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**WHITE PAPER**

# Virtual Reality: How to Avoid Getting Fired Over Facebook



## > How to Avoid **Getting Fired over Facebook**

Every now and then you will read about someone who lost a job over a posting on Facebook. Some of them made us laugh because we thought how could someone actually think they could keep their job after doing that? But they did it anyway. It was almost as though the fact that there might be possible consequences never even entered their mind.

In stories such as these, besides losing their job, one thing that is probably never told is the fact that they may have to wait a long time before they are able to get another job, too. This is because another potential employer read the headlines that had gone viral and now they also are going to be very hesitant to hire someone who had openly abused their employer – and had fun while doing it.

For some reason, some people simply feel that it is their right to blast anything and everything just because they have a Facebook page. They also think that they need to post pictures of every stupid thing they do – like the guy who got drunk, ran across Wrigley Park with no clothes on, got arrested, and posted pictures of himself doing it! Surveys have revealed that a minimum of 30 percent of employers have turned away applicants simply because of things they discovered on their Facebook accounts, or on other social networks. The number of people who get fired because of inappropriate material is rapidly growing. Proofpoint, an email security firm, says that seven percent of organizations have fired people because of activity found on social media Websites. It was also reported that as many as 20 percent of companies have had to take some kind of disciplinary action against an employee (or boss) for the same reason.

### **Things You Want to Avoid Doing on Facebook**

Facebook can be either a powerful tool to help you move forward in your career – or it can be a powerful tool to cripple it. Use it wisely.

- **Not Considering All Your Posts to Be Public.** Unless you understand the ins and outs of selecting who can view your posts, it should become a rule of thumb not to post anything you do not want everyone to see. Sometimes, even though one person may not be able to see a post directly, by knowing someone else – a friend of a friend – they may still be able to see it. This is where caution and common sense should tell you not to post pictures online of you doing embarrassing things at a party.
- **Updating a Status Change and Forgetting You Have Added Your Boss as a Friend.** Another mistake that you hear about every now and then is when someone lets it be known that they had a bad day at work and name their boss. Even worse may be if you talk about how your job search went that day, and you have not mentioned it yet to your boss. Since your boss is your friend, he or she will see everything that you have posted – everyday – if they are avid Facebook users. Belonging to a group that you do not want your boss to know about is another problem – if they are your Facebook friend. Obviously, they can see what groups you belong to, if they simply perform some searching.

- **Updating Your Facebook Page Too Often.** Letting others know everything that you are doing through Facebook can be a bad thing. If you are doing this at work, your boss will wonder how you are getting any work done in between your posts. They may also wonder if you are getting paid to post from someone else – so they may think you need more time to do it and let you go.
- **Don't Drink and Post.** You got home half plastered and felt you just had to let the world see you in all your plastered glory making a real fool of yourself. Unfortunately, when you sent it, you included your boss, who is very concerned now about the reputation of the company – which means you are going to suddenly be very concerned about finding a new job.
- **Not Using Lists on Facebook for Selected Viewing.** Even if you are careful about what you post because you want a more businesslike focus, you need to remember that you may have some friends who are not selective in their posts. This means that the material from other people can get you in trouble, too. Fortunately, you can control which friends can make posts to your wall, and you can also control who can see your wall. A potentially serious problem came after a new head had been selected for the British Intelligence service. While this is normally a rather highly secretive position, it was not long before it was discovered that the man's wife had been posting pictures of their children on Facebook, along with other information that could have enabled readers to identify where they lived.
- **Forget About It If You Post Pictures of a Crime.** Police now regularly look over Facebook postings in order to see what someone will post in order to brag about their crimes (or, at least mischievous actions). It's as though they actually thought it normal and acceptable to steal office supplies, vandalize a house or office, etc., – and take pictures of it and post them on Facebook.

## Tips for Staying out of Trouble Because of Facebook

Probably the best tip for staying out of trouble while using Facebook or any other social media is to just stay away from saying or doing questionable things. If you would be embarrassed if your family, friends, or boss, saw what you said about \_\_\_\_\_, or about what happened at \_\_\_\_\_, then you probably should not say it at all. One teacher, June Talvitie-Siple, found this out when she referred to her students as “germ bags.” Unfortunately, she did not know that Facebook had changed their settings, and this reset privacy settings to public until you manually changed them back to privacy. She also said she was not looking forward to another year in the district – and it really is not surprising that she suddenly found herself without a job.

- **Speaking about Your Company.** Even if you are not in some way bad-mouthing the company, talking about your company can get you in trouble. Even if you defend it, you have to realize that unless you are the duly appointed public relations spokesperson, you probably are not authorized by the company to make public statements.
- **Avoid Getting Too Personal.** Comments can be personal but you certainly want to watch for being too personal. The public does not need to know about troubles in your personal relationships, how you hate your spouse or exgirlfriend, or how you feel about tasks that you perform at work, or people you meet while out socializing. This includes pictures that make you look less than professional – which are sure to be career-killers.

## Use Facebook to Promote Your Career

Instead of treading on thin ice with your postings, you can (and should) create a professional profile in Facebook, and then use it to build your career. Post things on it that show what you are doing to grow in your career field, and use it like a resume.



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