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Facebook & Your Job: 5 Ways to Get Fired

By Amy Levin-Epstein | Mar 7, 2011 | [2 Comments](#)

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In a perfect world, Facebook would be a safe space to express yourself and share your life with your family and friends, period. Unfortunately, that line inevitably becomes blurred. First, you start linking with co-workers you're close with; next thing you know, your boss "friends" you and you can't say no.



Even if you try to keep your personal and work life completely separate, both on- and offline, and you implement rigid security measures, social networks are truly a public arena - and should be treated as such. "If you really want your employer looking at you in a hot bikini holding a mai tai, so be it. Just make sure that is the image you want to project in your career as well," says John Millikin, a professor at the W. P. Carey School of Business, and former vice president of human resources at Motorola in Phoenix. (I'd add that unless your boss happens to be [Hugh Hefner](#) or [Charlie Sheen](#), this is generally the *opposite* of the image you want to project.)

But not all transgressions resulting in termination are as colorful. "A client of mine put information up about how his boss [could not] prioritize," says David Couper, a career coach, consultant and author of *Outsiders On The Inside: How to Create a Winning Career...Even When You Don't Fit In*. The client "did not name names, but it was obvious who he was talking about. He didn't get fired [immediately], but when there was a downsizing he was one of the first to go," Couper says.

Here are five other ways that social media can mess with your employment — or even end it.

1. Updating Your Status — Hourly

It's not only what you post — it's how often you post. Unless your job title includes the words "social media," keep updates to a minimum. "Frequent postings suggest that you may not be actively engaged at work or you may not have a life outside of work. Either way it's still sending the message: pathetic," says Roy Cohen, career coach and author, [The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide](#).

2. Living Like a Pre-Rehab Lindsay Lohan

You know this, I'm sure, but it bears repeating: "When it comes to Facebook, think of yourself as a celebrity. If anybody has a camera, behave," says Kenneth Sundheim, president and founder of staffing agency KAS Placement. And mind you: In the smartphone era, pretty much *everyone* has a camera. "You can only control what you do; you can't control what others put up," Sundheim says.

After you finish reading this, immediately change your settings to prevent tagged photos from being automatically visible to everyone. Go to [Privacy Settings](#), click on "Customize settings" and then edit to allow "Only me" to view "Photos and video I'm tagged in." Then, at your leisure you can choose appropriate ones to put in albums for your friends to see. This will prevent bleary-eyed photos from Friday night from greeting your boss online Saturday morning.

3. Making Your Religious Status: "Satanic Scientologist"

You shouldn't share any political or religious views on Facebook that you wouldn't face-to-face, says Dan

Schawbel, personal branding expert and founder of [Millennial Branding](#), a full-service personal branding agency. Just use the same guidelines as in the workplace: “Don’t talk about politics, race, class, or gender on Facebook in an aggressive way that disturbs your co-workers,” says Schawbel.

4. Bragging About Your Beautiful Baby, Boyfriend or Boat

Nobody likes a show-off. “They see all these great posts by friends about trips, parties, kid’s firsts, etc. and [may] feel that their own lives don’t measure up,” says J.T. O’Donnell, CEO of [CareerHMO.com](#). “Having a better life than your boss could lead to him/her treating you different in the office,” O’Donnell adds. “Your fabulous life might just make a boss say, ‘Well, I guess he/she could handle being let go.’”

5. Getting Chatty with the Competition

Clearly, updating your Facebook status to “I just had an amazing job interview with Our Biggest Competitor, Inc. Fingers crossed I’m blowing this pop stand, stat,” will get you fired, stat. However, even friending multiple people from a competitor after meeting them at a networking event - or socially - can ruin your office rep. “Sending out red flags like these may have you headed straight to the boss’s office for some unwelcome news way before you were ready to hand in a resignation letter,” says Rusty Rueff, [Glassdoor.com](#)’s career and workplace expert.

Do you know anyone who was fired because of Facebook? Please sign in below and share the cautionary tale. And for more career advice, follow [@MWOnTheJob](#) on Twitter.

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