

Title:

For Women Only: Your Computer Usage Could Cost You Your Job

Word Count:

514

Summary:

There's no arguing that computers enrich our lives and provide us with options our mothers never dreamed of. As women, though, computers can also be our downfall at work.

Keywords:

women, computers, myspace, employers, job, double standard

Article Body:

Few would argue that, despite the advancements of feminism over the past three decades, women still face a double standard when it comes to their behavior. While men's borderline-inappropriate behavior is often laughed off as "boys will be boys," women face higher conduct standards - especially in the workplace. That's why it's crucial that, as women, our behavior on the job is beyond reproach.

Small Towns and Big States

For evidence of the double standard, we need look no farther than Arlington, Oregon, where Mayor Carmen Kontur-Gronquist was recalled in a 142-139 vote after the town's denizens discovered that the mayor's MySpace page featured photos of her in lingerie. Although Kontur-Gronquist is alleging election fraud and challenging the returns, and even though the mayoral position was unpaid, no one is arguing that her MySpace page did her in.

Contrast her situation with that of David Paterson, New York's new governor. After Governor Eliot Spitzer resigned amid allegations of engaging the services of a prostitute, Paterson was sworn in and admitted that he had engaged in extramarital affairs and that he had experimented with both cocaine and marijuana while he was in his twenties. It seems odd that the mayor of a small town in Oregon is being held to a higher standard than the governor of New York.

With Computers, Private Can Go Public

The moral (so to speak) of the story is that, as women, our behavior must be

impeccable - both on and off the job. Yes, we can have private lives, but we unwittingly make those private lives public when we boot up a computer, use email, or go online.

To protect yourself in the workplace, the first rule of thumb is never to conduct personal business using your employer's equipment. You have no right to privacy, and your employer can have total access to your record of computer usage, your Internet history, and your email. Resist the temptation to shop online, check the news, or surf the Internet while you're at work. Don't forward that joke or motivational email to your colleagues. And don't email your friends or family members.

The second thing to keep in mind is that the niche of the Internet you've carved out for yourself using your home computer is also visible to your employer. Increasingly, potential employers use tools to screen job candidates' presence on the Internet. That hysterical YouTube video of you dancing with a lampshade on your head at your best friend's bridal shower may prevent you from landing the job of your dreams. Before making a bold rant on your blog or uploading a questionable picture to a social networking site, think about the impact it might have on your career.

Final Thoughts

There's no arguing that computers enrich our lives and provide us with options our mothers never dreamed of. As women, though, computers can also be our downfall at work. It may be acceptable for men to check out the Sports Illustrated website while they're at work (even the swimsuit edition!), but women are held to a higher standard... Just ask Carmen Kontur-Gronquist.