
From Instagram to Insta-Fired: 86% of Canadian Companies Would Fire Employees for Inappropriate Social Media Posts

Two-Thirds of Companies Use Social Media to Screen Job Applicants

TORONTO, Jan. 11, 2023—Personal social media posts are not off limits when it comes to getting and keeping a job, according to a new survey released today from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

A large majority of Canadian companies (86%) say they would fire an employee based on inappropriate social media posts.

Fireable social media offenses include posting content that damages the company's reputation (63%), reveals confidential company information (58%), showcases and/or mentions illegal drug use (45%), violates the company's social media use policy or contract (37%) or showcases and/or mentions underage drinking (32%). Only 14% of Canadian hiring managers say their company would not fire an employee based on their social media posts.

But it's not just current employees who need to be careful about what they post on social media. Two-thirds of Canadian companies (65%) say they use social media to screen job applicants and say it's an effective screening method (64%). Of those employers who use social media to screen applicants, 41% report finding content on a job candidate's social media that caused the hiring manager not to employ them.



In contrast, most job seekers (61%) do not believe a candidate's social media profile(s) should impact their likelihood of being hired. Interestingly though, job seekers agree that once someone is an employee, their employer should be able to fire them based on social media posts (88%). In fact, job seekers are even more likely than employers to say employees should be fired for posts that violate the company's social media policy (52%) or showcase and/or mention underage drinking (39%).

Despite the prevalence of social media, less than one-fifth of Canadian companies (18%) have a formal social media policy for employees. In terms of how companies do handle social media use by employees, 37% discourage use of social media during work hours, 21% provide resources and information on professional social media etiquette, 14% block social media sites on company property (e.g., laptops and cellphones), 13% view or monitor employees' social media accounts and 12% have access to employees' social media accounts.

However, not all companies discourage social media use by their employees. One quarter of companies (25%) encourage their workers to build their personal brand and have a well-defined presence on social media.

Companies need to come to terms with employees using social media, but they also need to provide clear guidance as to what is acceptable, according to Jessica Culo, an Express franchise owner in Edmonton, Alberta.

"Without a social media policy, there is no guidance or a baseline from which to build conversations," said Culo. "Education, training and regular communication regarding social media use that is open and transparent is a must."

"We live in a world now where our personal brands are not separate from professional brands,

and it is important for employers to understand this, ensure team members understand this and to plan around the impacts and interactions,” added Culo. “Hiring based on shared values is also critical when considering implications of social media actions.”

While she says most companies do not formally monitor their employees’ social media posts, many employees add their team members and bosses to their social media so their accounts are being monitored informally.

In terms of how she handles social media in the workplace, Culo has chosen a commonsense approach with her team.

“We have chosen to embrace the use of social media in the workplace, as people have become used to being able to communicate on their personal devices throughout the day.” explained Culo. “An expectation we have of each other, however, is that social media posting unrelated to our business is not done during working hours (i.e., it is saved for breaks and before and after work). We have also asked that our team members do not post unprofessional things (like alcohol use for example) related to the business or workday.”

Her advice to employees and job seekers is to be conscious and considerate about what is posted on social media.

“Be aware that everything you post or comment on social media could be seen by your clients, team members and your boss,” said Culo. “Refrain from posting or commenting when emotions are high, or if/when under the influence of anything. If it is a good idea to post it now, it will still be a good idea to post it later when your mind is clear.”

“Social media is a powerful tool for expression and connection, but a poor decision in content posting can haunt individuals for the rest of their careers,” Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller said. “The best advice is to refrain from publishing anything you wouldn’t want your boss to see or think you may regret in the future.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Dec. 1 and Dec. 15, 2022, among 506 Canadian hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in Canada who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data were weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 4.6 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

The omnibus survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Dec. 13-15, 2022, among 1,050 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income and propensity to be online, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 3.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

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