

Facebook - harmless fun or a hidden menace?

You may well have heard, or may even be a member, of Facebook or MySpace, the social networking internet sites.

There are some obvious benefits to these, and other similar sites, such as sharing information and keeping in touch with people generally. However less well-known is the potential to bring individuals, and companies they work for, into disrepute. How could this happen? In several ways including joining a group stating that you work for



Britannia/CFS, which, in itself, is not an issue however then expressing controversial views, or publishing risqué material, can lead other people, who might be offended, to link the content back to the company.

A recent example occurred where comments, posted on a public forum, led to a customer complaint as the individual stated that he worked for Britannia and the nature of his comments gave a less than complimentary view

of the services offered by his (ex)employer. I hope this article does not stop you from using these sites because that certainly is not the intention, indeed the editor is an active member and the TUC has just set up an application (*My Union*) as the modern-day equivalent of pin badges.

(this article was first published in December 2007 however a recent spate of related misconduct cases prompted us to run it again as a reminder)



"Snow joke" A wintry Britannia House on December 1.

Community Work – Voluntary or Compulsory?

During the summer, BSU received reports of local management in a small area applying undue pressure on staff to undertake work in the community, albeit in work's time, with threats that failure to perform the activity would result in performance being marked down at appraisal/desk review time.

BSU believed that the matter was resolved however I am sorry to report that the problem has manifested itself in other areas where BSU believes that some managers are misinterpreting the Group's corporate goal and how employees can demonstrate that they are living the values.

A great many staff already contribute to their communities in a variety of ways and to be told that they must partake in certain activities is causing bad-feeling and worry.

We have been reassured by HR that the community events are entirely voluntary and individuals should be free to make up their own minds as to whether or not they participate. As heritage Britannia staff will be aware, there are many ways in which examples of living the values can be demonstrated in the workplace.

Fancy a great opportunity to develop your career?

Ever thought of becoming a BSU Representative? We are always looking out for new Reps no matter the geographical location.

We offer initial training for new Reps and reinforce this at our quarterly National Executive Committee meetings. Whatever level you are at now in your career, we can provide opportunities to improve your skills and experience other areas of the business. Some of our past (and present!) Reps have achieved promotions to senior posts assisted by the broader knowledge and experience gained as a result of being involved with BSU.

In terms of time commitment, Reps spend on average two days per month on BSU business and, for successful candidates, we have an agreement with the company to paid time-off for trade union duties.

If you're interested, please contact Lisa Beverley, Assistant General Secretary, on 01538 399627.

Single Terms and Conditions (formerly known as Single Employee Proposition)

As you will be aware, negotiations on this front have been taking place for over six months with input coming from the results of our Terms and Conditions Survey which members completed in the spring.

Unfortunately we are unable to disclose any details until matters are finalised however, at some point soon, we shall be communicating, along with the business, as

we shall be asking our members to consider proposals, understand the impact, and vote in a ballot.

To ensure that your view is heard by the business, and you are not a member, join BSU now.

If you are a member, please make sure you have notified us of any change of details (address, name, email address).

To join BSU, use the link on The Exchange (People>Staff Union>On-line Britannia Staff Union Application Form), call 01538 399627, or email staff.union@britannia.co.uk.

Welcome to the latest Union newsletter

I must start this edition with an apology for the infrequency of our newsletters. BSU does appreciate that we have not been communicating widely with members much in 2010. The simple reason is that we have had to prioritise our resource in favour of assisting individuals and groups who have been directly affected by structural changes.



We have been overwhelmed by the positive feedback we have had from members, both those who have left the business and those who have secured other roles internally. Our union took the decision to have a physical presence at the vast major-

ity of organisation design (OD or restructure) staff announcements, wherever in the country they were.

We felt that it was so important to be there to answer those immediate questions likely to be asked when faced with varying degrees of emotions triggered by changes in structure or premises. I am sometimes asked why we do not employ separate resource to write our newsletters. There are two principal reasons: i) this would cost a significant amount of money, and ii) by the time the subject had been explained to a journalist and gone through numerous iterations, it would probably have been quicker to do it ourselves.

I appreciate that, for those of you who have

not been directly affected by the OD, there may be some mystery, hence the lead article. You should also be assured that, if it comes to supporting you through the process, our service will continue to be second to none. Whilst the information from us to you may not have been so frequent, we have continued to receive, listen and respond to feedback and observations coming the other way. This gives us the confidence to know that we are in touch with our members' feelings, thoughts and views and this is something that we are determined to maintain. Meantime, BSU wishes all members a happy and prosperous 2011.

Adrian Northcott
Chairman

Organisation Design Update

Unless you have been on another planet for the past ten months, you will be aware that nearly all central functions are at some stage in their organisational design (OD). To date this has not affected the branch network, except for area structures and above.

We are conscious that very little information has been given around the process so we thought that we would try to de-mystify what actually happens.

Simplistically, management in most business areas work to design a structure with guidance from HR. This information is put into a standard business case format with the impact on staff clearly shown, normally in "current" (before) and "proposed" (after) scenarios.

Cases are put before a HR forum to be checked against a set of parameters. Once these are signed off, they are scheduled into regular meetings between HR and the trades unions which were occurring at least once a week. In advance, electronic copies of the cases are emailed to the unions; these can range from 10 to 80 pages of slides for each case.

Senior management from the area in question, usually the business or function leader, presents the case to us which gives the opportunity for questions to be asked and challenge to be made.

The impact of the case determines the preparations BSU has to make. We ask for detailed scripts that managers intend to use, briefing venues, times and attending staff. Given the sheer number of cases that have been presented to us, we have to consider very carefully how we use our resources. Where possible we try to attend brief-

ings, especially where there is a reduction in roles or significant staff impact.

We were involved in the first OD exercise (below Function Leader level) which was the personal assistant (PA) review at the end of 2009 where several staff, who wished to go, left the business with our assistance and enhanced redundancy packages that we had negotiated. In February, we saw the start of the Shared Services and Operational Arrears OD work which typically involved staff at team leader and manager level having to state their preferences for roles going forward. The Operational Arrears piece generally went well however as roles were not contracting it was never going to be particularly contentious. However, there were learning points from the Shared Services approach and we, as unions, would have been failing if we had not have expressed our concerns to management.

As a result, the rollout of business cases was delayed. We were conscious that people were eagerly awaiting the result of their own OD work however, for the sake of those individuals most adversely affected in particular, it was vital that the process was right.

During this pause, we continued to meet with management on a number of issues. In one of these meetings, we became aware of some very significant premises impacts. Not only did this information have a bearing on business cases that had yet to be presented to us, it also affected some that already had been. It was clear that the changes, at that point unknown to staff, could alter the way in which affected individuals had preferred. Not only that, a large number of

people, who previously thought that their roles would be "lift and drop", meaning that very little would change, except perhaps reporting lines, would now have major concerns as their roles were being moved to a location more than a reasonable commute away.

We had very little time to prepare for the premises announcements and mobilised our Reps and Officers on 24/25 March 2010 to Bristol, Plymouth, London, Hanley and Leek (Contact Centre). These

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We want your feedback...

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BSU has no political affiliation

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