

## Is Your Facebook Use at Work Hurting Your Career?

Here are four signs you should unhook from this addictive site while you're on the clock.

By **Robin Madell**, Contributor Nov. 16, 2015

**DO YOU HAVE A CASE OF “FOMO”** that keeps you checking Facebook throughout the day during work hours? According to Suzana E. Flores, author of “Facehooked: How Facebook Affects Our Emotions, Relationships, and Lives,” this fear of missing out is increasingly common in social media culture. “[I]t’s hard to resist when you have instant access to what everyone else is doing,” Flores writes.

Studies have shown that plenty of people access Facebook during working hours – and in fact, afternoon posts from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. have been identified as resulting in the highest average click-through, according to SurePayroll. This means time for your afternoon work projects may be competing with your desire to hit that optimum social media window.

Yet while your Facebook feed may be easy to follow and maintain from anywhere – including from many offices that don’t block employees from using the site – that doesn’t mean it’s always a smart thing to do. In fact, overuse or **improper use of Facebook** at work can get you quickly fired – or keep you from being hired in the first place.

Research from the Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania validates that problems associated with social media usage at work are on the rise. A recent survey of human resources officers and hiring managers found that just over half of respondents reported an increase in information technology misuse over the past five years. Over 65 percent noted that excessive use of Facebook while on the job was one of the major culprits.

Not sure if your own Facebook habits are just enough or **too much**? Here are four signs that you need to pull the plug on this addictive app while you’re on the clock – before your boss pulls the plug on you:

**You haven't created a separate page for your professional life.** The personal and professional frequently blend on Facebook, with users connecting with friends and colleagues alike. In fact, a report from CompTIA found that 60 percent of employees surveyed admitted that social media blurs the line between their work and personal lives. This is partly because many people create only a single Facebook page that they use to communicate with everyone they know. While it may feel convenient to have only one page to manage and monitor, this can create serious problems for employees who aren't careful about what types of comments and images they post.

To avoid trouble, Parker Geiger, CEO of image and brand development company CHUVA group, suggests building two Facebook pages – one for your personal friends, and another for your business associates. When developing your professional page, Geiger recommends: “Act as if you are your own business. It is imperative that you only put business, professional pictures, comments and likes on this page. Use the page to reinforce your talents and skills to the world. ‘Friend’ other business associates, and build your network. Follow profit and nonprofit organizations and professional associations that are reflective of your professional profile.”

Geiger adds that using your [personal Facebook page can be harmful](#) if you've failed to create this separation. “For example, when calling in sick, an employer may go to your Facebook page and see you posting pictures on the beach when you should be at work,” Geiger says.

**You assume the comments you make are private.** In “Facehooked,” Flores writes, “Even if you set the highest privacy setting, it is naive to assume that everything you post will remain private.” Flores explains that one reason for this is that the site's default settings allow search engines to easily link back to your timeline. This can be a problem if your employer might view certain comments as negative, whether they are posts directly about your company or statements and photos that make you appear unprofessional.

Darius Maxwell Fisher, president of the tech startup Status Labs, adds that “likes” and comments you make on public pages are exactly that: public. “Not only do these appear in the activity feed and your timeline,” Fisher says, “they are also directly served to your

friends in their newsfeeds as stories, and can appear in Google searches for your name. Currently, no privacy setting exists that allows users to hide them.” This can cause a variety of work-related problems, from losing a client who disagrees with a post you wrote to losing a job opportunity when a potential employer finds your self-expression on Facebook in poor taste professionally.

**You chime in with political or controversial comments.** With the 2016 presidential campaign season in full swing, it can be tempting to [voice and vent your opinions about candidates](#). But when it comes to Facebook, this is a bad idea, according to Fisher. “It can be really easy to get sucked into the political melodrama, but employees should think twice before voicing their unhumble opinions and battling it out with ideological opponents via comment sections on Facebook,” he says, noting that you can lose friends or even income by offending others with your political commentary on social media.

It’s also bad for your career to say anything that anyone construes as negative about other people – whether you work with them or not. This is true whether you have a job or are just looking for one, since a Jobvite social recruiting survey in August 2014 of 1,855 recruiting and human resources professionals shows that nearly all recruiters surveyed (93 percent) said they review a job candidate’s social profile before making a hiring decision. “If you’re seen bad-mouthing your co-workers or employer, spewing toxic or racist language, or posting inappropriate content featuring yourself or others, that’s an immediate negative impression before you’ve had a chance to say a word,” says Scott Curkin, senior account catalyst at 919 Marketing Company.

**You’re always on Facebook.** It goes without saying that overuse of social media in the office – whether you’re on your phone or computer – is a major red flag to most bosses and employers. To cut down Facebook usage whether in or out of the office, you can download programs or apps that will help keep you off of social media as needed. “Anti-Social is a product that will allow you to browse the Internet but locks you out of Facebook [among other sites],” says Alice Williams, public relations coordinator for Frontier Communications. “For your phone, you can download AppDetox, which lets you specify exactly which apps you want to restrict. For example, you can make it so that you cannot use the Facebook app during business hours.” While it may seem extreme to block yourself from your own social media activity, doing so at the right time just may save your career.

**Robin Madell** has spent over two decades as a corporate writer, journalist, and communications consultant on business, leadership and career issues. She serves as a copywriter, speechwriter and ghostwriter for executives and entrepreneurs across diverse industries, including finance, technology, health care, law, real estate, advertising and marketing. Robin has interviewed over 1,000 thought leaders around the globe and has won 20 awards for editorial excellence. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association in both New York and San Francisco, and contributed to the book "Be Your Own Mentor: Strategies from Top Women on the Secrets of Success," published by Random House. Robin is also the author of "Surviving Your Thirties: Americans Talk About Life After 30" and co-author of "The Strong Principles: Career Success." Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#) or follow her on Twitter: [@robinmadell](#).

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**Robin Madell** began writing for U.S. News & World Report's On Careers section in 2013, with a ... [READ MORE »](#)

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