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Survey: Social Networks Not So Hot in the Workplace (And No One Cares)

By Mark Walsh
July 2, 2009

Are people social networking at work? More than half (55%) of office workers with Web access have at least one social networking account, but only 43% use it at work, and typically for less than 30 minutes per day, according to a new survey by WorkPlace Media.

It might please employers to know that workers aren't hanging out on MySpace or Facebook all day, but social media advertisers probably won't be overjoyed. Even less encouraging for marketers, the study found that not having a presence on a social site made no difference to people's opinion of a brand. And only 11% follow any major brand on a social network.

"When it comes to influencing brand perception and purchase decisions, the data shows that social networking still has a long way to go." says Stephanie Molnar, CEO of WorkPlace Media, a marketing firm that targets the cubicle crowd. "Most of our meaningful recommendations continue to be old-fashioned, word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, co-workers, and/or family."

That view gets support from a recent Harris poll in which 21% of participants said they relied on face-to-face discussions with a family member or friend when researching a purchase decision compared to only 4% who mentioned using online social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace.

In the Workplace Media study, however, Facebook was by far the most popular social property, with 89% members of the site. The runner-up was MySpace (40%), followed by LinkedIn (31%), and Twitter (18%).

Of the 18% who reported acting upon a business or product recommendation on social networking sites, the top categories were: entertainment (53%), dining out (50%), groceries (23%), beauty care/cosmetics (21%), apparel (20%), and electronics and pet care (15%). The survey was fielded in May 2009 among 753 American workers.

Time spent at work on social networking sites

