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## ***Tech changes affecting your career now, part 1 of 3***

By Paperitalo Staff

Back when I was EVP of a famous engineering company's US location, graffiti appeared on the bathroom wall only once, written with a heavy felt tip marker: "I don't give a dxxx how they do it in Helsinki." Obviously a local a bit frustrated with our trainers.

A couple of weeks ago, Procter & Gamble (# 68 on the Fortune Global 500) flew four women that blog about baby issues to Cincinnati, Ohio for a meeting with top brass in the diaper business. The purpose of the meeting? To discuss alleged problems with Pampers Dry Max, a new diaper P & G recently introduced. P & G, ever sensitive to public relations issues, has by this action acknowledged the importance of blogging in today's world.

BP (#4 on the Fortune Global 500), the hapless oil company apparently responsible for the sheen on the Gulf of Mexico, has roughly 5,000 followers on its official Twitter page about the incident. However, it is reported a faux BP Twitter page, a parody on the real thing, has 20,000 followers.

According to The National Law Journal's online edition, 1 June 2010, the big brand conscious law firms are "mortified" by the Facebook pages that are popping up, such as "slaves at Skadden."

In November 2008, a Missouri mother, Lori Drew, was found guilty of three misdemeanor charges in a hoax on Myspace that was linked to the suicide of 13 year old Megan Meier.

In less than twenty years we have gone from a world where expressions of frustration and downright evil intent have moved from the limited audience of a bathroom stall to the ability for anyone to spread opinions, true or false, to the entire world in nanoseconds. Public relations has been elevated to a place of importance, for companies and their employees, which most have not yet even begun to grasp.

The P & G diaper launch is fighting for its life in the blogosphere. BP is fighting for its life in every electronic media available. The Freedom of Speech Genie is out of the bottle, no matter location, no matter local laws (for the record, I am a stalwart supporter of Freedom of Speech). For the career pulp and paper industry professional, this has extremely serious implications on two levels.

First, your company must be cognizant of these conditions and constantly vigilant. As can now be seen with real live cases, an incident "going viral" in cyberspace can quickly bring the biggest of companies to its knees. If your company is not paying attention to this and does not have a plan in place that can be implemented with the dispatch speed of a fire department, it is only a matter of when, not if, this problem strikes it. Phone apps that can stream live video to the Internet are now available, and employees and contractors wishing to do you harm can stand inside your fence and send your disaster to the Internet as it unfolds from an up close and detailed vantage point. You are not going to fix this potential problem by the quaint action of confiscating cell phones.

As an employee, you must be very careful with what you post anywhere. A cook brought in to prepare the state dinner at the White House for the president of Mexico a couple of weeks ago twittered about the experience. He allegedly did his twittering outside the White House grounds, but who cares? I wouldn't hire him to prepare a takeout dinner myself. And this is where you can get in trouble. No matter where you are, no matter the laws protecting freedom of speech where you live, you can be fired for publicly commenting on conditions at your employer's place of business. And we have learned "publicly" does not just mean Twitter or Facebook or other such locations. It can be, for instance, your email that, once sent, is passed around or posted by others.

Thanks to modern technology, intangible perils in the world are greater than ever. As pulp and paper technical professionals, we have a bias to treat these as silly things, not important. Perpetuate such an attitude at your own risk. Marshall McLuhan's statement, "the medium is the message," spoken over four decades ago, is truer today than ever before.

For safety this week, it might be a good idea to roll out a way to use modern communications methods in a positive way--to promote safety within your mill. Some are doing such things already, but I am sure more ideas can be generated.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##