

Facebook

Would you accept your boss's invitation to online friendship? Is technology changing the rules of office etiquette?

1 Are you on 'Facebook'? Which answer (a–e) is closest to your own? Compare your answer with a partner.

(a) "Of course!" (b) "Absolutely not!" (c) "Not yet!" (d) "What's Facebook?" (e) "No, but I'm on MySpace"

2 Put the paragraph headings (a–d) in the correct order by skimming the article.

(a) Company history (b) Socialising with colleagues (c) New office rules (d) 'An offer you cannot refuse'

Facebook or face-to-face? [1] Your boss invites you to become his friend on Facebook. Would you accept? Alternatively, would you invite your boss to become your online friend? Do you really want him or her to see your wild party photos? Bloggers have recently been discussing the problem of what happens when professional and personal worlds collide. Some say it is wise to reject the boss's offer of friendship, while others think rejecting the offer is a sure way of decreasing your chances of promotion. One boss claims he would be happy to accept an employee's offer of online friendship, but would never initiate that friendship himself.

[2] Even if you believe that there is a clear line between your work and private life, that line is becoming more blurred. Once, the boss invited a subordinate to dinner. Nowadays, there are more opportunities for out-of-work encounters. Facebook users can classify people in different groups, such as friends, relatives and co-workers, and give each group a different level of access. Maybe this could be the answer if you want to make sure the boss doesn't see those photos.

[3] Facebook began in 2004. It was originally a social site for students at Harvard University, but it grew quickly and today, employs around 500 people. In 2006, Facebook was opened up to everyone and nowadays has over 70 million users worldwide. 14 million photographs are uploaded every day. The site is not without controversy, especially concerns about privacy and identity theft. Do users actually post up too much information about themselves?

[4] Facebook is just one example of how technology is changing 'relationship etiquette' in the office. The rise of e-mail has led to fewer face-to-face meetings and while communication by IM (Instant messenger) and e-mail is effective, it has brought a new set of problems. Humour and irony don't work well in e-mails. Some people use e-mail to express things they wouldn't dare to say to a person. The rules of remote conversation, to be brief and businesslike, are constantly being broken. Maybe we should go back to using the telephone more to sharpen up our communication skills. No, sorry; there goes my mobile again ...

3 Read the whole article. In what ways is technology changing the office environment?

4 Decide if these words are red (three-star, two-star, one star) or black words in MED.

blogger	promotion	initiate	subordinate	collide
access (n)	controversy	etiquette	mobile (n)	irony

*** Very common words
 ** Common words
 * Fairly common words
 Less common words in **black**
 (Macmillan English Dictionary
 2nd Ed. 2007)

5 Look at the blog posts. In small groups, discuss how you would answer them and report your ideas to the class.

(A) Help! My boss has invited me to become his friend on Facebook. Do you think I should accept?

(B) My boss only ever e-mails me. Is he scared to deal with problems face-to-face? Should I speak to him about this?

(C) I would like to invite my boss to be my friend on Facebook? Is it a good idea? I am afraid he might misinterpret my request.

(D) Should I let my staff use MSN at work? I think that they may be just wasting time communicating with friends.