

PSA LINK

NO 11/2019

PSA SHOP STEWARD NEWSLETTER

Social media: It may end a career

Social media has become a powerful tool changing not only how people communicate with each other, but also as a marketing strategy that can reach millions of people in a flash. However, the reach of social media also means that one wrong move can have disastrous consequences. Many workers may believe that their views are protected under Freedom of Expression, enshrined in the South African Constitution, but few understand that this right comes with responsibility.

**Can I be fired for in discretionary use of social media?
The answer is YES!**

The use of social media may seem innocent at first. However, where an employer decides to discipline, depending on the level of sophistication of the individual concerned, perceived innocence may not be an appropriate defence, if the employer regards such usage as having had a negative impact or potential negative impact on its business causing reputational damage. The PSA encounters many misconduct cases emanating from negative remarks that members allegedly made on social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* regarding their employers or managers of the employer. The Labour Court previously established that a negative remark on social media can lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

**Before posting on social media:
STOP and THINK before you click**

- Posting on the internet is essentially making a public statement, i.e. when commenting on social media sites, blogs or other electronic forums.

- Failing to take care about what you write can have serious personal, disciplinary and financial implications.
- Even if you are e-mailing or using other forms of online communication in your own time, if you refer to colleagues or work-related matters, you and your employer could get into trouble.

So, before you share ask yourself:

- "Will this statement bring into dispute my ability to do by job?"
- "Does this make me seem like a racist, sexist or someone who discriminates unfairly?"
- "Will this statement polarise people?"
- "Am I busy with gossip?"
- "Am I badmouthing anyone?"

Use social media where it is an inherent requirement of the job as a tool to express an employer's position. Avoid making use of it as a private tool at all costs. Of course, this is impossible in this day and age. Where it is used privately the fact that is posted disables reliance on the right to privacy. The PSA cautions members to refrain from making any remarks about their employers, workplace and clients on social media sites that may result in misconduct hearings and possible dismissal.

Tips to avoid getting in trouble!

- Ensure that work time is for work business
- Think before you post
- Never post when you are emotional
- Avoid revealing confidential workplace information
- Avoid unproductive usage

