

Free Tech Report
Executive IT Info Series

*"Virtual CTO" Tim Gillen reports on
current business technology issues*

Why Your Company or Organization Needs an Internet Acceptable Use Policy ("AUP")

With computers and Internet access such an integral part of every business, and the Internet filled with everything from gambling to x-rated websites, it is critical that every business has an Internet use policy in place. This policy can help prevent your employees from accidentally or intentionally causing harm to your company or your company's reputation. While you don't want to give your employees the idea that they are living in George Orwell's 1984, you want them to have a clear understanding of practices that are and are not appropriate during work hours. It is necessary for companies to create an Internet policy that everyone can live with.

Why Have An Internet Policy?

The purpose of a business is to make money. In order to accomplish this, the company has to have productive employees. The Internet can be a time drain and often prevent employees from being as productive as they should be. With such a wide range of information available on the Internet, it is necessary to clarify the company's expectations of its employees regarding Internet access. With a strong policy in place, the employee, as well as the employer, will find Internet use less confusing and frustrating.

Another important reason to have a strong Internet policy is to save your company from unnecessary lawsuits. Unless you have a clear policy on what is and is not acceptable on the Internet in your company, you can risk having an unfair dismissal lawsuit on your hands when an employee is abusing the company's Internet.

What Elements Should Your Internet Usage Policy Contain?

When planning your Internet use policy, it should contain certain key elements such as:

- The company Internet is for company business only and to be used only during company business hours
- All work done on company computers during business hours, including all emails, is company property and can be accessed by the employer at any time.
- Establish what type of computer use is unacceptable such as accessing personal social media accounts, personal email, pornographic websites, etc.
- Employees must refrain from accessing websites, creating, or forwarding email that promotes any type of discrimination such as racial or sexual discrimination, or that is defamatory or harmful towards another person or group.
- Employees are not allowed to gain access to or attempt to access other employee's computers, employee stored information, or any information unauthorized by the company.

In addition to the guidelines above, inform your employees that whatever is done by the company, for the company, and on the company computers should remain confidential and within the confines of the company. In addition, let employees know that when they access unapproved sites, they risk infecting the company computer system with viruses that could possibly shut down the entire company network.

Having an Internet use policy in place helps to eliminate any confusion and possible abuse that could prevent a company from functioning productively. A solid Internet use policy help to make the work environment more pleasant and more conducive to getting the necessary work done in order to have a successful business. Creating a safe and productive environment is important for any business, and one way to ensure that is to implement an Internet use policy.

We can help your company craft a proper "AUP" (Acceptable Use Policy); just give me a call and we'll get it going.

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