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Companies can prevent workplace from becoming show place

Orlando Business Journal - August 17, 2007 by [Mary Gardner](#)

Remember when taking pictures or video was relegated to vacations and special events?

Cameras were used to document something we'd like to remember the rest of our life.

Years ago, Hollywood stars were enigmas and their private lives were mostly off-limits, but that was before the advent of a magazine called People. That fascination with the stars has spread beyond the paparazzi that exposes every dirty secret of the stars.

Even the stars have jumped on the bandwagon, with TV reality shows that examine how Scott Baio and Paula Abdul work out their personal problems in front of a camera.

If you wonder who would choose to air their dirty laundry in public, you haven't visited YouTube or MySpace recently and realized that it's not just stars who are sharing their secrets.

With today's teens growing up in an era where everyone is looking for their 15 minutes of fame, it's no wonder that the majority of teens are looking for recognition and don't care how they get it.

Gone are the days when you asked someone to take your picture for your scrapbook. Young people now pose for the camera and document every stage of their lives.

But what happens when these young people begin entering the workplace in a few years?

When workers are asked to start off at a company as a receptionist or in the mailroom, will they become upset when they they're not followed around 24/7 by the flash of the camera and able to post their whereabouts on the net for all to see?

How will they respond when upper management tells them that some information is private and that they're being asked to sign a confidentiality agreement? Will they be able to do it?

Will they need to seek some outside gratification to get the attention they've had their entire lives? Will they be able to survive in a corporate environment where the team is more important than the individual?

How will managers deal with these workers who are addicted to their own self-induced paparazzi and ego that gets a buzz every time someone comments on their personal sites?

News of workers being fired for blogging about inside information shows that companies are willing to act to maintain control of their workplace. However, it's not just the blogs that will be critiquing your workplace, but future workers could be providing pictures --and video, too -- of your offices.

Could privacy soon be a thing of the past?

What about those average, mild-mannered workers who do a good job for their company and don't care to have their life documented in the workplace? *All content Inc. All rig*

Will they have a co-worker willing to do it for them? Could the co-worker add his own commentary and claim it to be perfectly acceptable under the First Amendment?

These workers could have their own blogs and internet TV broadcasts and claim the same rights as the traditional press.

According to First Amendment rights attorney Lawrence G. Walters of Weston, Garrou, DeWitt & Walters in Altamonte Springs, the courts will be struggling with the issue of what is newsworthy and who is protected by the First Amendment.

If a person tapes themselves for their own autobiographical purposes to profit from their own image, that is allowed, he says. But once they show images of anyone else in public without first getting a signed release, the owners of the other images can file a publicity claim lawsuit, according to Walters.

Walters suggested that companies implement rules to circumvent this sort of thing from happening in the future.

If companies set up rules of what to wear and what can happen in the workplace, the company would be protected legally if an employee crosses the line.

If companies do not prepare for the future and develop these policies and procedures, they could become the next star on someone else's show.

Mary Gardner is president of Lifestyles Communications Inc., which is dedicated to helping individuals understand and succeed in the new virtual, Internet and global marketplace. Contact her at Mary@marygardner.com.

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