

Behaving Badly

Jobs *How your off-duty shenanigans can get you in deep trouble.*

By Duff McCutcheon

In hindsight, you have to wonder what prompted a Toronto FC soccer fan to express his admiration for the odious FHRITP meme—enthusiastically and loudly—to a female TV reporter, all while a news camera was rolling.

But he did, and within hours after the footage was aired on CITY TV news, he was (predictably) outed on social media as a network engineer at Hydro One. Hours later, and after a barrage of demands for the employee's head via social media, he was fired, with a Hydro One executive telling the Toronto Star that “respect for all people is engrained in the Code of Conduct and in our Core Values and we are committed to a work environment where discrimination or harassment of any type is met with zero tolerance.”

(For those who may have missed it, the FHRITP phenomenon involves individuals sneaking up on [typically female] TV reporters and yelling an obscene remark into the microphone.)

It's a cautionary tale that illustrates how bad behavior during off-duty hours can come back to haunt you—even if you're not talking about your job or wearing a company logo. All it takes is a cell phone, some incriminating footage and a quick post on Twitter or Facebook before your “crime” is broadcast on the World Wide Web and someone identifies you as Joe Blow of company X.

Saturday night meet Monday morning

“Although the Hydro One guy clearly wasn't on-duty when he offered his commentary on the FHRITP incident, that doesn't mean his conduct was irrelevant to the employment relationship,” says Jason Beeho, an employment lawyer at Rubin Thomlinson LLP. “When an employer is making



a decision about hiring an individual, or about maintaining the employment of an individual, it is their prerogative to consider that person's overall suitability based on a variety of factors, including education, qualifications, professionalism—and character. To a reasonable employer, an individual's participation in and/or enthusiastic endorsement of FHRITP harassment speaks volumes about his character and about the quality of his judgment.”

There's also a certain “creep” factor: Will an individual's co-workers feel comfortable working alongside someone who's been shown to hold some unsavoury views?

Ken Cross is SLH

Transport's Senior Manager, Human Resources Business Partner. Here's what he has to say: “While SLH team-members have always represented the company in a positive light, in workplaces generally there could be repercussive effects of off-duty behavior on the workplace.

“Some examples are loss of respect for fellow employees,

Codes of conduct

A key employer tool that lays out expectations around behavior, professionalism and ethics, both on and off the job, is a code of conduct that all new employees sign after reading.

At SLH Transport, all staff are required to review the firm's code upon the start of their employment as well as on an on-going basis throughout their career, according to Cross.

“Although the code cannot address or provide examples for every situation which an employee may encounter, at work or not, there are basic principles to which every employee must adhere. That said, common sense also plays a significant role. We would expect employees to follow the principles of the code any time they are at work or representing the company either directly or indirectly.”

One thing the infamous Toronto FC fan now probably understands very well is that his momentary indiscretion has become a permanent part of his online resume. When a future employer types his name into google to see what comes up, his past FHRITP support will be at the top of the search results—and that's pretty hard to look past.

And all employers use a quick Google search to see who they're dealing with. In fact, what Google says about you is equally if not more important than what's on your resume. So be mindful of what you post (and what others post about you). **TT**

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