

## The Sydney Morning Herald - My Career - February 2009

### Writing on the Facebook Wall.

#### **Mind your cyberspace manners, the boss may be watching writes Valerie Khoo**

When business owner Michelle Wilson was catching up on reading through her regular list of blogs she was surprised to find one written by one of her staff about how much he hated his job.

The staff member (we'll call him Tom) had posted a missive on his personal blog about how he was underpaid and liked nothing about his job.

"I was shocked to read this" Wilson says "Tom never voiced any dissatisfaction to me in any of our conversations or formal reviews. I often asked him how he felt about the job and he was always positive about it".

Wilson says this revelation spurred her on to read previous posts. "When I interviewed Tom for the job he told me his personal blog address." Wilson says "I read his blog and was fairly impressed at the time but I hadn't monitored it for a couple of months. When I reviewed his recent posts I realised he'd been writing a flood of negative comments about the business and his role."

In a world where blogs, Facebook status updates, Twitter messages and other social media platforms are proliferating, people have the ability to broadcast their gripes at the click of a mouse.

Where rants about bosses or colleagues were once heard over a beer at the pub people can publish negative views in cyberspace about their employers and it's there to stay.

**Human Resources consultant and managing partner of Odin Consulting (now The Mindset Group), Aaron Dodd notes that in traditional companies some managers may not even be aware of what social networking sites are.**

**"My view is that if your company is being written about in a blog, you should monitor it even if it does not have the same level of circulation as it would in mainstream media" Dodd says.**

**"Even if an employee is not mentioning the name of your company, it doesn't take much to work out where that person is working, especially with sites such as LinkedIn."**

**In the case of Michelle Wilson's disgruntled staff member, Dodd suggests counseling.**

**"Take this person aside and ask them what changes could be made in the workplace to make their job better," he says.**

**"And make it clear that if those things can't change because of the nature of the business, then perhaps they would be happier in another organisation."**

**Dodd points out that some employers are using social media to find out more about prospective employees. "We have been asked by clients to review social networking sites for potential candidates" he says. "We look for published data which doesn't match what's on the CV"**

**MINDSET**