Social media surfing and other things we hide from the boss

With 90% of people in employment going online several times a day, it can be hard for most workers to keep their private and work-life separate during the working day (and beyond). The recently published Global Privacy Report from Kaspersky Lab reveals that 64% of South African consumers choose to hide social media activity from their boss. This secretive stance at work also extends to their colleagues, with 60% of South Africans also preferring not to reveal online activities to their co-workers.

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Globally, the average employee spends an astonishing 13 years and two months at work during their lifetime. Interestingly though, not all this time is directly related to solving work tasks or earning a promotion: almost two-thirds (64%) of consumers admit visiting non-work-related websites every day from their desk.

Not surprisingly, 35% of South African employees are against their employer knowing which websites they visit. However, more interestingly, 60% of South African are even against their colleagues knowing about their online activities. This probably means that colleagues constitute an even greater threat to future perspectives of an office slouch or maybe the relationships with colleagues are more informal and therefore, more valuable.

On the contrary, social media activity appears to be a less private domain for many and therefore, more suitable for sharing with colleagues but not the boss. This is probably because workers fear harming the public image of a company, or interest in decreased staff productivity motivates companies to monitor employees' social networks and make career changing decisions based on that. Such policies have led to 64% of South Africans saying that they don't want to reveal their social media activities to their boss and 53% even don't want to disclose this information to their colleagues.

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A further 29% are against showing the content of their messages and emails to their employer. In addition, 3% even said that their career was irrevocably damaged as a consequence of their personal information being leaked. Thus, people are worried about how to build a favourable internal reputation and how not to destroy existing workplace relationships.

"As going online is an integral part of our life nowadays, lines continue to blur between our digital existence at work and at home. And that's neither good nor bad. That's how we live in the digital age. Just keep remembering that as an employee you need to be increasingly cautious of what exactly you post on social media feeds or what websites you prefer using at work. One misconceived action on the internet could have an irrevocable long-term impact on even the most ambitious worker's ability to climb the career ladder of their choice in the future," comments Marina Titova, head of Consumer Product Marketing at Kaspersky Lab.

To ensure workers don't fall prey of the internet threats at a work, there are some core guidelines to adhere to in the digital age:

- Don't post anything that could be considered defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libellous. If in doubt, don't post.
- Be aware that system administrators may at least in theory be informed about your web browsing patterns.
- Don't harass, threaten, discriminate or disparage against any colleague, partner, competitor or customer. Neither on social networks or in messages, emails, nor by any other means.
- Don't post photographs of other employees, customers, vendors, suppliers or company products without prior written permission.
- Start using a password manager to ensure your social media and other personal accounts are not at risk of unauthorised access by someone else in an office. Install a reliable security solution to protect your personal devices.

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