TO: All Regional Directors, Officers-in-Charge and Resident Officers

FROM: Anne Purcell, Associate General Counsel

SUBJECT: Report of the Acting General Counsel Concerning Social Media Cases

Attached is an updated report from the Acting General Counsel concerning recent social media cases.

/s/
A. P.

Attachment

cc: NLRBU
Release to the Public
REPORT OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

In August 2011 and in January 2012, I issued reports presenting case developments arising in the context of today’s social media. Employee use of social media as it relates to the workplace continues to increase, raising various concerns by employers, and in turn, resulting in employers’ drafting new and/or revising existing policies and rules to address these concerns. These policies and rules cover such topics as the use of social media and electronic technologies, confidentiality, privacy, protection of employer information, intellectual property, and contact with the media and government agencies.

My previous reports touched on some of these policies and rules, and they are the sole focus of this report, which discusses seven recent cases. In the first six cases, I have concluded that at least some of the provisions in the employers’ policies and rules are overbroad and thus unlawful under the National Labor Relations Act. In the last case, I have concluded that the entire social media policy, as revised, is lawful under the Act, and I have attached this complete policy. I hope that this report, with its specific examples of various employer policies and rules, will provide additional guidance in this area.

/s/
Lafe E. Solomon
Acting General Counsel
Social Media Policy

Updated: May 4, 2012

At [Employer], we understand that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share your life and opinions with family, friends and co-workers around the world. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media.

This policy applies to all associates who work for [Employer], or one of its subsidiary companies in the United States ([Employer]).

Managers and supervisors should use the supplemental Social Media Management Guidelines for additional guidance in administering the policy.

GUIDELINES

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, social media can mean many things. Social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else’s web log or blog, journal or diary, personal web site, social networking or affinity web site, web bulletin board or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with [Employer], as well as any other form of electronic communication.

The same principles and guidelines found in [Employer] policies and three basic beliefs apply to your activities online. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow associates or otherwise adversely affects members, customers, suppliers, people who work on behalf of [Employer] or [Employer’s] legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Know and follow the rules

Carefully read these guidelines, the [Employer] Statement of Ethics Policy, the [Employer] Information Policy and the Discrimination & Harassment Prevention Policy, and ensure your postings are consistent with these policies. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Be respectful

Always be fair and courteous to fellow associates, customers, members, suppliers or people who work on behalf of [Employer]. Also, keep in mind that you are more likely to resolved work-related complaints by speaking directly with your co-workers or by utilizing our Open Door Policy than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably
could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage customers, members, associates or suppliers, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone’s reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or company policy.

**Be honest and accurate**

Make sure you are always honest and accurate when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about [Employer], fellow associates, members, customers, suppliers, people working on behalf of [Employer] or competitors.

**Post only appropriate and respectful content**

- Maintain the confidentiality of [Employer] trade secrets and private or confidential information. Trades secrets may include information regarding the development of systems, processes, products, know-how and technology. Do not post internal reports, policies, procedures or other internal business-related confidential communications.
- Respect financial disclosure laws. It is illegal to communicate or give a “tip” on inside information to others so that they may buy or sell stocks or securities. Such online conduct may also violate the Insider Trading Policy.
- Do not create a link from your blog, website or other social networking site to a [Employer] website without identifying yourself as a [Employer] associate.
- Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for [Employer]. If [Employer] is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an associate and make it clear that your views do not represent those of [Employer], fellow associates, members, customers, suppliers or people working on behalf of [Employer]. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or subjects associated with [Employer], make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of [Employer]. It is best to include a disclaimer such as “The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of [Employer].”

**Using social media at work**

Refrain from using social media while on work time or on equipment we provide, unless it is work-related as authorized by your manager or consistent with the Company Equipment Policy. Do not use [Employer] email addresses to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use.

**Retaliation is prohibited**

[Employer] prohibits taking negative action against any associate for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any associate who retaliates against another associate for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
Media contacts

Associates should not speak to the media on [Employer’s] behalf without contacting the Corporate Affairs Department. All media inquiries should be directed to them.

For more information

If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact your HR representative.