Responsible Use of Technology

Internet at Work

The Internet is a very useful educational tool for students and teachers. Employers understand the benefits the Internet provides, but it has a negative side: an open invitation to waste time. In many workplaces, employees are increasingly participating in Internet chat, personal e-mailing, on-line shopping and bill paying on company time. Most businesses have a policy outlining the use of the internet with regards to how much time an employee can spend on-line. Monitoring such time is difficult and relies heavily on the honour system. Some business networks can have their network placed in a vulnerable situation to hackers and viruses if non-business surfing is a regular activity. As a coop student, if you have access to the internet, it is imperative that you follow company policies regarding internet use.

Cell Phone and Texting at Work

Like the internet, cell phones have become an effective tool to communicate with friends, colleagues and business clients. Cell phones, with their ability to text, access the Internet, e-mail and listening to music, can also disrupt the work environment and negatively affect productivity. Considerable business time can be wasted by employees who cannot resist the temptation of using their phone. When your coop teacher met with employers, we ask about cell phone policies. No employer permits the use of cell phones by their employees for personal business on company time. In the case of an emergency, exceptions are made of course. This was the policy in the workplace before cell phone technology emerged. Coop students are expected to be treated as entrance level employees at a business and are expected to follow company cell phone policy. Some employers provide company phones for business purposes and are used for company work purposes only. Lost productivity and workplace accidents are why employers have been forced to implemented workplace policies around the use of cell phones.

Some workplace managers do not necessarily believe in an outright ban of cell phones in their workplace. Many families have working parents who like to contact their children to check-in after school or contact in case of an emergency. A prohibited cell phone policy might lead employees to feel they must resort to deception. Sneaking away during work time and tending to family affairs through making a phone call can create an atmosphere of resentment. Some organizations allow employees to use business telephones or personal phones for brief conversations. This level of reason conveys the message to employees that management is rational and willing to compromise by considering the perspective of the employees.

As coop students, you should be aware of the following issues around technology in the workplace:

* While at coop, visit only websites that relate to your role as worker. Do not browse websites that you would visit out of the workplace.
* Do not send or receive personal emails from work.
* Do not share or post videos or footage of your placement.
* Use company e-mail for business purposes only, not personal affairs.
* If you accidentally see information about another employee in an email or on a company database, do not share the information.
* Be careful about how much information you reveal about the daily operations at your placement. Some details may be considered private.