

AT WORK WITH CHERYL LIM

Think before posting rant

It's becoming easier for firms to track what is being said by their staff online

POSTING pictures of last night's drunken pub crawl on your Facebook account or tweeting a rant about your boss might seem like some harmless fun.

But experts say "think before you type" is the mantra you should bear in mind if you want to stay clear of trouble at work.

As companies gear up their online presence, it's becoming easier for them to track what is being said by their employees.

Earlier this month, Ms Amy Cheong, a former assistant director at the National Trades Union Congress' membership department, caused a firestorm on social media after posting racist remarks on her Facebook account.

Her comments went viral within hours, drawing a storm of criticism, culminating with her employer giving her the boot.

Mr Paul Heng, founder of NeXT Career Consulting Group, Asia, said that as users spend more time on social media, they have to constantly remember to observe the line between what they should and should not post on publicly accessible platforms.

But if you think adjusting your privacy levels on your social media account will mean your comments will be seen only by friends, think again.

Ms Pat Law, a founder of social media consultancy GoodStuph,

said: "There seems to be a heightened level of privacy online perceived, but the truth cannot be further from that perception."

She pointed out that search engines often keep a copy of anything posted online - including supposedly private material - and that can mean it is reshared in the public domain.

Experts say it's fine to have moments when you want to rant about your boss, company or even the puny size of your salary, just as long as you keep it offline.

"You can be assessed with how you express your views and opinions, and the content, the thoughts that you share in social networking sites," said Mr Christopher Leong, managing partner of executive search company Chris Consulting, stressing that it is important to be aware of the "image" you project online.

"These posts are apparent to your peers, colleagues, present bosses, future employers and recruiters to gauge and form first impressions of your personality, which may not be accurate."

Mr Heng agreed on this point, adding that reference checks are increasingly being carried out over a digital platform, such as a potential candidate's Facebook page, blog and Twitter account.

Mr Leong outlined some social media dos and don'ts for employ-

ees to watch out for.

"Only share generic/non-sensitive information on social media. Be mindful of other's beliefs and culture. As a sign of respect, avoid tackling these issues.

"Do not post discriminatory

comments. Do not criticise your boss, the company you are working for or your country in social media sites."

As highlighted by Ms Cheong's high-profile case, Ms Law said the accessibility, immediacy and

democracy that social media provides means that it is easier for incidents to snowball quickly.

Mr Leong added that the easiest way to judge what you should put online is to put yourself in the shoes of your boss

or future employers.

"Evaluate if you like what you see... the more positive things people see or read about you, the better your credentials would become."

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