

Reading My Co-Workers' Facebook Feed Make Me Hate Them

Dear Stephen:

I am a vice president of sales for a medium-sized manufacturer, and I am sorry to report I made the mistake of accepting "friend" requests from some of my employees. Let me paint the picture for you.

A regional manager and I became "friends" a month or so ago. I like him a lot, he's a good, smart worker, and he's on target to meet his sales goal, but he is not very discerning on Facebook. He is clearly very social and seems to be in a new relationship, so I see every long weekend ski trip and every fancy romantic dinner he and his partner share. Now that summer is upon us, I just know I will soon be seeing every shirtless picture from his share house on Fire Island.

He isn't the only one. I have another rep who posts pictures of her cat incessantly.

And another rep whose timeline is packed with her kids playing what seems like every sport on earth. I have seen a co-worker's tattoo that's somewhere I didn't even know you could put a tattoo. I know I don't have to "follow" these people if I don't want to see what they're up to, but I feel like I should know what's going on in their lives. As a senior executive it gives me insight into my team members' lives. The problem is I can't help judging them, and I hate that. As a manager how do I stop judging my employees on their personal lives and just focus on their performance at work, while still knowing enough about what's going on in their lives to be a good people manager?

Signed,

Judgy Jim



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @stephenviscusi, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Dear Judgy Jim:

I usually tell people not to be friends with their co-workers on Facebook, but I understand in some cases it feels unavoidable. Many of us spend more time at work than we do at home, and our co-workers begin to feel like our family. It can be fun to gain insight into our co-workers' lives, but I also know it can be annoying to see every meal, every trip and every other thing everyone is doing. Sometimes it can be far worse than annoying, it can permanently alter the way you think about someone. Is that worth the trade-off? I don't

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think so, but I suppose there are people who can justify it.

I also appreciate your question as it relates to managing people. As a recruiter, I can't tell you how much easier it is to poach people who have managers they don't like or managers whom they don't think care about them. You should make it your business to know your reports' business — both professional and personal. While Facebook and other social media might be the easiest way to make sure you're tapped in to your workers' lives, it certainly isn't the only way, and I don't think it's the best way either. No matter how many people you manage directly, you should be able to know what's going on in each of their lives. My novel solution: Talk

to them. All good managers ask their reports how they're doing; all good managers know their reports' partners' names, not because they see it on Facebook but because when their report mentions a partner the manager asks a follow-up question. It should be that simple.

Some might struggle to turn down Facebook requests from co-workers, but there are two easy answers there. Either make a rule, and make it well known you aren't Facebook friends with anyone at work or just ignore the Facebook requests without rejecting them. If and when anyone asks about it, just tell them you don't even check your page. I prefer the first one, but either should work.

Another element you didn't even bring up is these Facebook relationships are two-way streets — bosses and managers need to be careful, too. Don't think those people who report up to managers aren't judging those managers based on their social media accounts. My experience is that it is far more common — and has much worse results — than managers being extra harsh on their teams.

Either way, if you can avoid it, by all means, please do. Now, if you can't avoid it, for whatever reason, my best advice is to relax a little. You may be their boss, but you're not their Dad. Judge their performance not their Facebook feed.

Stephen