

# Bosses use social media at work more than employees

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“Do as I say, not as I do?” seems to be the motto of managers when it comes to using social media during working hours.

Every day, more than one billion people worldwide use social media – a habit that has also invaded the workplace.

How is this looked upon by the management?

New research from the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Bergen (UiB) shows that managers hold more negative attitudes to personal use of social media at work than subordinates.

Middle managers and top executives are most negative to personal social media use at work.

However, top executives, are also the ones who browse social network sites for private purposes at work the most.

Postdoctoral Fellow Cecilie Schou Andreassen at UiB’s Department of Psychosocial Science suggests that this can be explained by the fact that top executives have longer working hours, and that work and leisure are much more integrated than it is for employees.

“It is likely that managers are worried about reductions in output and financial loss as a result of use of private social media among their employees,” she says.

## **Singles surf more**

Schou Andreassen and her colleagues are among the first in the world to do research on the causes that may explain the attitudes and actual usages of private social media in the workplace.

About 11,000 Norwegian employees participated in the researchers’ study about the personal use of social media at work.

Here are the main findings:

- Younger employees use social media for private purposes more than older employees do.
- Men browse social network sites more for private purposes than women do.
- People with higher education are the most active social media users.
- Singles are more active on social media than those in relationships.
- Extrovert and nervous people are more active online.
- People who are structured/reliable/organised/prompt personalities, spend less time on social media

compared to their counterparts.

### **A social function**

The researchers have some indications as to why some surf and use social media for personal purposes more during working hours, and why young, single and educated men stand out.

“Social media probably has a greater social function for singles than it has for people in relationships,” says Schou Andreassen.

Those with higher education and socioeconomic status are likely more familiar with computer use, which may explain why they are more active online than those with lower education. Their work situation may also provide more opportunities to engage in private use of social media at work compared to those with lower education.

“The finding may also reflect that people with a high socioeconomic status are not as afraid to lose their job as those in low-status jobs,” says Schou Andreassen. “In addition, high rollers may be more interested in social media to advance their career.”

The study also showed that people who are outgoing, so-called extrovert personalities, and neurotic people spend more time online and on social media for personal purposes during working hours than their counterparts. People who are organised and punctual, however, spend the least time online for personal purposes during working hours.

“While outgoing people in general enjoy being social, anxious people may prefer to communicate digitally rather than in stress-inducing real life situations,” suggests Schou Andreassen.

“Ambitious people with a sense of order may surf less than others for private purposes, but will probably use the web actively for work-related business during office hours.”

### **Limiting social media at work**

The use of social media during working hours is closely related to attitudes. The survey showed that strict guidelines and limited access reduce private browsing at work.

“Good regulations combined with motivational work challenges can prevent private browsing during work hours,” says the postdoctoral fellow.

A heavy work load also limits the use of social media and private browsing at work. But Cecilie Schou Andreassen cautions against this.

“Although a demanding workload limits browsing, it is not recommended that managers overload their staff with work to prevent them from using private social media,” she says.

So then, should employers worry that private browsing hampers output and leads to financial loss?

Different studies provides conflicting answers to this.

“Some studies suggest that companies suffer financial losses as a result of private browsing; while other studies suggest that private browsing has the same refreshing effect on the mind-set as going for a walk,” says Cecilie Schou Andreassen.

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 [The finding may reflect that people with a high socioeconomic status are not as afraid to lose their job as those in low-status jobs, according to the researcher. \(Photo: Colourbox\) \[7\]](#)

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[Predictors of Use of Social Network Sites at Work - A Specific Type of Cyberloafing \(2014\) Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication doi:10.1111/jcc4.12085 \[15\]](#)

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