

ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE

Opinion

Let your employees write blogs

In the past few years, blogging employees have been fired for criticizing unreasonable bosses, decrying the cowardice of supervisors and posting provocative personal photographs. Anyone who's worked in the corporate world for awhile can remember when company dirty laundry was once contained internally at the water cooler, while now it is aired on the Web for all to see.



VIEWPOINT

Perry Binder

But in most states, employees can be fired for virtually any reason unless they are union members or allege the firing violated a discrimination statute.

So when a company spends a fortune creating and promoting its brand, should it guard that identity by instituting a no-blogging policy, or allow workers the freedom to discuss company life online? My answer is a resounding "Let 'em Blog!" for two reasons — money and morale.

Many workers have the innocent, yet misguided, notion that what they do on their time with their home computer is their business. But in most states, employees can be fired for virtu-

In 2006, Pew/Internet reported that 12 million American adults maintain a blog, and 57 million more read them. With more than half the bloggers under 30 getting most of their news and entertainment online, that is a huge buying audience which won't be captured by traditional advertising.

As for employee morale, blogging can form a sense of community not commonly seen in the workplace. If you simply tell personnel they can't blog, some may become disgruntled and anonymously blog.

Employers who permit blogging must set limits in a well-crafted policy, instructing employees not to use blogs to post company trade secrets, harass, discriminate, defame or cast the company in a negative light.

My message to encourage employee blogging is not for the risk-averse executive. It takes resources to monitor Web activity and if handled improperly, a company's brand can be tarnished. Hopefully, your new "Web employees" will generate a revenue stream once unimagined, rather than post embarrassing footage on YouTube.

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