



*Looking back on 2012, what technology news or event surprised you most and why?*

Social media has been taking the world by storm, with consumers eagerly on board and companies trying to figure out how to use it to broaden marketing outreach. But from a different angle, we see that social media is having a negative impact from a human resource and IT perspective. Companies are struggling with setting policy and measuring the impact of lost productivity of their employees due to social media.

A survey our company, MySammy, created and published in late 2012 highlighted a lot of surprising findings. The survey results show concerns regarding everything from threats from social media, lack of corporate policies, impact on recruitment and the effects on productivity.

Firstly, the two biggest factors on why companies block access to social media websites were “security threats” (77% important) and “decreased productivity for employees” (67% important). And while 76% expressed concern that employees are using social media to harm their reputation, only 38% block access at work to social media websites. Of the ones who aren’t blocking access, two-thirds (66%) aren’t even monitoring the time employees spend on them either.

Secondly, and somewhat surprisingly, if employees use social media on behalf of a company, only a little more than half (57%) consider that information company property. Looks like companies may need to look at modifying their social media policies, which we show 69% of respondents already have. But the vast majority (86%) do not have limits spelled out on the time employees can spend on social media, likely leading to confusion or lax enforcing of existing policies.

Thirdly, our survey respondents didn't feel that blocking access to social media will hurt them when recruiting job prospects (66%). But a past study by Cisco showed that more than half of college students globally (56%) said that if they encountered a company that banned access to social media, they would either not accept a job offer or would join and find a way to circumvent corporate policy. This highlights the conflict between what a company thinks and what prospective employees think.

Fourthly, more than 3 in 4 believe that social media hurts employee productivity, yet they have no way of knowing by how much; two-thirds of respondents (65%) don't have a way to measure employee productivity while on the computer. Yet more than half (54%) felt social media was useful for employees to perform their duties. These somewhat conflicting findings show the struggle of companies when it comes to social media and its impact on employee duties and productivity.

Finally, since almost all respondents' companies (87%) allowed their employees to bring their own smartphone to work, it is conceivable that employees are circumventing website blocking by accessing social media with their personal devices. More than half of respondents (58%) worry that they use it to access social media during work.

So what are the implications of these findings? It looks like social media will not be going away any time soon. Thus, companies need to be proactive in terms of setting clear guidelines for employee use of social media, and be clear in communicating and enforcing the policies to their employees. Just as important, companies cannot be lulled into a false sense of security that simply blocking access to social media websites at work is the answer.

Rather than using brute methods of global website blocking, a more effective answer is enacting solutions to measure productivity. If harnessed properly, social media can benefit organizations through increased collaboration, real-time monitoring and online evangelism.

To check out the survey results in its entirety or download a PDF version, please visit <http://www.mysammy.com/survey-social-media>

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