

# Use of private social media affects work performance

November 13 2014

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New research from the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Bergen (UiB) shows that the use of online social media for personal purposes during working hours can have a negative effect on work performance and the well-being of organisations.

In a new study, *Use of Social Network Sites at Work: Does it Impair Performance?*, Postdoctoral Fellow Cecilie Schou Andreassen and colleagues at the University of Bergen's (UiB) Department of Psychosocial Science looked at the consequences of the use of social media 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 use social media for private purpose during working hours.

Surprisingly, although this type of distraction may potentially harm the well-being of organisations, no studies of this relationship have been conducted until now.

The goal for Andreassen's study was to conduct a survey that specifically assessed the use of social network sites for personal purposes during working hours, and whether such use is related to self-reported [work performance](#) – controlling for basic demographic, personality, and work-related variables.

The study shows that use of [social media](#) during working hours can impair performance at work and also harm the well-being of organisations. The overall finding of the University of Bergen study is that this type of distraction has a negative effect on self-reported work performance. However, the effects may be regarded as slight enough to be irrelevant, with no practical importance.

On the other hand, the study's results cannot rule out that use of online social network sites for personal purposes actually stimulates creativity and inspires some workers. Also, it cannot be ruled out that use of online social network sites aids performance, particularly if workers are interacting with their co-workers through these sites. However, this study explicitly focused on the use of online social network sites for personal purposes at work; use involving communication with co-workers was therefore excluded as a study focus.

Employers typically fear financial loss due to employees cyber loafing. Thus, research on this topic is important for organisations and their employees.

**More information:** Andreassen, C. S., Torsheim, T., & Pallesen, S.: "Use of Social Network Sites for Personal Purposes at Work: Does it Impair Self-Reported Work Performance?" *Comprehensive Psychology*, 2014. [www.amsci epub.com/doi/abs/10.2466/01.21.CP.3.18](http://www.amsci epub.com/doi/abs/10.2466/01.21.CP.3.18)

Provided by University of Bergen

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