Lazy and Greedy
*by Shannon Warren for August, 2013 publication in The Journal Record*

That’s exactly how actor Sylvester Stallone described Bruce Willis in the latest celebrity hissy twit fit. Think this type of bare-knuckle jab couldn’t happen to you? Then, you might want to take a look at the alarming trends reported by the Ethics Resource Center (ERC) in a report released last month.

Twitterland, among others, is packed with countless examples of similar sucker punches. According to the survey, 53% of the most active social networkers post comments at least once a week about their work projects, company, managers, coworkers and even clients.

Productivity is suffering, too. The report also revealed that at least three out of four social networkers are connecting to their networks every day, to the point that those activities are interfering with work responsibilities. With 28% of those networkers consuming an hour or more each workday on personal interests, it is easy to see how time theft from companies racks up. Now that almost everyone seems to have a link to a site, networking on company time is quickly becoming standard behavior with Facebook being the primary method used by 95% of those surveyed. (Twitter came in at 43% and Google tied with Linked in at 37%.)

With so much on the line, you would think that companies might be proactive in facing these growing trends. Unfortunately, that’s not the case. Fewer than one third of the companies in the ERC survey have rules relating to social networking. The ones who do take time to clarify expectations have enjoyed great success. For one thing, social networkers in those companies are less likely to post something that might damage the organization’s reputation. Training employees to think before they post yields even more positive outcomes.

Rules cannot cover every contingency nor can they keep up with the rapid advancement of technology. Besides, navigating through laws protecting employee’s free speech among other rights can be a tricky feat. However, policies anchored to company principles seem to inspire workers toward higher ideals. In those situations, 95% of employees the ERC surveyed indicated that they are better equipped to handle these types of ethical dilemmas. Clearly, being proactive on this front is a winning strategy that can reap great rewards in promoting a well-rounded culture of integrity.

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