

## Policy on personal websites and weblogs policy

Employees are free to set up personal weblogs or 'blogs' on the internet, provided that they do not breach the law or disclose company secrets, breach copyright, defame the company or its suppliers, customers or employees, or disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Company does not encourage employees to write about their work in any way and would prefer them not to do so. If individuals choose to do so then they should follow the rules below, which form part of their contract of employment. Employees who have a weblog should not disclose the name of the Company on it or allow it to be identified by any details at all.

The following guidelines apply.

- Employees should state to their readers that the views that they express are theirs only and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Company. They should include a notice such as the following: 'The views expressed on this website/weblog are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer'.
- Employees must not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the Company or to any third party that has disclosed information to the Company. The Company's confidentiality policy provides guidance about what constitutes confidential information.
- Employees should be aware that other companies in the industry may employ staff to read the personal weblogs of their competitors' employees to glean information about, for example, their work, products, technical developments and staff morale, and that their weblog may be being read in this way.
- If employees choose to write about their work even without identifying the precise Company name it may still be possible for people to work out the employer's identity. Individuals should always be conscious of their duty as employees to act in good faith and in the best interests of their employer under English law. This duty of fidelity to the employer is a very strong legal obligation. The Company will not countenance criticisms in weblogs. Even where they are true and not defamatory, they will amount to a breach of employee duties and could lead to action under the Company's disciplinary policy. [The Company employs public relations experts at some cost to present it in a particular way. It cannot allow this to be undermined by bloggers on the workforce.]
- Employees should not link their site to the Company's. Any such links require the Company's consent.
- Employees must not use the Company's website, internet systems or intranet for their weblog. They must not write their weblog in employer time.
- If an employee is asked to contribute to an official weblog connected to the Company then special rules will apply and the employee will be told in detail how to operate and about what to write.

Although employees should take their own legal advice on their weblog, they should be careful not to:

- include material that breaches copyright, and should link to other material rather than cutting and pasting it;
- defame (libel) anyone;
- include personal information about an individual without his/her consent, otherwise they risk breaching the Data Protection Act 1998, which is a criminal offence;
- include material that is sexist, racist or otherwise actionable;
- bring the Company into disrepute.

Any questions about this policy should be directed to Del Hunter.