
Human resources gathering aims at social Web sites

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KILGORE — Twitter, Youtube and Flickr were the main topics of discussion at a Kilgore Economic Development Corp. media luncheon for human resources professionals this past week.

“Social media has made its way into the workplace, and employers are having a hard time policing it. It can be a good tool and a bad tool,” said attorney Rosemary Sage Jones, guest speaker of the luncheon.

Jones recommended setting up company policies to manage employee use of social media sites and the legal ramifications that sometimes result from their misuse.

She described eight types of social media sites — sharing, discussion, social networks, microblogs, life streams, livecasts, virtual worlds and publishing.

Sharing sites such as YouTube, and social networks such as MySpace and Facebook, are among the most heavily visited sites among employees, she said.

“Don't fool yourself into thinking you can ban it,” Jones said, telling the group that many employees use social media when they are off the clock and accessing it with their personal property.

Jones said the chief reasons employers are hesitant to allow employees to use social media are because of fear of losing control, confidential information being revealed and because it is time consuming. Many employers also fear legal liabilities.

Social media does have its perks though, Jones said.

“It can further (use of company) products and services. It helps establish credentials and helps build your professional reputation. There are good things about using social media.”

Many different companies in the area have taken to using social media as a marketing tool. School districts, cities, fire departments, police officials and economic development corporations have begun using the outlets to foster open communication with the public.

KEDC began using microblogging site Twitter after discovering the site could be a valuable marketing tool and facilitate communication with the media.

“We keep usage of it to a minimum,” said KEDC Marketing and Development Director Jana Russell.

KEDC has a corporate Twitter account, a Web site blog, and each employee uses Link'd In.

Despite the effectiveness of other forms of advertising, Russell believes word of mouth marketing still reigns

supreme for many people. Word of mouth is based on the principal that people tend to believe their friends, she said.

"Social media is basically an extension of that."