

# Case Study

## Chapter 12

Chris works for an accounting firm. He has increasingly become unhappy at work with more responsibilities and less appreciation. To add insult to injury, he was just passed over for a partner position for the third time despite how many overtime hours he's worked.

Chris's friend on Facebook posts some complaints about his job. Chris replies and post negative comments about his company, saying "it sucks" and that the senior partner at his firm is "a jerk".

Later that week, Chris is called into the office and shown the posts by the senior partner. Chris is in shock because those posts are private. He later finds out that a colleague, and Facebook friend, had shown the posts to the partners. He never finds out who because he's Facebook friends with most of his colleagues. The senior partner informs Chris that he is fired and a security guard escorts Chris out of the building.

- 1. Does the employer have a legal right to fire Chris?**
- 2. Do employers check Facebook? Do they have access to material that is posted as private, not public?**
- 3. What can employees do to make sure this doesn't happen to them?**
- 4. What could Chris have done differently?**
- 5. Do you know anyone who has lost their job due to online activity? Do you agree or disagree with this consequence?**

**Sample Answers:**

1. Employers do have a legal right to fire employees who slander the company and/or managers online. However, the employer can argue that Chris has a negative and uncooperative attitude, which is the reason they fired him. They don't have to prove it is because of the Facebook posts.
2. Yes, some employers check social media during the hiring phase and also once someone has been hired in order to monitor their online activities. Whether this is fair or not, the fact remains that anything posted online can be accessed and retrieved. In fact, large companies have entire IT departments that are able to investigate an employee's online activities.
3. Employees should not post anything negative about the company or managers online or through email. These messages are now written evidence and can be used to justify punitive action, including dismissals.
4. Chris should have spoken to the partners about his desire to pursue opportunities for advancement and what he could do to attain a partner position in the future. This would demonstrate a positive attitude and willingness to do what it takes to become partner. He should not vent his frustrations online.
5. Answers will vary, but students are encouraged to think of examples in order to understand that this can, and does happen, and to caution them regarding what they post online.