Facebook could cost you your job!

Social networking websites have rocked our world to its core.

Before the days of Facebook, Myspace and Twitter, people had to actually *meet* with each other, chat over the phone or even send letters in the post (gasp!)

Now, we have an open, interactive world where we can satisfy our curiosity by delving into other people’s social network profiles, whilst sculpting our own personal online identities.

We all want a slice of the social networking pie, whether it’s to use the websites to keep in touch with friends or simply to keep the world updated on our personal lives.

But be careful, this pie could end up burning you and, more importantly, your wallet, if you’re not careful.

**Online identity**

Having a reputable professional identity is key to having a successful career, so it’s no surprise that we all try and keep a professional attitude in the work place.

Of course, it’s also important to let your hair down and your boss will be oblivious to the fact that you drank your local bar dry the night before, right?

Well, thanks to social networking sites, we’re now all celebrities who can get snapped at any moment and these incriminating pictures will probably be proudly displayed on the web for all to see, including your boss.

This could be especially risky if you ever pull a sicky and then discover last night’s antics have been documented in pictures and posted online for your boss’ one-click-away convenience.

Your online identity could also damage the company that you work for. Don’t underestimate the fact that clients and contacts of your company may look at your social network profile, so you should ensure yours represent your employers in the highest light.

More and more people are realising just how damaging social networking sites can be to our careers, with Google boss, Eric Schmidt, suggesting that people should even change their names to escape their online identities. But just how much trouble can they get you in?

**You’re fired/not hired**

Reckless use of social networking sites could get you instantly fired from your job and there have been a number of cases where people have been given the boot for what they posted online.

For instance, one high profile case involved a woman who commented on her Facebook status that she hated her job and called her boss an unsavoury name.

Her boss promptly responded that she was fired and her P45 would arrive in the post shortly.

So, no matter how much of a rubbish day you’ve had at work or if your colleague is annoying you, you should never even consider sharing this information on a social networking site.

Social networking sites can also act as a barrier, preventing you from landing your dream job. Potential employers may ‘google’ you and if they don’t like what they see from your online identity, you could miss out.

**Protecting your privacy**

So, the main issue is managing your online identity so you can control which people see what.

There’s no reason you can’t have a 'professional’ online identity and a ‘casual’ one, but the key is making sure they don’t mix.

If you haven’t already done this, the first thing you should do is switch every social networking site that reflects your ‘casual’ identity to maximum privacy.

This means that if a potential employer is hunting you down online, they won’t be exposed to the events of your private life.

However, this won’t help if you’re already ‘friends’ with your current employer, as they’ll consequently have full, V.I.P access to your online antics.

So, it’s a good idea to ‘clean up’ your existing online identity.

Take time to look through your comments and photos and remove any which you think represent you in a negative light. You should also consider removing contacts who you don’t regularly correspond with.

This will mean you’ll have a cleaner, more organised online profile that you can easily monitor and manage.

There *are* other social networking websites where you can create a reputable, professional online identity which could actually boost your career prospects.

Check out [Linked In](http://www.linkedin.com/nhome/) and [Climber.com](http://www.climber.com/) for online networks that are aimed at promoting successful career networking.

You should put a lot of time in making these online profiles thorough and perhaps focus on them as your main social websites.

The bottom line is, if you want to keep your job or boost your career, you should strictly monitor your social networking websites and avoid making foolish mistakes that could put your job in jeopardy.

 **Summary (15-20 lines) article and Make (5) questions must inspire people to explain their thoughts and opinions on the article or other everyday experiences with media.**