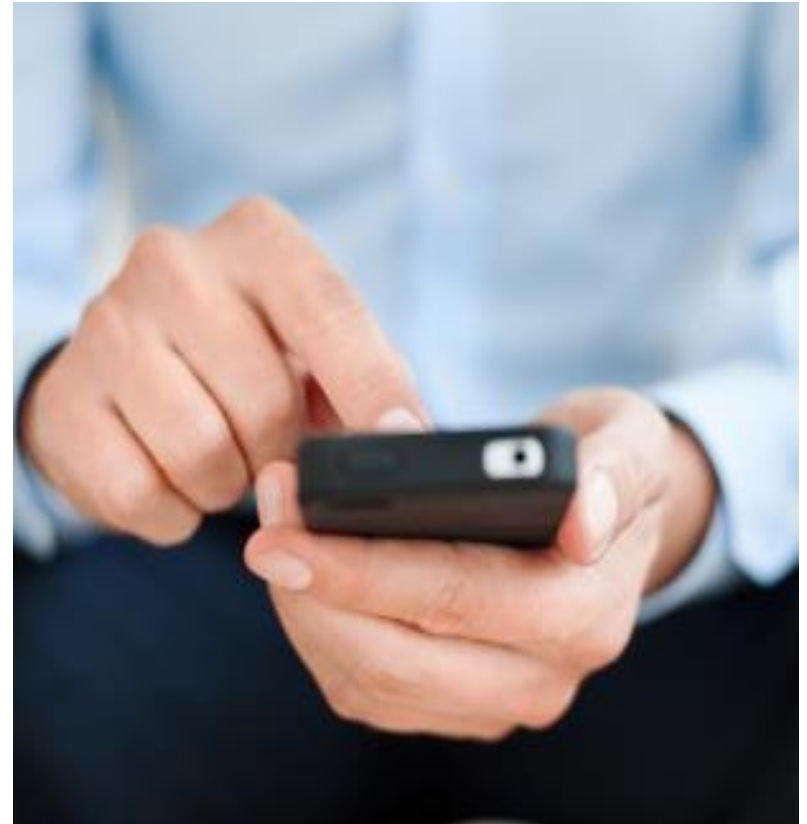
Privacy

on social media networks

is an illusion.

- Suzana Florez

”



Thank you for your time!

QUESTIONS?

**This concludes The American Institute of Architects
Continuing Education Systems Program**

Jennifer Walton, Operations Representative

Jennifer.Walton@rlicorp.com

Mika Dewitz-Cryan, Client Solutions Manager

Mika.Dewitz-Cryan@rlicorp.com

RLI[®] DIFFERENT WORKS