

Should we let staff communicate with each other using sites like Twitter and Facebook or instant messaging services?

March 12, 2010

Q Should we let staff communicate with each other using sites like Twitter and Facebook or instant messaging services?

A Many retailers are engaging with their customers using social networking sites, but is it a step too far to allow staff to communicate with each other on platforms you have no control over?

4Retail chief executive Keith Taylor says that as staff have struggled to keep on top of email there has been a trend to turn to other forms of communication. He thinks the quicker decision making and lead times that retailers work to mean they need to be able to communicate more quickly too.

However, he warns against allowing staff to use public sites and services for official communication as they are not tied in with business processes and there is no audit trail.

“Staff could be on instant messaging with anyone. There is a place for it - but within a business context.”

He says that the ideal is if you can get staff and suppliers all using the same social media-type tools within a corporate system. This type of communication can be less formal, you can see whether your contacts are available and decisions can be made more quickly.

There is a security issue if you are going to open up such systems to a wider external community, and so you must be careful which bits of information and shared files you give different users access to.

Taylor adds: “Generic sites are not set up for corporate usage. Individuals will drive their development, whereas companies need systems that they can drive the development of.”



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