***Not All “Facts” Are Equal***

**Evaluating Information for Business Decisions**

**Audience**: The 54-year-old boss of a medium accounting firm (175 employees) based in Vancouver, with branch operations in Calgary, Kelowna, and Victoria.

**Problem**:

Many employees have been using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites while at work. The boss is concerned about a negative impact on productivity and on the corporate image among clients. She’s also concerned about inappropriate posts and tweets that might reflect poorly on the company.

Her initial impulse is to simply ban all social media use by employees, but her 20-year-old son has suggested that approach might cause many more problems than it solves, including an inability to hire or retain younger employees who can’t live without regular Facebook and Twitter updates.

*What should she do?*

**Resources** (all are Canadian newspaper articles):

1. Gorman, A. (2013, Feb 16). Banning social media at work short-sighted. *Winnipeg Free Press*. p. A.15. <http://tinyurl.com/unequal-facts-1>

1. A study conducted by the University of Melbourne (Australia) [and] presented in 2010 at the International Strategic Management Conference in St. Petersburg, Russia, found 70 per cent of people who were allowed to browse the web on sites unrelated to work, use social media and watch videos for up to 20 per cent of each workday, increased their overall productivity by nine per cent.

2. Campbell, M. (2011, Nov 16). Social media bans may help hackers. *Toronto Star*. p. B.3. <http://tinyurl.com/unequal-facts-2>

1. A report in IT security issued jointly by Telus and the Rotman School of Management surveyed 649 firms and found companies that ban employees from using social media suffer 30 per cent more computer security breaches than ones that allow free use of sites like Facebook and Twitter.

**Main Concerns**

* WHO is responsible for the fact? (Will your audience trust their *authority* on the topic?)
* HOW was the fact gathered? Was it a *reliable* study?
* How OLD is the fact? (Is it *recent* enough for the decision your audience needs to make?)
* Is the fact *RELEVANT* to the problem?
	+ *Geography* = Vancouver?
	+ *Industry* = Accounting?
	+ *Scale* = 175employees?

These are just some of the factors to consider in the “**3 Rs**” of BUS 360W. Evaluating information for business decisions is difficult. The information available is rarely perfect or complete. You will need to decide what is good enough for your audience, then communicate clearly so that your audience knows the risks.

**Help?**

* Evaluating information: [**http://tinyurl.com/360w-3Rs**](http://tinyurl.com/360w-3Rs)
* BUS 360W: [**http://tinyurl.com/bus360w**](http://tinyurl.com/bus360w)
* Business research in general:

[**http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/subject-guides/business/home**](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/subject-guides/business/home)

Business

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