Social Media- Jeopardy or Windfall on Organizational Progression

By Dr. Neha Shukla

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Abstract- Galagan (2010) emphasized the role of social media at workplace, "whether we like it or not, whether we use it or not, social media is changing the way we work". Modern workplace is characterized by changing technology and subsequently the different behavioral pattern of the employees. After reviewing the available reports and researches it is clear that social media is an effective strategic business tool but the hazards it portrays at workplace cannot be ignored. This research paper aims to put forward the risks and drawbacks of social media at workplace. It would also provide an insight to the HR professionals on how to avoid the risks involved with the use of social media.

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I. Introduction

Social media as defined by Wikipedia as "Social media are primarily Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings". Modern workplace is characterized by the predominant use of these social media tools by the employees even while they are working. Many organizations are focusing on the strategic advantage of using social media for profit generation. However the impact of this on the employees' behavioral pattern, their productivity and also their relationships with their colleagues is a matter of concern for the HR professionals. In 2010, in US only 6% of companies were using social media for recruitment, it has now exploded to 89%. It is a depiction of the growing use of social media by companies.

Human resource management is the key to success in any organization; employee satisfaction is what every company is looking for with respect to achieving the edge in the market. However the growing usage of social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube etc. at workplace poses a serious threat in front of the HR professionals. They need to reconsider on how much and what can be accessed by the employees at work. The management needs to analyze whether putting a ban on these or restricting the usage would be acceptable by the employees. This paper is a review of the studies and research conducted by various consultants with respect to the social media and workplace. It aims to present a conceptual model which can be adopted by the HR professionals with regards to the use of social media.

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II. Review of Literature

According *to Caloisi (2008),* Social Media must protect employee and company privacy and be a tool used to enable employees to work more efficiently.

The graph below is given by *Christian Fuchus*, he states here that the major disadvantages of using social media at workplace is that of data abuse and also lack of privacy control.
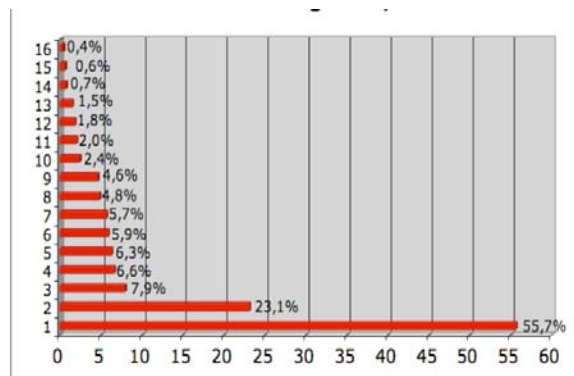
According to *McLain (2009),* companies should consider the difference between official and unofficial communication.

Breslin (2009), "Employers have the right to hold employees responsible for such conduct if the postings are used to 'attack the company' or 'harass co-workers'.

According to *Peacock (2008),* "employers worry that staff are wasting time on websites during the day, weakening productivity and increasing security risks to the company by sharing data externally."

a) Research Objectives
- Determining the role of social media at workplace.
- Analyzing the risks of using social media at workplace.
- Suggest model for HR professionals on how to manage the usage of social media in their organization.

III. Research Methodology

This research was conducted by reviewing and analyzing the available literature on social media. Various surveys and consultants approach was reviewed and henceforth an analytical study was conducted. A model is prepared to give a holistic view

with respect to HR professionals' role in usage of social media at workplace.

a) *Social Media at Workplace- what it is?*

Technology has changed the way people communicate, the way they are informed and even how we behave at our workplace. Employees now communicate by sending a text message from their mobile phone, post comments on their favorite online network or send a short Tweet to inform or even update about their schedules. The growth of social networking platforms has been phenomenal. Every employee is member of one or more social networks. They have a permanent online presence where they create profiles, share photos, share their thoughts with friends and spend hours catching up with what their hundreds of friends are doing with their lives.

Prominent examples of Web 2.0 & social networking sites

Facebook – a social networking service where users create personal *profiles*, add other users as *friends* and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organised by common characteristics (e.g. workplace).

Twitter - a *microblogging** service enabling its users to send and read publicly visible messages called *tweets*. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. Users may subscribe to other users' tweets.

LinkedIn – a business-related social networking site mainly used for professional networking. Users maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some level of relationship, called *connections*. This list of connections can then be used to build up a contact network, follow different companies and find jobs, people and business opportunities.

MySpace – an online community of users' personal profiles. These typically include photographs, information about personal interests and *blogs**. Users send one another messages and socialise within the MySpace *community*.

YouTube –.a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. A wide variety of *user-generated* video content is displayed, including film and TV clips as well as amateur content such as video *blogging**. Media corporations including the BBC also offer some of their material via the site. Most videos enable users to leave and exchange comments.

Wikipedia – a collaborative web-based encyclopaedia project; its 18 million articles have been written collaboratively by volunteers around the world, and almost all articles are freely editable by any visitor. A prominent web 2.0 site but not an example of social networking site *per se*.

*A *blog* is a type of website or part of a website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary and descriptions of events (*blogging*). The content of a microblog is simply smaller in size.

The graph below (*Pierre Khawand, Founder and CEO of People-OnTheGo*) reveals that in a survey conducted on 1000 professional across the globe about what they do using social media, checking personal emails was the answer by majority of professionals (91.7%).
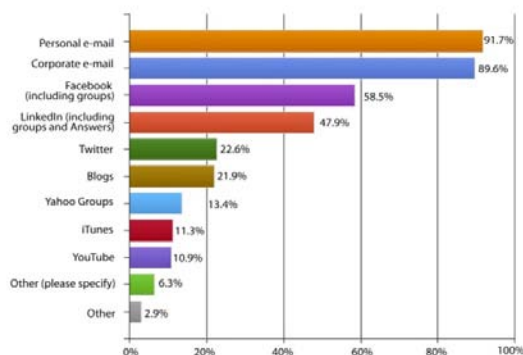
Benefits – Social medial undoubtedly has certain advantages for its organization. The employees and the management both can reap under its benefits, and provide that competitive edge which every organization strives for.

➢ Improved internal communication
➢ Enhance brand name of company
➢ Improved recruiting techniques
➢ Employee engagement
➢ Quick feedbacks- customers and employees
➢ Knowledge enhancement

Major Drawbacks/Disadvantages- Despite the benefits of social media, the shortfalls needs intervention from the HR professionals.

➢ *Employee Productivity*- With the available social networking platforms, employees focus on sharing and exchanging information which is more personal. Devoting time to this shifts their focus and thus work gets affected. Leading to a decrease in their productivity. According to researchers, managers worry that their staff members are wasting time on social networking sites which equates to a 1.5% decrease in productivity during a work day. Most employees check their "inboxes" too often, constantly interrupting their work. Employees estimate that they spend about 4 hours a day (half a workday) on social media.

➢ *Adverse effects on employee relationships*- Social networking sites are public platforms where everyone expresses interest or even their disgruntled attitude openly. Personal attacks are made which often leads to disturbed relations even at workplace. This often becomes a cause of de motivation and loss of interest in work. Negative messages can be sent through social networking sites and can hamper the ability for employees to work together. "Additionally, social networking provides a way for employees to communicate with one another throughout the day without anyone overhearing, leading to an increase in off-task conversations." *(Zeiger)*

➢ *Confidentiality concerns*- A big risk is involved with the employees openly discussing issues regarding their work or even the organization. Blaming the company for problems or even indulging in de faming the name of the organization with the clients, might lead to serious consequences. Thus the company's name is at stake where the employees are given total freedom to communicate on social media. Employees can inadvertently post confidential business information on blogs, wikis, or Facebook. "An employer could find itself defending its employee's unauthorized postings against claims of defamation, harassment, or trade

disparagement" *(Wise, 2009) (Baker, Buoni, Fee & Vitale, 2011)* Nestlé is but one of many cases where an employee who was managing content on the company's Facebook 'fan page' posted offensive comments in response to negative remarks by 'fans'. The company stated that the employee's actions violated the company's business principle of integrity and their commitment to "avoid any conduct that could damage or risk Nestlé or its reputation" which provoked a consumer backlash." (*"The ethical challenges," 2011*)

➢ *Data security concerns*- A leak out of some confidential data is also a big risk involved with the use of social media at workplace. Company's database is at risk of being secretly out and thus affecting the name of the organization.

➢ *No privacy*- At social networking sites, employees openly discuss and indulge in personal attacks and unhealthy comments on each other. This leads to a breach in the privacy which is unacceptable by many. Workplace problems are also made part of the arguments and discussions. Many employees feel uncomfortable due to such open forums.

➢ *Distraction* – Social media is the biggest cause of workplace distraction as suggested by many reports and surveys. Employees coming to work are unable to concentrate on their job and thus productivity is affected.

➢ *Viruses & Malware* – Another threat faced by the organizations is that of harmful viruses attacking the systems and disrupting the work. Internet access causes defects in the computer systems which need immediate corrective measures. IT department has to continuously monitor these sites in order to save the electronic systems from crashing down. This threat is often overlooked by organizations. Hackers are attracted to social networking sites because they see the potential to commit fraud and launch spam and malware attacks.

➢ *Access to online inappropriate & non- work related materials* – Employees get distracted at their workplace and indulge in viewing such inappropriate material which is easily available online. It is both harming the work productivity as well as damaging the ethical work culture of the organization.

➢ *Health issue*- Serious health concerns start due to the overuse of social media, like loss of sleep, stress, depression, indigestion to name a few. If neglected these turn into serious health hazards.

What companies and their HR need to do?

More than 90% of firms in a recent Symantec survey said they've experienced the downside of worker social media use.

The figure below (Richard N. Landers) describes the harmful behavior of employees as a result of using social media at workplace. Offending others, relationship damaging and reputation damaging are some of the adverse effects of excessive use of social media.
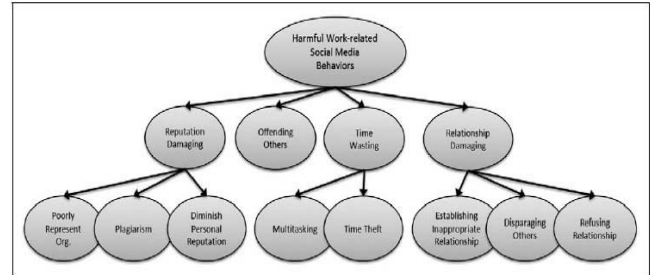

Figure 2 : Theoretical structure of harmful work-related social media behaviors

As part of the employee management, HR professionals need to device strategies to tactfully deal with this issue. Restrictions and certain guidelines need to be adopted; however a total ban on the use of social media at work is not advisable. The reason is simple employee de motivation and disregard towards the HR. A more practical approach is needed in order to deal with these risks at workplace.

IV. Findings

HR approach to Social Media Usage
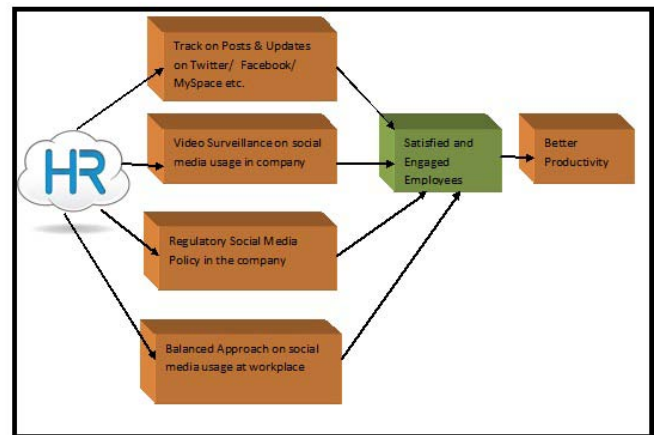
The representation above with respect to HR's role in monitoring social media usage at workplace depicts that a well structured and balanced approach is required to allow employees to have access to their favorite social networking sites but under the company's guidelines.

In 2009 Electronic Business Communication Policies and Procedures Survey was conducted where 14% of employees admitted to emailing confidential company information to third parties; 6% sent customers' credit-card data and Social Security

numbers; and another 6% transmitted patients' electronic protected health information. Such examples have to be considered as ringing alarms for the HR professionals who need to gear up and monitor the social media usage.

With strict monitoring the HR is able to spot potential problems at an early stage, get the posts/comments/messages removed and alert and discipline the concerned employee. Video surveillance can be used by locating the cameras at strategic locations in order to get information with respect to employee's social media usage at work. However the essential part is the social media policy which needs to be adapted and effectively implemented in the company. It should:

- Introduce to the employees to the company's objective with respect to social media usage; like-knowledge exchange, collaboration or peer to peer networking.

- Lay out basic terms of engagement, like-defamatory content is not permitted, or that client confidentiality needs to be maintained at all times.

- Remind employees that they are responsible for the quality of network that is by moderating one another's posts, or generally staying on the topic of discussion.

- Identify the person, people or team to be contacted in regards to suggestions, questions, or to whom employees can report related problems.

V. Conclusion

Social media can and should provide an enabling framework which allows creativity and collaboration to flourish in the organization. Adopting and adapting to it is clearly vital for any organization which aims to remain updated and successful in the market. HR professionals need to ensure that the use of social media in their company is not simply driven as an issue rather it should be looked as an innovative strategy which involves all the employees and reflects the company culture.

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