

# Bosses use private social media more than staff

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Credit: Colourbox

Managers are more negative about the use of social media for private purposes in the workplace compared to subordinates. Still, top managers are the ones who use private social media most during working hours.

Every day, more than one billion people worldwide use social media. This habit has also invaded the workplace, as some research reports that

four out of five employees now use social media for private purpose during work time.

New research from the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Bergen (UiB) shows that managers are more critical of private use of social media at work. However, middle managers and top executives are most negative to private social media use at work.

New research from the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Bergen (UiB) shows that managers hold more negative attitudes to private use of social media at work than subordinates.

## **Executive surfing**

"It is very interesting that top executives, who are negative to private web-surfing during working hours, are the ones who surf the most for private purposes when at work," says Postdoctoral Fellow Cecilie Schou Andreassen at UiB's Department of Psychosocial Science.

She suggests that this can be explained by the fact that top executives have longer working hours, and that work and leisure are much more integrated than it is for employees.

"It is likely that managers are worried about reductions in output and financial loss as a result of use of private social media among their employees," says Schou Andreassen.

## **Singles surf more**

Schou Andreassen and her colleagues are among the first in the world to do research on the causes that may explain the attitudes and actual usages of private social media in the workplace. About 11,000

Norwegian employees participated in the researchers' study [Predictors of Use of Social Network Sites at Work](#).

Some of the main findings in the study about the habits of internet use at work:

- Younger employees use social media for private purposes more than older employees do.
- Men browse the internet more for private purposes than women do during working hours.
- People with higher education are the most active social media users.
- Singles are more active on social media than those in relationships.
- Extrovert and nervous people are more active online.
- People who are structured/reliable/organised/prompt personalities, spend less time on social media compared to their counterparts.

## **A social function**

The researchers have some indications as to why some surf and use social media for personal purposes more during working hours, and why young, single and educated men stand out.

"Social media probably has a greater social function for singles than it has for people in relationships," says Schou Andreassen.

Those with higher education and socioeconomic status are likely more familiar with computer use, which may explain why they are more active online than those with lower education. Their work situation may also provide more opportunities to engage in private use of social media at work compared to those with lower education.

"The finding may also reflect that people with a high socioeconomic status, are not as afraid to lose their job as those in low-status jobs," says Schou Andreassen. "In addition, high rollers may be more interested in social media to advance their career."

The study also showed that people who are outgoing, so-called extrovert personalities, and neurotic people spend more time online and on social media for personal purposes during working hours than their counterparts. People who are organised and punctual, however, spend the least time online for personal purposes during working hours.

"While outgoing people in general enjoy being social, anxious people may prefer to communicate digitally rather than in stress-inducing real life situations," suggests Schou Andreassen. "Ambitious people with a sense of order may surf less than others for private purposes, but will probably use the web actively for work-related business during office hours."

## **Limiting social media at work**

The use of social media during [working hours](#) is closely related to attitudes. The survey showed that strict guidelines and limited access reduce private browsing at work.

"Good regulations combined with motivational work challenges can prevent private browsing during work hours," says the postdoctoral fellow.

A heavy work load also limits the use of social media and private browsing at work. But Cecilie Schou Andreassen cautions against this.

"Although a demanding workload limits browsing, it is not recommended that managers overload their staff with [work](#) to prevent

them from using private [social media](#)," she says.

Should employers worry that private browsing hampers output and leads to financial loss?

"The research conducted provides conflicting answers to this. Some studies suggest that companies suffer financial losses as a result of private browsing; while other studies suggest that private browsing has the same refreshing effect on the mind-set as going for a walk," says Cecilie Schou Andreassen.

Provided by University of Bergen

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