

Coaches Corner With Barry Knepper

TAB Member's Question: Does anyone have a good policy for employee Internet use? I feel I am getting four hours of work a day from an eight-hour employee, with MySpace getting the balance of her time. I know how to deal with this person, but I want to put a policy in place to address future situations.

TAB Coach: You have a two-part problem. The first is the lack of a policy as to Web usage for personal use. If you decide that there is no personal use allowed – then the problem is simple. A policy must be established and enforced stating all means of communication provided by the employer (including the Web, email, phone and mail) are to be used for business purposes only, and the employer has the right to monitor usage – and penalize – if the policy is violated. It's a good idea to provide advance notice that you have the right, whether exercised or not, to monitor computer usage.

The second problem is the use of business time for personal business – whether on the Web or not. If you are okay with personal Web usage, but want to limit it, then it can be stated in the policy that Web usage for personal purposes is okay during authorized breaks, but only during that time and any non-break time use will be penalized. The use of business time for personal business seems to be a serious offense, but only if clearly stated in your policies.

Personal computer use results in the abuser not being productive, but it can also slow down those employees who are trying to accomplish their work. There have been instances where employees lis-



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tening to radio stations over the internet took a company network down.

A simple policy on computer usage is:

1. Desktops are configured to only have access to specified business related sites that are necessary for doing business. There is no universal right to unfettered Internet access.
2. All games are deleted from the desktops.
3. A computer is kept in the break room (in public view) that is available for people doing personal work (shopping, etc.) during their break times.
4. Anything done on company computing resources is subject to monitoring by the company.

5. No software other than that loaded by the company can exist on the computer – no downloading without company approval.

Another source of a comprehensive policy is The E-Policy Handbook available on Amazon.com.

Barry Knepper is the certified facilitator and coach in Queens for The Alternative Board® (TAB). Board members meet monthly to learn from one another's successes, to grow their businesses to the next level through a combination of peer advice and coaching. He also serves as a part time Chief Financial Officer (CFO), utilizing his 30 years of full time CFO experience to help business owners maximize the profitability of their business through the development of a budget, business plan and monitoring of financial operations. He can be reached at 516-724-0351 or bknepper@tab-queensny.com.

TECH TALK A feature from the Queens Chamber Info Tech Committee

Customer Retention Part Two

By Scott Wolpow

In Part One, we discussed using email and online communications to retain clients.

Using Email Clients: [A client is any software that gets data from a server].

Most of your email clients [Outlook, Thunderbird, Gmail, Yahoo, etc.] can handle sending out mass emails. You can use these to create a mail merge that can personalize the emails, based on address books. Optional ad-ons allow you to create groups or filter who gets the emails. In addition, CRM solutions like Act and Goldmine have the ability to send out blasts. For smaller mailing lists where you do not need permission to contact them, this works out fine. The downfall is that it lacks the ability to opt out, which is required by law for unsolicited emails. [More on Can-Spam in part four].

Available are applications specifically designed for this purpose. They have features that can include measuring how many people open their emails, bounces and opt outs. A warning: Sending out large volume of emails may violate your agreement with your service provider or have your IP address labeled, or your media address code [MAC, it is the equivalent of a machine SS#] as a spammer. That is costly to remedy.

Online Mailing List Managers:

Quite a few companies provide Mailing List Manager Services. They offer similar products, but some have unique features including integration to your website [Like Joomla powered sites] or your local address book. Companies include Constant Contact, IContact, Mail Chimp and Campaigner. You can upload your email addresses and sort them into different mailing lists. For example: Current

clients, people you met at the Queens Chamber Business card Exchanges, or any other criteria.

What is exciting is that you can measure how many people have opened the email, find out what emails bounced [never got delivered] and why. People can opt out, which is a legal requirement. You can also create a form for people to join your lists. The cost varies with each company. Charges vary by volume, amount of mailings or list size. Another option offered on these sites is the ability to send out polls.

Online Customer Relationship Management services like Salesforce.com also include these tools. With the online world the definition of product offerings are often shades of gray. You need to evaluate each one and see how it solved your needs.

Yahoo, Google and other sites offer free 'user groups'. These are fine for social

groups or people with mutual interests. A business owner should avoid these tools because it tells people you cannot afford the service. You also have no control over what they add to your message. An email blast from Yahoo may contain an advertisement for your competitor or worse, something that embarrasses you. I heard one horror story of a group for chicken farmers that sent out a blast with a free service. They were talking about larger yields. The advertisement that was attached was for breast enhancement.

[On a side note, it is also poor judgment to be somebusiness@gmail.com. Get your own domain].

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If you have any questions please email me or call 718-275-7765



Lou Vlahos Named Board Of Director At LICBDC

Farrell Fritz congratulated its partner, Louis Vlahos, on his recent appointment to the Long Island City Business Development Corporation Board of Directors.

Vlahos has extensive experience in corporate, individual and partnership income taxation and in estate and gift taxation, including tax planning, ruling requests and tax controversy.

He serves on the board of directors of the Queens

Theatre in the Park, the Queens Chamber of Commerce and the Long Island City YMCA. Vlahos earned his LL.M. in taxation from New York University after receiving his Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School.

The Long Island City Business Development Corporation is a nonprofit local development corporation whose mission is to enhance the business environment in greater Long Island City. For more information, visit their website at www.licbdc.org.