



Modern-day grapevines: accounting ethics meet social media

Employees in accounting firms need to understand the ethical responsibilities of using social media in the workplace.

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Van Rooyen, A. A. (2020). "Social media is so easy to share", *Accounting Education*, 29(4), 356-371, DOI: 10.1080/09639284.2020.1779763.



Accounting professionals should be more aware of what they share on social media.

Just like private individuals, companies don't like to have their sensitive information shared online. Especially in the financial domain, certain information such as earnings and net worth should preferably remain confidential.

However, employees in accounting firms are often blamed for sharing sensitive information concerning clients and employers on social media platforms. This could easily lead to legal action being taken.

Research conducted in the College

of Accounting Sciences at UNISA has found that students often fail to realise that there is a fine line between sharing personal and workplace information on social media.

"Employers expect qualified professionals to behave ethically and to have obtained the necessary skills at university to conduct their work in an ethical manner," says Dr Annelien van Rooyen. "Ethical behaviour involves more than just doing the right thing; it helps you

make decisions when it comes to grey areas."

Competency frameworks from various national and international accounting institutes provide comprehensive definitions of ethical conduct. Yet, none of these frameworks mention the ethical use of social media.

"Communication technologies are here to stay. Professional bodies should consider writing social media policies into their frameworks."



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