COMM 2204
**Research Report**



 **Exploring Contemporary Workplace Trends**March 1, 2012

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# Introduction

 **Al**l aboard the Social Media bandwagon! Come take a ride with us as we giddy-up on an adventure through the fantastic new workplace trend of Social Media. With the help of the World Wide Web, advancements in technology and business people around the globe, Social Media has become a great tool for furthering business success as a business or business professional. It is seen as a two-way street, giving you the ability to communicate and interact online, people to people, through any form whether it be written, picture, audio or video. From a business perspective, it is a way to market, network, and communicate back and forth with customers and employees, and can even help you find work. But it can also be the bane of any workplace. If not used appropriately it can drastically affect the production of employees who overuse and neglect to finish work on time. So, is Social Media really leading us in the right direction or is it deteriorating the workplace?

 In the next four sections, each group member will be discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a specific Social Media website and how they affect the workplace. This report includes the following headings; Facebook prepared by Matt Fedyniak, Blogger prepared by Kelly Durack, Twitter prepared by Laura Cardwell, and LinkedIn prepared by Brittany Rae.

# Body

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| **Facebook****T**here are countless possibilities when it comes to how the social networking site Facebook could impact a business or workplace in a positive way. Many businesses have jumped on the social media bandwagon in terms of staying relevant in one of the fastest growing industries in the world. * **Advantages**

**M**any companies have taken to the social media and networking platform of Facebook and had exceptional success. Facebook allows businesses to promote and market their products and services to people across the globe and the best thing is, it’s completely free.  Furthermore, businesses and workplaces can also use Facebook to interact with other co-workers through messaging, and more recently they have implemented video calling and conferencing, which can be very beneficial to the workplace. Believe it or not, Facebook is also being used by employers and recruiters to attain more information about possible job candidates as well as observing how they interact with others and whether or not they keep a professional demeanor. After that, employers can also take a look at a possible hires social network. ‘One of the most important things employers look at today is the person’s network itself! If the employer is hiring a bunch of new talent and brings on someone who has a polished network, then the new hire instantly becomes a recruiting asset’ (Qualman 228). These are just a few of the advantages to using social media and networking sites to improve the overall atmosphere at the workplace.* **Disadvantages**

 **H**owever, with the good comes the bad. Facebook may have plenty of favourable aspects to it but it can also be a disaster to the workplace. Facebook can have a huge impact on the productivity of employees, as it can be a major distraction from work. As mentioned earlier, not only can you interact with friends but also since it’s grown in popularity, many other features have been added to Facebook such as games, applications and music. These types of activities, as fun and entertaining as they may be, are inappropriate to do while working and can cost employees their jobs. Many businesses feel that the negative aspects of Facebook outweigh the positive and block all access to the site while on work computers or devices. Another way Facebook can ruin careers or affect the workplace negatively is through what is said or done on the website. A good example of this was a woman fired in 2009 for calling into work sick with a migraine headache and claimed that lighting might further aggravate it. She was later that day caught surfing on Facebook by her employer (Madden, Kaitlin). It also isn’t wise to express hatred and animosity toward your job or co-workers over Facebook when almost anyone can have access to read what you say. You may or may not get fired for what you say on Facebook but you it can ruin your opportunities at promotion or advancement within a company. As you can see, there are both advantages and disadvantages to using Facebook in the workplace. It really depends on the people working for the businesses and how they choose to prioritize their time and whether or not what they are doing on Facebook is actually beneficial to the company or just for use out of personal interest. |  |

## **Blogger**

 **B**logging has become a very popular thing around the world, especially in the work place. One of the many blogging websites that can be used is Blogger. Many workplaces or even workers have become accustomed to the use of blogging. Blogs started out as just a point of interest for most people by allowing them to express themselves and their interests but now many of the people are using blogs to talk about their jobs. “The world of blogs has expanded exponentially over the past three years, and bloggers cannot seem to resist the urge to talk about their jobs.” (Gordon, Philip L.) This can be a good thing and a bad thing.

* **Advantages**

 **T**he advantage of using sites like Blogger to talk about a job is that many people can see what the job is like in the eye of worker. If many people read the blog about the company and see that it’s a good place to work more people will want to apply which gives the company more choices of applicants. Another advantage of using Blogger is that if a business wants to get a product or service marketed quick, a business can use Blogger and make a post that can be viewed all over the globe. It can contain information regarding the product such as features, prices, and release dates. So that way the company can see whether or not the product will garner enough demand to actually put it out on to the market. Knowing how popular the use of blogs has become, this type of publicity can be very beneficial to a business. So using blogging can be a really big advantage in both of these aspects of the workplace.

 Blogs can also be very helpful to the workplace as a means to get messages across to everyone in a quick and efficient manner. Internal blogs bring innovation to the forefront and reduce the 'cc-all' e-mails; they create organic groups of people who can solve problems without having to add to corporate hierarchy (Jeanette James). These are the types of ideas that can really help bring synergy to a company and get all of the employees on the same page.

* **Disadvantages**

 **T**he aspects stated above also have their disadvantages of being used in the workplace. The major problem with using Blogger, or blogging in general, is employees’ speaking negatively about the workplace or even competition using blogs as a means to bash the company. Many people, especially competing companies, can use a blog to defame a company so that their customers will go to them. This is a very tasteless approach to attract new customers, but it’s used quite often because many people that follow blogs believe in what is being written even without really knowing what the company is all about. You could have a great company being discredited by false claims and as a result that company could lose valuable customers because of it. Even if the company is the best in the business, people who haven’t used them and then come across a blog post that vilifies said company, people will most likely go to a competitor with their business.

 Another disadvantage of having blogs in a workplace is that it can take away from the work being produced. If somebody is more focused on writing the blog and trying to make it perfect, a lot of the other work that should be done is not getting completed on time or being completely forgotten about, this can be a serious distraction. Another negative aspect to blogging on sites like Blogger is that the information used by business is not always accurate and maybe based solely on the opinion or personal interest of the business.

 These are the primary reasons that blogging websites like Blogger have both a wide variety of advantages and disadvantages when it comes to being used in the workplace and to promote the business.

## **Twitter**

 **E**ver since Twitter has opened to the public in 2008, more and more companies have been joining this social media website. Seeing as the amounts of accounts being created are on the rise each year, companies figure it will be a good way to help their business’ grow even though there can many advantages and disadvantages to this social website.

* **Advantages:**

 **T**here are many reasons why company’s keep creating Twitter accounts the list can go on. To start things off Twitter is famous for its one hundred and forty (140)-character limit, this helps business’ get their word across quick and straightforward to their consumers who may be following and can re-tweet them for others to see. Not sure what it means for companies to have followers and people to re-tweet them? Well it’s simple the more people that follow them, means more people they get their word across to, and by their followers re-tweet them they get their word across to even more people world wide. Another great reason for companies to have Twitter is to then they can hear feedback from their consumers and if they like what the company has to share, they can re-tweet the post to all their followers to read. Companies can hear feedback from their consumers tweeting away back at the posts they share, and by doing so this can factor in on how a company does their decision-making (Ojeda-Zapata, J.). Companies can also trend what they are saying or see what people are saying about them by the “#hashtag” factor, the meaning of this is so you can easily search topics or trends that may be becoming popular around the world (Street, J.). Probably one of the best advantages that can help out companies is how Twitter will put a blue checkmark beside the companies name so then consumers who search them can realize that their account is the real deal, and not a fake one. Overall there are many advantages to a company starting a Twitter account that would increase their word around town, or better yet around the world.

* **Disadvantages:**

 **E**ven though there are many advantages for companies creating Twitter accounts, there come the disadvantages too. One of the biggest disadvantages to having a business Twitter account is having someone else pretending to be your company. If a company happens to stop using their Twitter account someone might “hijack”, this meaning someone who may not even be related to the company is posting false information to their consumers and followers (Ojeda-Zapata, J.).

 Another disadvantage to having Twitter is how you can hear what bad stuff consumers might have to be saying about your business. Even though companies could take this as a form of feedback to improve their product or service, people can still be stating their opinion and sharing that with others which can often deter or dissuade others from giving them business.

 Therefore, even though there may be many more advantages than disadvantages to creating a company Twitter account, you always have to expect the unexpected as to what might happen to a business account. Nothing ever comes easy.

## **LinkedIn**

**L**inkedIn is a very attractive Social Media website often billed as the largest network of business professionals. It’s much more focused on business participation than many other Social Media networks and is a great place to network, do research on specific organizations and seek opportunities using a variety of different tools throughout the Social Media website itself. It’s a website designed to connect business professionals and enable them to share information, get answers and promote themselves and their business. LinkedIn is primarily focused on introductions and gives you the ability to see who knows whom and who can help make that introduction to connect you further (Jantsch 28). In the next two paragraphs we will explore the advantages and disadvantages of the Social Media website LinkedIn in the business world as a new workplace trend.

* **Advantages**

**I**f you are a business professional being a part of LinkedIn will give you an unlimited amount of advantages to further your success as an individual or your businesses success. Some advantages LinkedIn will give you are allowing you to find clients, help, and deals in the industry, build up your profile, find professionals to hire, as well as get feedback and research other organizations and opportunities. For some industries LinkedIn is a great place to find many individuals openly, promote a relationship as soon as you locate a connection, get great network partner opportunities, making deals in the market, and marketing yourself or your business (Janstch 28). After you have signed up and started to establish a following within LinkedIn you can begin to promote specific things around yourself as a business professional or your organization (Janstch 28). This is a great advantage because you can easily do this at the *convenience* of where ever you are and when ever you are able to do so. As you continue to connect with people on LinkedIn you will get to know many people that may become an asset to you or your business and you may decide to hire them, therefore giving you great associates, partners and vendors in return (Janstch 28).

The most effective way to tap into Linkedln and your newly built social networks is to use them as a resource for research, opinions, ideas and feedback. Simply by putting your questions out to your group of connections is a great way to get a feel for areas where you would want input from others you have connected with, as well as give answers and return the favor to others with your business intelligence (Janstch 28).

Overall, the advantages and possibilities are endless with the Social Media website LinkedIn and it’s becoming a great asset to business professionals and businesses all over the world.

* **Disadvantages**

**W**ith all the great highlights and advantages of LinkedIn, like many other Social Media websites there are still going to be some disadvantages. With LinkedIn reaching a major milestone in 2011 of 100 million professionals worldwide and counting, they are now growing at roughly one million new LinkedIn members every week as the days continue on in 2012. (Weiner) With that being said when it comes to all the people that are apart of LinkedIn, you are unfortunately almost guaranteed to run into people who don't abide by common netiquette or the LinkedIn User Agreement, therefore inviting some shady behavior by persons that may include toll-boothing, lying, using LinkedIn answers to cloak inappropriate questions, fishing for fake recommendations and light-linking (Alba). To give you a better understanding of some of these disadvantages let us go into further detail. Toll-boothing is when people charge you to have access to their LinkedIn connections. Meaning if you want an introduction and are asking them to communicate with one of their contacts to connect you, they will charge you (Alba). Now seeing as this will most likely be an odd occurrence a business professional maybe faced with the decision to go forward with it or pass, which in turn might create difficulties with your LinkedIn networking.

The most common disadvantage to Social Media websites including LinkedIn is lying. Everyone lies or tries to twist the truth in some way, whether it be just to beef up their profile or going to the extreme extent of creating a fake profile to see what’s out there and what they can get away with networking wise. Regardless it is wrong and if someone was to encounter this it might change there trust in the Social Media website itself and discourage someone else from using it because they are unsure of what is true and false. Staying with the topic of lying, fishing for fake recommendations fits right in there. On LinkedIn, you can have recommendations on your profile; most are real and will be given to you by previous employers, bosses and fellow business professionals that you are already connected with. The shady part is when you get someone asking you for a recommendation that you hardly even know (Alba). This then becomes a decision based on ethics because if you bend over backwards for them they will most likely return the favour, which then proceeds into more fakeness and lying. The last disadvantage we will talk about is light-linking. Light-linking is pretty much accepting all the connections that people ask for, therefore making you look like the “most popular”.

Although light-linking does expand your network, reach and increases the chances that you’ll be found by others because you have such a large and more diverse network the value of LinkedIn is diminished when connections are made with people you don’t know well enough to recommend, or pass along to another network contact (Alba). With all those disadvantages being said it is understandable to see that it will be hard to sometimes differentiate the good people from the bad when it comes to LinkedIn profiles, recommendations and such. So, for LinkedIn, only the people whom you accept as connections can view your other contacts and it is very important you only have people you trust as contacts to limit the access to those that may not be as trust worthy (Martin Ch.10). By avoiding all these disadvantages you will be sure to have a more successful experience as a business professional using LinkedIn.

# Conclusion

 **W**e strongly believe that these forms of social media will become more intertwined with everyday life, whether it is for business or personal interest, and that the workplace will have to find ways to adapt and implement them to improve employee productivity and the overall work atmosphere. With proper guidance and direction, Social Media can be a huge asset to any business that wants to stay connected with the rest of the world and be on top of everything new. It can also save companies a lot of money and resources and allows for better time management. It can greatly increase the functioning and cooperation of the workplace through better synergy among employees. One of the more prominent advantages to social media is the ability to market and advertise the product to a wider audience. Many businesses have already taken advantage of social media to attract new business and have had a great amount of success so doing so. To sum it all up, we feel that the businesses and workplaces that don’t incorporate social media into their business fundamentals are going to suffer and will always fall behind successful companies that have embraced it and learned to use it as a very beneficial tool.

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