

University of Texas at Arlington

MavMatrix

2017 Spring Honors Capstone Projects

Honors College

5-1-2017

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: REASONS WHY YOU COULD LOSE YOUR JOB THROUGH THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Chère Mason

Follow this and additional works at: https://mavmatrix.uta.edu/honors_spring2017

Recommended Citation

Mason, Chère, "SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: REASONS WHY YOU COULD LOSE YOUR JOB THROUGH THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA" (2017). *2017 Spring Honors Capstone Projects*. 5.
https://mavmatrix.uta.edu/honors_spring2017/5

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at MavMatrix. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2017 Spring Honors Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of MavMatrix. For more information, please contact leah.mccurdy@uta.edu, erica.rousseau@uta.edu, vanessa.garrett@uta.edu.

Copyright © by Chère Mason 2017

All Rights Reserved

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: REASONS WHY YOU
COULD LOSE YOUR JOB THROUGH
THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

by

CHÈRE ARIEL MASON

Presented to the Faculty of the Honors College of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

HONORS BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IN MARKETING

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I must thank my lord and savior, Jesus Christ. He has given me the knowledge, the desire, and the motivation necessary to complete this thesis. Next, I would like to thank my parents, Charles and Danelle Mason, who taught me the value of hard work, loved me unconditionally, provided me with an abundance of resources, and always pushed me to reach for excellence. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for all of the opportunities you have presented me and the life you have given me. I would also like to thank my Goolsby Leadership Academy classmates. They, along with the Goolsby Leadership Academy professors, have taught me the importance of leadership and development both in school and the workplace. They were also willing to read over segments of my thesis and provide insight on how I could critique it. Next, I would like to thank the faculty members involved in the Goolsby Leadership Academy. Goolsby has changed my life in a meaningful way and has changed my perspective on profound success. Next, I would like to send a special thank you to Mrs. Bobbie Brown and the rest of the faculty from the Honors College for giving their senior students the opportunity to write this thesis. Also, I would like to thank The University of Texas at Arlington and the College of Business. I made the right choice when picking this university, because it has presented me with opportunities a business student only dreams of having, and more. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisory professor, Dr. Lauren Brewer. I knew the project would be difficult, but I did not know how difficult. Dr. Brewer was always there for me whether I needed encouragement, questions answered, or advice in general. She

always provided me with a guiding hand and advice on how I could make my thesis better and more appealing. I can truly say that my research skills have become heightened and I am a better thinker, writer, and student thanks to her help and direction. Thank you for all that you have done to make this thesis a reality, Dr. Brewer.

April 14, 2017

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: REASONS WHY YOU COULD LOSE YOUR JOB THROUGH THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Chère Ariel Mason, B.B.A. Marketing

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2017

Faculty Mentor: Lauren Brewer

The main problem: Employees are terminated/dismissed from their employers because of what they post or have posted on social media accounts.

This thesis analyzes the reasons why people have lost their job through the inappropriate use of social media and the advantages and disadvantages of social media use. Social media is widely used not only by individuals, but also by major corporations in order to promote the products and services they deliver. Currently, there are plenty of articles on the internet that show and tell reasons why people were fired from their jobs and the social media policies and/or company laws they broke. There are a number of reasons of why occurrences like these happen, and I plan to analyze what they consist of. This thesis is separated into two major segments: Facebook and Twitter, with inappropriate postings associated with each that resulted in people getting fired. My research concludes

that violations of employer policies, misconduct, and inappropriate social media use are all factors that could contribute to someone's termination. As a result, the consequences include termination, resignation, damaged reputation, and a possible reduction of future employment possibilities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview, Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media	1
1.2 The History of Social Media.....	2
1.3 How has Social Media Changed/Grown?.....	4
1.3.1 Social Media Usage in the United States.....	4
1.3.2 Social Media Usage around the World	4
1.4 What Is Social Media Like Today?	7
1.5 The Future of Social Media	8
2. FACEBOOK POSTS ASSOCIATED WITH TERMINATION.....	13
2.1 Facebook Usage in the United States and around the World.....	13
2.2 Facebook Cases.....	14
2.2.1 Case #1 – Lindsey Stone.....	14
2.2.2 Case #2 – Kaitlyn Walls	15
2.2.3 Case #3 – Marine Sergeant Gary Stein.....	16
3. TWITTER POSTS ASSOCIATED WITH TERMINATION.....	18

3.1 Twitter Usage in the United States and around the World	18
3.2 Twitter Cases	19
3.2.1 Case #1 – Justine Sacco	19
3.2.2 Case #2 – Alicia Ann Lynch.....	20
3.2.3 Case #3 – James Kennedy.....	20
4. CONCLUSION.....	22
REFERENCES	25
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.....	29

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure		Page
1.1	Social Media Landscape 2016	8

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.1	Percentage of U.S. Population with a Social Media Profile from 2008 to 2017	4
1.2	Do You Use Social Networking Sites?	6
1.3	Young Population is Much More Likely to Use Social Networking	6
2.1	Facebook Subscribers in the World by Regions – June 2016	13
3.1	Number of Smartphone Twitter Users in the U.S. from 2012 to 2018 (in millions)	18

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview, Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media

Social media is continuing to be one of the most widely-used tools for marketing and social life, not only in the marketing spectrum, but in the world in general. Social media is one of the main ways that we, as humans, communicate and express our ideas. Social media has made it possible for one person to communicate to hundreds or even thousands of people at once. The research topic, *Social Media: Reasons Why People Have Lost Their Job Through the Use of Social Media*, will ultimately enable young business professionals like myself to understand the importance of following company policies, rules and guidelines when it comes to social media use.

Some of social media's advantages include the ability of users to conveniently stay in touch with friends and family, connect with like-minded individuals, trade ideas, and share content and pictures, all for free. Social media has also been used to create and increase awareness of social, political, and controversial issues. For businesses, social media could be used to advertise products, build customer loyalty, and perform other functions (Ta, 2014). For example, interaction and feedback from customers helps businesses to understand their target market, and fine-tune their products and strategies (Ta, 2014). Finally, compared to advertisements and promoting through television and radio, social media is cheaper; it is a cheap and effective means to enhance brand image for your company (Ta, 2014).

Some disadvantages of social media include a decrease in real-world personal experiences, the possibilities of cyberbullying, stalking, hacking, and other additional privacy concerns. Many introverts and socially reclusive users place too much emphasis on virtual interaction, and ignore the real world outside (Ta, 2014). Having your personal information available could also have an impact on an individual's privacy. If people are not careful, their posts could come back to haunt them. Revealing personal information can make people very vulnerable to identity theft, stalking, etc. This is one of the main reasons why companies perform background checks on potential employees. If a prospective employee has posted something embarrassing on social media, it could drastically affect the chances of them landing another job (Ta, 2014).

Social media has both advantages and disadvantages amongst its users. Users must use it wisely while still enhancing their personal and social life. All companies, especially start-ups, can use popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to gain respect, attention, and a good reputation amongst viewers. These tools are of the cheapest ways to communicate and are considered a universal, not just for entertainment.

1.2 The History of Social Media

Before social media platforms, people would communicate their messages using written form, which would be delivered by hand from one person to another and email. Technology changed rapidly in the twentieth century. After the first super computers were created in the 1940s, scientists and engineers began to develop ways to create networks between those computers, and this would later lead to the birth of the internet (Hendricks, 2013). The earliest forms of the internet were developed in the 1960s. Email

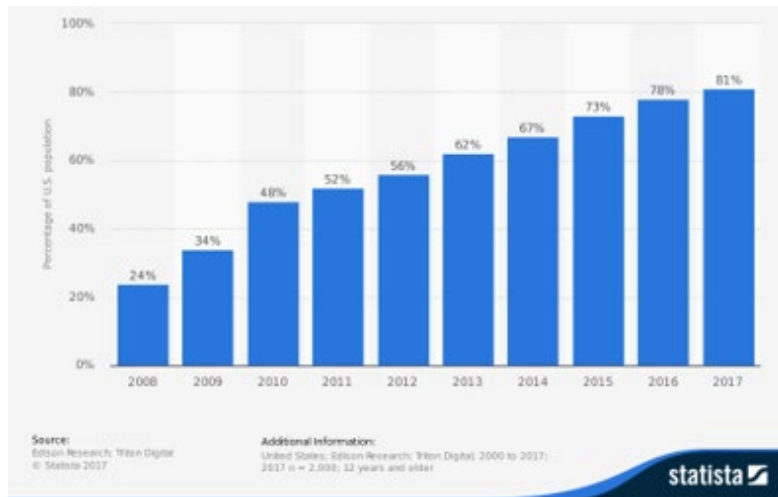
communication also came about during this time. CompuServe was the name of the earliest form of the internet. By the 1980s, home computers were becoming more common. Internet relay chats (also known as instant messaging websites), or IRCs, were first used in 1988 and continued to be popular well into the 1990s. This is where it all began. To my surprise, the very first form of social media came about in the 1990s: Six Degrees was created in 1997, twenty years ago. Six Degrees opened the doors for those who wanted to do more than just send messages and post bulletin board items to people in their first, second, and third degrees. The word “degrees” is in regard to the people you are directly connected with, people who are connected to your first degree connections, and people who are connected to your second-degree connections. Two years later, blogging started to become increasingly popular, creating a social media sensation that has not diminished to this day. After the concept of blogging came about, social media began to explode in popularity. Sites like Myspace and LinkedIn gained fame in the early 2000s, and sites like Photobucket and Flickr earned their popularity in 2003 and 2004 (Hendricks, 2013). Facebook was created in 2004. YouTube came out in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to post content. Individuals could now post videos on the web for anyone in the world to view. In 2006, a year later, Twitter was created. Other sites like Tumblr and Spotify were developed to fill in social niches; for example, Spotify was created for its users to share music and Tumblr solely focuses on sharing and re-blogging photos. Today, social media users have the option of sharing content across multiple platforms using cross-posting, which is where users can reach the maximum number of people without sacrificing the intimacy of person-to-person communication (Hendricks, 2013).

1.3 How Has Social Media Changed/Grown?

1.3.1 Social Media Usage in the United States

Statistics show that 81% of the population in the United States will have a social media profile in 2017, representing a three percent growth compared to the previous year (The Statistics Portal, 2017). Table 1.1 shows over the course of ten years how social media has become integrated in the U.S. population. From 2008 to 2017, social media usage amongst the US population has increased by almost 60 percent.

Table 1.1: Percentage of U.S. Population with a Social Media Profile from 2008 to 2017



1.3.2 Social Media Usage around the World

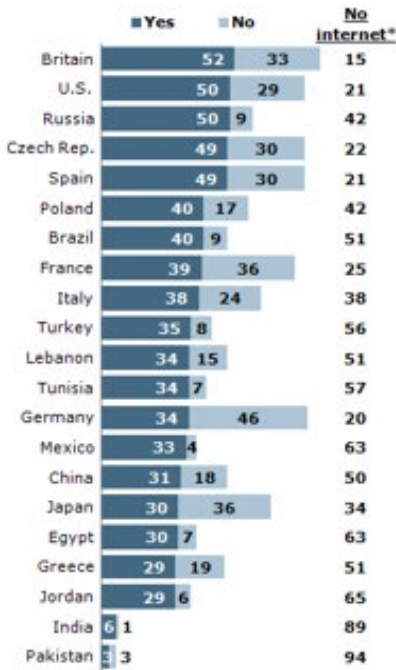
According to estimates, the number of worldwide social media users reached 1.96 billion and is expected to increase to 2.5 billion by 2018 (The Statistics Portal, 2017). Worldwide, the region with the highest penetration of social media use is currently North America, at 59 percent, followed by South Africa at 50 percent and Western Europe at 48 percent (The Statistics Portal, 2017).

Learning about the usage of social media from different parts of the world via surveys is very beneficial. Social Media usage is heavily present not only in the United

States, but also in other countries around the world. In Britain, Russia, the Czech Republic, and Spain, roughly half (50 percent) of all adults use Facebook and similar websites (Pew Research Center, 2012). Social networking sites are also more popular in lower-income nations. Knowing how many people use social media is a powerful indicator of the influence these sites and apps have on everyday lives; exactly who and how people are using them is also telling. As the availability of the internet increases in low-income countries, the number of people who use social media sites within those countries could surpass those of the United States.

Table 1.2 shows that British people use social media platforms more than people in the United States. Table 1.2 also shows that Britain has a slightly higher percentage of people that use social media sites than the United States because they have a smaller percentage of people with limited internet access. Fifteen percent of Britain's population have no internet, while 21 percent of the US population has no access to the internet. Table 1.3 shows that individuals from younger generations are more likely to use one or more social media sites. The tables represent the percentages of the total population of each country listed. For example, 91% of people in Italy between the ages of 18 and 29 use social networking (based on total population). This group of people is more likely to use social media compared to the older generations.

Table 1.2: Do You Use Social Networking Sites?



*Respondents who do not use the internet.
 Based on total sample. "Don't know/Refused" not shown.
 PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q77 & Q79.

Table 1.3: Young Population is Much More Likely to Use Social Networking

	% That use social networking (based on total)			Oldest- youngest gap
	18-29 %	30-49 %	50+ %	
U.S.	80	59	28	-52
Italy	91	52	13	-78
Poland	82	53	8	-74
Britain	94	66	22	-72
Greece	74	35	4	-70
Spain	91	58	24	-67
France	81	47	17	-64
Czech Rep.	87	57	25	-62
Germany	69	42	16	-53
Russia	84	59	20	-64
Lebanon	66	28	4	-62
Turkey	69	31	7	-62
Tunisia	64	25	7	-57
Egypt	50	22	18	-32
Jordan	35	35	6	-29
Pakistan	4	2	0	-4
Japan	71	41	10	-61
China	61	26	8	-53
India	12	3	1	-11
Mexico	63	29	7	-56
Brazil	62	43	12	-50

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q79.

1.4 What is Social Media like Today?

Either through personal use or at the workplace, every business professional has had some type of interaction with a social media platform, whether it be creating content, posting a picture online, or doing online research about someone or another company. The number of new social media profiles are increasing around the world, especially if friends and family members are using them. However, popularity comes with a price. As certain social networks are becoming increasingly popular, others diminish in fame. This is exactly what happened to Myspace when Facebook came about in 2004. Facebook became more popular than Myspace because it was the newest, hottest thing and had the same capabilities as Myspace.

According to Small Business Trends, the 20 most popular social media sites (in order of popularity) today are: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, Reddit, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Quora, Vine, Periscope, BizSugar, StumbleUpon, Delicious, Digg, and Viber (Maina, 2016). Facebook still dominates this competitive market; within the last 12 years, Facebook has accumulated almost 1.6 billion active users (Maina, 2016). Twitter is second in popularity with more than 320 million active monthly users who make use of the 140-character limit to inform audiences (Maina, 2016).

As seen in Figure 1.1, the social media landscape is vast and continues to grow as new ideas come about year after year. Today, social media has evolved to be one of the primary ways people interact and connect with each other across the world. Social media today consists of thousands of social platforms, all serving the same but slightly different purpose. Of course, some social media platforms are more popular than others, but even

the smaller ones get used by a portion of the population because each platform caters to a very different type of person. Businesses are often using social media as their primary marketing tool. Each social media platform is used by a portion of the population because each one caters to the needs of a different type of person (Hale, 2015). The reason is because so many people in the world have a social media presence, so it is vital for businesses to participate in them as well. This could be a starting point for businesses as they continue to broaden their network and market their products and services. Ultimately, social media has enhanced capabilities for its users. Individuals can now view restaurant ratings, watch movies, blog, video chat, post videos, blog, participate in chat sessions, download music, find potential spouses, and more, all while using social media platforms. There is a social media platform available to fit the interests of all consumers.

Figure 1.1: Social Media Landscape 2016



1.5 The Future of Social Media

If social media evolved more often it would become the main way that humans will communicate. Today, individuals still rely on letters, cell phones, electronic mail, advertising, instant messaging, blogs, radio, and television for global viewing. As

additional social media sites are created, the number of people joining will increase. Furthermore, social media will be tailored to fit the needs of people who come from various backgrounds and have different interests. For example, a dating site for African Americans has been developed, known as blackpeoplemeet.com, and another dating site for Christians is called christianmingle.com. There will likely be social networking sites for people who enjoy gaming, art, or even travel. Additionally, the future of social media could be determined by how people and business professionals communicate their messages to their target audience. Since social media is growing exponentially, there will be an increase for businesses with an online presence. There will be an increase in social interactions through digital mediums. Facebook purchased their major contender, Instagram, in 2014. It is only a matter of time before they acquire additional platforms, and it is clear that this will continue. Ultimately, social media could soon be blended into a single social experience. With new and exciting technologies just around the corner, social media will be interesting to see in the coming decades (Hale, 2015).

A questionnaire was administered to business professionals within the United States in December 2016. Below are the responses of what they think will happen in the near future:

- “In the next year, I think we’re going to see a lot more companies’ marketing budgets going towards social media boosting. Not just Facebook, but also on Twitter and Pinterest. Social media is where the people are, so marketers should be, too.” – Lindsay Kent, Social Media Strategist at ONTRAPORT (Abbott, 2016)
- “I predict that in 2017, more social networks will compete in the live video space, including Twitter and LinkedIn. The competition for attention using live, real-time

video – which Periscope, Snapchat, Facebook Live and Instagram offered – will extend to these other networks. I think that we will also see a decline in the number of social networks that companies use, while marketers focus their attention on testing live video on the various networks.” – Sandra Nomoto, President of Conscious Public Relations, Inc. (Abbott, 2016)

- “As a big user of Instagram, I believe they will continue to become more video and moment (like Snapchat) focused in the coming year. After all, live video is where it’s at! They are one of the fastest platforms out there and do not want to lose steam. I predict they will also continue to push advertising and focus more on business, which has already begun in 2016 with the roll-out business profiles and easier ways to use ads. This is especially important now that Facebook’s ad growth is slowing!” – Ashley Faulkes, Founder of Mad Lemmings (Abbott, 2016)
- “Personally, I think video will be everything next year. Companies such as Snapchat have revolutionized the way we communicate with each other. Written content is being left behind for video content, with an increasing demand for live-stream. I expect all social media platforms to force a big push towards video updates and statuses in 2017. Facebook has already been making it easier for users to live-stream video and others are sure to follow.” – Tom Brown, Marketing Assistant at Shiply (Abbott, 2016)
- “Constantly evolving, social media is moving towards visual content, rather than text. Already a trend, video will continue to dominate social media, particularly live video. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and now Facebook want users to capture and share their real-world moments, creating a whole new way for friends to

connect. Don't be surprised if virtual reality takes a role in a new social media, as well. Allowing people to see and 'experience' things can be the future of advertising. The prospect of selling can evolve entirely when people can literally see themselves with a new product or service.” – Jessica Moreno, Social Media and Brand Account Manager at Active Web Group (Abbott, 2016)

Lately, live-video streaming is becoming more popular amongst social media users. For example, Periscope, which was launched in March 2015, has already amassed 10 million users, 1.9 million of them being active (Aslam, 2017). Periscope has become increasingly popular because of celebrities and well-known figures from around the world. Periscope is used most in the: United States, Turkey, and Brazil (Aslam, 2017). Periscope is still young, so upgrades to the software may become appealing to new users. Furthermore, the new software changes to this platform could potentially enhance the likelihood of more users, which could influence the way Periscope will be perceived by nonusers in the near future.

Chapter 2 will report the findings of employees who posted an inappropriate picture or status on Facebook, which resulted in unemployment. The actual post/status is provided, along with what happened between the employee and the employer and what happened as a result of the post/status. As a marketer, we want to understand what these individuals did afterwards in order to understand the consequences of their actions. What their employer said and did after their termination gives a good inclination of what can happen as a result of misconduct. Lastly, each case includes how the public responded.

Chapter 3 reports the findings of employees who used Twitter wrongfully, which resulted in unemployment. The actual post/status is provided, along with what happened between the employee and the employer and what happened as a result of the post/status. As a marketer, we want to understand what these individuals did afterwards in order to understand the consequences of their actions. What their employer said and did after their termination gives a good inclination of what can happen as a result of misconduct. Lastly, each case includes how the public responded.

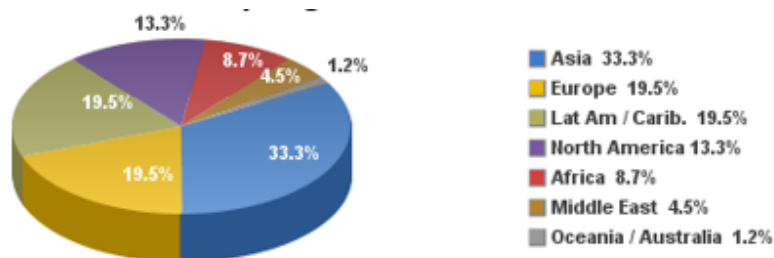
CHAPTER 2

FACEBOOK POSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TERMINATION OF EMPLOYEES

2.1 Facebook Usage in the United States and around the World

Facebook’s mission is to make the world a “more open and connected” place. Facebook remains the most popular platform on the internet, and will remain in the top spot for a while. Facebook users are highly engaged with the platform. 70 percent of Facebook’s users say they use it either daily or every day (including 45 percent who do so several times a day), a significant increase from 63 percent who visited Facebook daily in August 2013 (Duggan, 2015). Furthermore, as of February 2017, there are 1.86 billion monthly users and 1.23 billion daily active users.

Table 2.1: Facebook Subscribers in the World by Regions – June 2016



Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm
Basis: 1,679,433,530 Internet users on June 30, 2016
Copyright © 2016, Miniwatts Marketing Group

Additional Statistics: (Zephoria Digital Marketing, 2017)

- In Europe, over 307 million people are on Facebook
- Five new profiles are created every second

- As of July 2016, over 1 billion people use Facebook Messenger, Facebook’s private messaging system
- There are 83 million fake profiles

A fact about Facebook that is mind-blowing: If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest country in the world, behind China and India. This proves just how popular Facebook has become in only twelve years.

2.2 Facebook Cases

With the advent of social media and the internet, individuals have found new ways to embarrass themselves. Unfortunately, in these cases, employees learned their lesson the hard way.

2.2.1 Case #1 – Lindsey Stone (2012)

- At the time, Lindsey Stone was a 30-year-old who worked at a company called “Life,” which is a community for disabled adults in Cape Cod, Massachusetts (D’Amato, 015).

Post: Lindsey Stone posed for a photograph while mocking a sign at Arlington National Cemetery’s Tomb of the Unknowns and then posted it on her Facebook profile.

Situation: Stone had stood next to the sign, which asks for “Silence and Respect,” pretending to scream and flip the bird. She and her co-worker, Jamie, who posted the picture on Facebook, participated in this lude behavior, which would have an impact on them for the rest of their lives.

What happened afterwards: Unfortunately, Lindsey’s co-worker, Jamie did not realize that her mobile uploads were visible to the public. Four weeks after the photo was posted, a Facebook like page called “Fire Lindsey Stone” was created. The photo went viral and

became flooded with angry comments over the disrespect of fallen veterans that the photo represented (D'Amato, 2015). A few weeks later, there were news cameras at her home. Also, when she showed up at her job, at a program for developmentally disabled adults, she was told to hand over her keys. She was placed on unpaid leave. She barely left home for the year that followed, racked by PTSD, depression and insomnia. Stone also stated that she “didn’t want to be seen by anyone” and that she “didn’t want people looking at her” (Ronson, 2015). This affected Stone in profound ways. She had a hard time dating and could not find another job until the next year. Her father made her apologize for the obscene gesture, which she did in 2015. After two years of job hunting, she eventually landed a job at another non-profit organization where she was hired to work with autistic children.

2.2.2 Case #2 – Kaitlyn Walls (2015)

- At the time, Kaitlyn Walls was a 27-year old single mother looking for a new job. She posted the status on Facebook the day before she was supposed to start her new job.

Post: “I start my new job tomorrow but I absolutely hate working at daycares.”

Situation: Kaitlyn Walls applied for a position at a daycare center in the Fort Worth, Texas area. The single mother vented to her Facebook friends about how she does not like to be around “a lot of kids” and does not have a desire to be a part of the place. She stated that she “absolutely hated” being around a lot of kids.

What happened afterwards: Walls’ Facebook posts were public at the time and her statuses soon attracted criticism on her page. Soon afterwards, she began receiving insults, with one commenter saying she had the “Bubonic Plague” (Mosbergen, 2015). Walls says her

employers were notified about the postings and told her not to bother coming into work. In an interview with CBS, she expressed her sorrows by saying, “It really was a big mistake” and “I don’t hate children...I have my own. I was just venting.”

2.2.3 Case #3 – Marine Sergeant Gary Stein (2012)

- Former Marine Sergeant Gary Stein posted a long rant on Facebook about everything upsetting him about our country.
- This is a prime example of one of the main reasons an employee can be fired from their job: Using social media to discuss your political views negatively. In this case, Stein argued that he was only exercising his First Amendment rights.

Post: “I have spent the last 9 years honorably serving this great nation and the Corps. Even though I will be discharged no one can take the title of Marine away from me. I thank my family and friends for their support and love. Today is just the start of the rest of my life.”

Situation: Gary Stein bashed his boss (Obama, in his case) behind his back and defied his orders. This was done not only in poor taste, but it is playing with fire (Brown, 2012). This man was negatively discussing the Commander-in-Chief, so of course they would be some negative backlash on his behalf. “Screw Obama. I will not follow any of his orders,” was one of the multiple remarks made towards the President.

What happened afterwards: Stein expressed regret for his negative remark, writing on Facebook at one point, “The words that I used were tasteless and I could have articulated my point more clearly. I am man enough to admit my mistakes.” His lawyers did determine that he was exercising his constitutional rights, but he crossed a very sensitive line (Brown, 2012).

People think lashing out on Facebook about anyone they please are one of their constitutional rights, but there are very real repercussions that may follow (Brown, 2012).

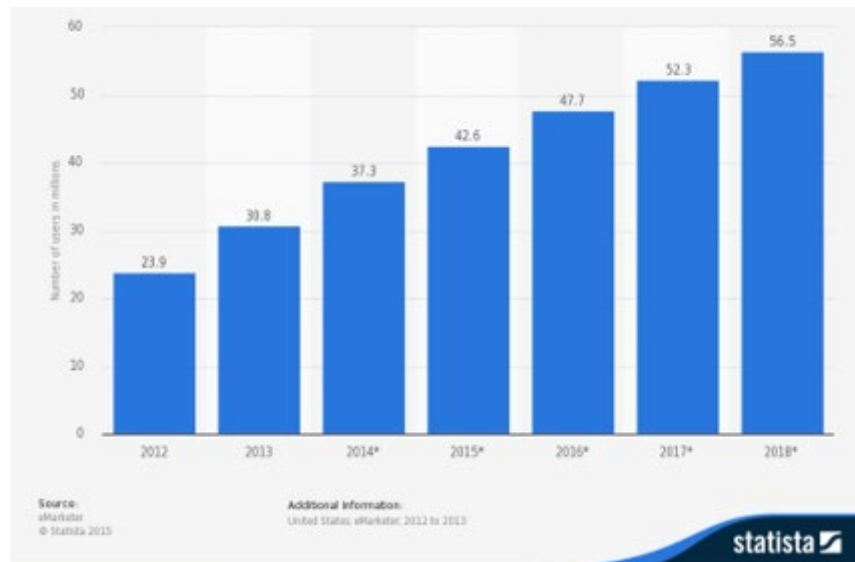
CHAPTER 3

TWITTER POSTS ASSOCIATED WITH TERMINATION

3.1 Twitter Usage in the United States and Around the World

As of 2017, Twitter is the second most popular social networking site in the world. As of February 2017, Twitter has 420 million users total, with 319 million of them being active users. Figure 3.1 shows an increase in the number of users on Twitter from 2012 to 2018 (seven years). In 2018, 56.5 million users will be using Twitter through their smartphones, an increase of 4.2 million users from 2017. While Twitter is very successful, it does not surpass Facebook. The chart below depicts how social media has become a great influence on our society.

Table 3.1: Number of Smartphone Twitter Users in the U.S. from 2012 to 2018 (in millions)



Additional Statistics:

- 80 percent of Twitter users are mobile users
- 100 million of Twitter's users are daily visitors
- 79 percent of Twitter accounts are based outside of the United States

(Smith, 2017)

3.2 Twitter Cases

With the advancement of social media and the internet, individuals have posted on popular platforms that have led to their termination. Through research, I was able to find cases of poor conduct on the Twitter social media platform.

3.2.1 Case #1 – Justine Sacco (2013)

- At the time, Justine Sacco was 30 years old and the Director of Corporate Communications at IAC, a leading media and internet company.

Tweet: "Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!"

Situation: On her way to South Africa to visit family, she began to tweet little jokes about the indignities of travel.

What happened afterwards: After she landed in Cape Town, her phone started blowing up. Her friends and family were trying to contact her. Her employer and co-workers began responding to the racist tweet by saying things like, "This is an outrageous, offensive comment. Employee in question currently unreachable on international flight." By the time Sacco had touched down, tens of thousands of angry tweets had been sent to her in response to her joke (Ronson, 2015). The Twitter community established the hashtag "#HasJustineLandedYet," where it remained the number one trend for a period of time. A

friend of Sacco's would eventually delete the tweet for her because she did not want to look at the outrage. She was ultimately fired for her transgressions in January 2014.

3.2.2 Case #2 – Alicia Ann Lynch (2013)

- Alicia Ann Lynch was 22 years old at the time of this incident. The Michigan resident was scrutinized for her lude behavior and became yet another person fired from her job from what she posted on social media.

Tweet: Lynch tweeted and Instagrammed a photo of herself at work dressed as a Boston Marathon bombing victim for Halloween.

Situation: Lynch posted a photo of herself dressed as a victim of the Boston Marathon bombing that happened on April 15, 2013 for the Halloween holiday. Lynch wore a running outfit and had smeared her face, arms, and legs with fake blood.

What happened afterwards: Lynch received even more scrutiny and hate than Kaitlyn Walls and Lindsey Stone. Actual victims of the bombing tweeted at her photo in response. One victim said, "You should be ashamed, my mother lost both her legs and I almost died." People also released Lynch's personal information by posting photos of her driver's license; people also sent her and her friends threatening messages as an effort to damage her reputation. She was let go at her workplace soon thereafter.

3.2.3 Case #3 – James Kennedy (2015)

- James Kennedy was the 38-year-old veteran who worked at Chipotle in Havertown, Pennsylvania, from late 2014 to early 2015.

Tweet: "@ChipotleTweets, nothing is free, only cheap #labor. Crew members make only \$8.50/hr. how much is that steak bowl really?"

Situation: Kennedy shared his grievances and complaints about pay and vented about the fact that Chipotle workers did not get breaks. In fact, Kennedy's comments were actually just a response to another member of twitter claiming they received a free meal (Fahmy, 2016).

What happened afterwards: After the tweet was seen by Chipotle, Kennedy was initially warned about the tweet and was asked to take it down. Kennedy later deleted the tweet after a supervisor showed him the social media policy, which states that an employee cannot make "disparaging, false" statements about Chipotle publicly. After Kennedy administered a petition to fellow co-workers, he was fired. Kennedy felt as if he was wrongfully terminated and decided to sue the company. Judge Susan Flynn ultimately ruled in his favor, deciding that Chipotle's rules on posting on social media violated federal labor laws (Fahmy, 2016). Ultimately, the Judge ordered Chipotle to give him his job back, pay him for his lost wages, and to start posting signs clarifying the employee policies (Fahmy, 2016).

While individuals can be rewarded for disparaging posts, the outcome depends on content and how it is perceived by the public. There could be some positive outcomes for what you post on social media, but it all depends on what you post. The consequences you may face depends on what type of content is posted on your profiles, positive or negative. Thus, you could have a hard time finding more employment after the negative publicity.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Overall, social media plays a vital role in the way we communicate today. The convenience of the platform is important to everyone, especially to business operations. Social media has been available to internet users since 1997. As of 2017, social media is being used by over 80 percent of the population in the United States; North America is the region with the highest penetration of social media use. According to this research, the outlet you choose can vary; what matters is what you say and how you say it. This could ultimately damage your reputation and hinder your chances of finding new employment. The articles provided offer sensitivity when it comes to social media use in the workplace and in our personal lives. As consumers, we must be aware of what we post and how the effects of social media can influence our public and private lives. Research about social media will give marketers the ability to fully grasp the various reasons why people have been fired and the risks associated with doing these kinds of acts.

From Facebook to Twitter to Instagram, the social media world has been used since its creation. As social media usage continues to increase, employers will need to establish clear guidelines on how employees can post about the workplace (Tian, 2016). Companies should keep consistent social media policies and hold corporate social media postings to the same level of accountability for following guidelines as employees (Tian, 2016). Enforced social media policies promote consistency and prevent accusations of unfair practices when a company needs to do damage control on social media (Tian, 2016). The

sole purpose of using social media is to connect with others around the world. With free use of social media, problems arise if they are used inappropriately. In addition to this, as a result of extensive use, people will become more confined in their comfort zones, not wanting to experience one-on-one human interaction.

The following list includes the reasons why people have gotten fired:

- Complaints about their company
- Complaints about their job
- Inappropriate photos/photos with foul activity
- Making racist, sexist, or other offensive comments
- Sharing confidential information
- Broadcasting your job search
- Discussing your political views
- Using social media while on the job

Social media is being used more in countries with low income, where the people with limited internet access use it for social networking to connect with others. For some reason, there is a considerable interest in social networking in low-income and middle-income nations (Pew Research Center, 2012). Within the next year or so, there should be a total shift in social media usage amongst users around the world. An increase in the number of people in the world with a presence on social media will affect this change; there will be a shift in the number of businesses that use social media within the marketing industry. We should expect to see social media make more of a switch to live video for its users. Eventually, these business professionals believe live video will incorporate it into its platforms. As of early 2017, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat all have this option; others

may follow through with this notion by the end of 2017. Overall, we also should expect to see an increase in the number of social media and social networking sites to fulfill wanted niches. Some believe social media will remain as long as humans are alive.

REFERENCES

1. Abbott, Erica. "The Future of Social Media: 37 Experts Share Their 2017 Predictions." *Business 2 Community*. Business 2 Community, 12 Dec. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.business2community.com/social-media/future-social-media-37-experts-share-2017-predictions-01727839#qM6KikbIJDPx4z0V.97>>.
2. Aslam, Salman. "Periscope by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts." *Periscope by the Numbers (2017): Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts*. OmniCore, 22 Jan. 2017. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.omnicoreagency.com/periscope-statistics/>>.
3. Brown, Maressa. "Marine Finds Out the Hard Way You Can't Diss Your Boss on Facebook (VIDEO)." *CafeMom*. CafeMom, 26 Apr. 2012. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <http://thestir.cafemom.com/politics_views/136761/marine_finds_out_the_hard>.
4. Center, Pew Research. "Social Networking Popular Across Globe." *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project*. Pew Research Center, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/12/12/social-networking-popular-across-globe/>>.
5. Chamlee, Virginia. "Chipotle Employees Are Now Free to Complain on Twitter." *Eater*. Eater, 22 Aug. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.eater.com/2016/8/22/12584750/chipotle-workers-fired-twitter-social-media-policy>>.

6. D'amato, Pete. "Non-profit Worker Who Provoked Fury with Disrespectful Arlington Photo Tells How She Lost Her Job, Can't Date and Now Lives in Fear." *Daily Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 23 Feb. 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2964489/I-really-obsessed-reading-Woman-fired-photo-giving-middle-finger-Arlington-National-Cemetery-says-finally-Google-without-fear.html>>.
7. Duggan, Maeve, Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Amanda Lenhart, and Mary Madden. "Frequency of Social Media Use." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*. Pew Research Center, 09 Jan. 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/frequency-of-social-media-use-2/>>.
8. Elliott, Megan. "7 Social Media Mistakes That Can Get You Fired From Your Job." *The Cheat Sheet*. The Cheat Sheet, 3 Dec. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://www.cheatsheet.com/money-career/7-social-media-mistakes-that-can-get-you-fired-from-your-job.html/?a=viewall>>.
9. Fahmy, Sean. "This Tweet Got A Chipotle Employee Fired, Here's How He Fought Back." *Foodbeast*. Foodbeast, 18 Mar. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://www.foodbeast.com/news/this-tweet-got-a-chipotle-employee-fired-heres-how-he-fought-back/>>.
10. Hale, Benjamin. "The History of Social Media: Social Networking Evolution!" *History Cooperative*. History Cooperative, 16 June 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<http://historycooperative.org/the-history-of-social-media/>>.

11. Hendricks, Drew. "Complete History of Social Media: Then And Now." *Small Business Trends*. Small Business Trends, 8 May 2013. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html>>.
12. Maina, Antony. "20 Popular Social Media Sites Right Now." *Small Business Trends*. Small Business Trends, 4 May 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<https://smallbiztrends.com/2016/05/popular-social-media-sites.html>>.
13. Mansfield, Matt. "SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS 2016." *Small Business Trends*. Small Business Trends, 22 Nov. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<https://smallbiztrends.com/2016/11/social-media-statistics-2016.html>>.
14. Marketing, Zephoria Digital. "The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics - Updated April 2017." *Zephoria Inc.* Zephoria Digital Marketing, 3 Apr. 2017. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>>.
15. Mosbergen, Dominique. "Single Mom Fired From Daycare Center For Facebook Post Saying She Hates 'Being Around A Lot Of Kids'." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 05 May 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/05/daycare-worker-fired-facebook-kaitlyn-walls_n_7210122.html>.
16. Portal, The Statistics. "Percentage of U.S. Population with a Social Media Profile from 2008 to 2017." *Statista*. Statista, 2017. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/273476/percentage-of-us-population-with-a-social-network-profile/>>.

17. Ronson, Jon. "How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up Justine Sacco's Life." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 12 Feb. 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/magazine/how-one-stupid-tweet-ruined-justine-saccos-life.html?_r=0>.
18. Staff, Digital Trends. "The History of Social Networking." *Digital Trends*. Digital Trends, 14 May 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://www.digitaltrends.com/features/the-history-of-social-networking/>>.
19. Ta, Jenny Q. "What Impact Has Social Media Truly Had On Society." *Business 2 Community*. Business 2 Community, 13 Aug. 2014. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://www.business2community.com/social-media/impact-social-media-truly-society-0974685#14mF1xpZLWVPLt2j.97>>.
20. Tian, Bixi, and Anthony Leon. "For Those Companies That Allow Their People to Represent Them via External Social Media, What Types of Activities and Level of Scrutiny Are Applied?" *Digital Commons@ILR*. Cornell University ILR School, Nov. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1124&context=student>>.
21. Williams, Valerie. "8 Insane Social Media Posts That Got People Fired." *Oxygen Official Site*. Oxygen, 06 Apr. 2017. Web. 14 Apr. 2017.
<http://www.oxygen.com/blogs/8-insane-social-media-posts-that-got-people-fired>.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Chère Ariel Mason is a Marketing major, a Goolsby Scholar, an Honors student, and a member of the Golden Key International Honor Society (UT Arlington chapter). Throughout her career at the University of Texas at Arlington, Chère has been involved in nine different student organizations. Chère will earn her Honors Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing in May 2017. In March, Chère joined Flagship Facility Services, Inc. to complete a market research internship in their Irving, Texas office. Specifically, Chère is interested in researching new ways for advertising/marketing agencies to innovate, market, and develop better products to ultimately have a leg up over their competition. Following her internship with Flagship Facility Services, Inc., she will begin pursuing a Master of Science in Marketing in the Summer 2017 semester. Chère aspires to begin her marketing career as a Social Media Manager, Social Media Marketer, Digital Marketing Specialist, Product Marketing Specialist, Brand Specialist, or Marketing Coordinator at a Fortune 500 company.

At the time she completed this thesis, Chère was working as a secretary for Gracious Diva Network. Gracious Diva Network, which is a non-profit organization, plans and conducts motivational seminars and networking events that will help women develop the necessary skills they need to succeed in all areas of their lives. Chère spends much of her leisure time with her family and friends. An avid exerciser and volunteer, Chère also spends a great deal of time exercising and serving her community by regularly volunteering at places like Mission Arlington and the Boys and Girls Club.