

Posting From the Oscars: What If That Guy Worked For You?

Dear Stephen:

All this hoopla over the Oscars goof up by the PwC accountants has me thinking. First, what in the world does it take to get fired anymore? Second, even at 50-something (the age of the two PwC people working the Oscars, I think), employees can get distracted by using a smartphone or tablet while working.

Taking pictures for social media is distracting everyone on the job today. I am a Principal and Design Director in one of the largest global interior design firms. I run big projects with scores of people reporting to me. I am a great mentor and my team works very hard and respects me. But still, I walk through our offices and everyone is on their smartphones. Sometimes I'll walk past some of my managers' work stations and they'll be on Facebook or Twitter; it is always something.

This PwC guy was allegedly tweeting pictures of himself with Emma Stone and handed Warren Beatty the wrong envelope. I have been thinking about what the correlation would be in my firm.

What if one of my most senior employees were texting their boyfriend pictures of goodness knows what while doing a client's interiors, and because they were distracted by these pictures, they ended up specifying a piece of furniture that is too large for the client's office.

Would I fire this manager?

I think so. I would have to, wouldn't I? The difference is that in the real world we don't track people's phones and don't have the evidence of phone usage like they have in more serious situations like a car accident. We only have what we see.



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 @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Either way I feel like this stuff is only going to continue to happen more and more often. I hear the same things from sales rep's that call on us. This story repeats itself in sales offices all the time.

More people are going to be distracted from their jobs by their technology and that will lead to more mistakes like what happened at the Oscars. Am I a smartphone scrooge? The worst thing is having stupid employees with smartphones.

What are your thoughts.

Smarter Than My Phone

All this hoopla over the Oscars goof up by the PwC accountants has me thinking. First, what in the world does it take to get fired anymore?

Dear Smarter Than My Phone,

We have talked about this topic before and the snafu at the Oscars brings it to the forefront again.

I got dozens of letters this week about this very subject. (As a side note, some of you have noted that the Oscars made my good friend Steve Harvey--whose show has me on as their resident workplace expert--look good.) Here is the deal. Smartphones are here to stay and the sooner we get used to this the better.

Ages ago (or at least what feels like ages), companies could just install simple firewalls to keep employees from surfing the web on companies computer, but now people own their own technology. With smartphones and other types of personal computers becoming more common at work, those days are gone. We, employers, can't control anything.

Some high schools now have smartphone lockers where stu-

dents surrender their phones at the opening bell, and I often wonder why offices or workplaces do not do the same as well. I know this is a pipe dream, especially when some companies supply their employees with smartphones, who need them for work, but I think that there are some situations where this is a no brainer.

What business do those accountants backstage at the Oscars have carrying their personal cell phones and tablets? I understand that these people are high powered partners, but gosh, there need to be some limits. I know that our business doesn't put our employees in situations that are quite as intense as protecting the Oscars information, but some mistakes can cost their businesses even more money than this will cost PwC.

It's really just a matter of clearly explaining to everyone at every level how dangerous these phones are at work and what is at stake.

You don't text when you drive because you need to focus on the road; you should be focused on work when in the office. Instead of costing your life, I think it needs to cost someone their job.

So the best way to teach everyone this lesson is to make an example out of some unlucky employee, who gets a bit overzealous in their posting, while they are being paid to be attentive at work. What they do on their own time is their own business, but as work and private life bleed together the lines become more difficult to parse.

When someone is using their phone at work they always tell you it is for business. I don't have all the answers, but this is definitely a problem that is here to stay.

I would love to hear from even more of you about this, and if you have some more creative solutions, please share!

Stephen