How to…manage staffs' use of social media at work

In this article, Adrian Ashurst provides some tips in managing staffs' use of social media while at work. It is vital to establish rules and make sure everyone is clear about what is and isn't acceptable

Today many care home managers are faced with the sensitive issue of staff using their mobile phones while on duty. The simple answer may be to ban the use of mobile phones while staff are on duty. With the introduction of smart phones, many staff appear to use their mobile phones as personal mini computers.

In some areas, when staff are on their officials breaks, the first thing they do is to switch their mobile phones on and visit their Facebook page or Twitter feed.

Facebook

Facebook is a site where members can share news, views and photographs with each other. Facebook contacts are known as 'friends', and they can join groups of like-minded people who share a common interest, i.e. photography, sport or wildlife groups.

If, for any reason, a manager or member of staff finds themselves in the media spotlight, then the press can quickly gain access to an individual's Facebook pages—if their is no privacy setting activated. Therefore, staff should be reminded of the importance of posting photographs that present a poor image or bring the company one works for into disrepute. Unfortunately, some people post comments which are not complimentary about their workplace, colleagues or even their employers. Once something is published on Facebook, then it cannot easily be deleted, and as a result the reputation of a company or person may be brought into disrepute. Therefore, staff should be made aware of their company's local policy on the use of social media in the work place.

Residents should never be given access to staffs' personal Facebook accounts and they should be encouraged to put in place privacy settings that prevent uninvited people have access to personal information and photographs.

It is an important point to remind all staff that Facebook entries can be read by many people, so never write something you may later to regret. Facebook is barred on some workplace computers, as some staff can spend hours on Facebook when they should be working.

Twitter

Many people have a Twitter account that is also available on their mobile phone. This gives them access to their followers, and in turn they can follow others. A tweet uses a maximum of 140 characters and can include photographs. Tweets can be re-tweeted, meaning that messages can be spread among other people on the recipients contact list. A hashtag (#) is a way of getting everyone to see a person's tweet. For example, if one has hash tagged '# older people in care homes' in a tweet, when a search is conducted everything to do with older people in care homes will be shown.
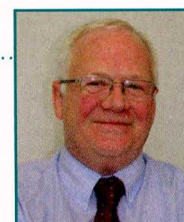
Snap chat

This is an application known as an app, which can be used to send pictures and videos (10 seconds maximum) to a person's contacts list. While people may find this fun, it can be used to post unflattering pictures and videos through. There is a danger that the recipients of snap chat may take a screen shot of the image and save it. Therefore, it is advisable to include some warning about the downside of snap chat for all staff while on duty.

Texting

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the social media phenomena over the last 5 years is the massive and almost constant use of texting. It is clear to see the benefits of being able to send messages from mobile phones. However, sadly some people may use texting to bully others, and staff should be reminded that sometimes mistakes can be made by people who send texts to the wrong recipient. Therefore, there are lessons that can be learned and one should always appreciate that texts may be read by others. Never criticise others at work, as the text may return to cause one lots of upset, and in some cases may even result in disciplinary action being taken by the employers.

Social media is here to stay and how care home managers choose to manage the use of individuals' mobile phones needs to be discussed. Rules need to be agreed and implemented in the workplace. NRC

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