

Where did the discretion gene go?

Here's Drew's take on Online Civility

Somewhere, with the advent of social media tools, we lost our discretion gene. Now many people will point to Facebook and teenagers and say that THEY have no filter. THEY share inappropriate things. THEY bully their peers.

And they do. But so do we. The adults.

I have seen many professionals that I know and respect say things online (in chat rooms, Facebook, Twitter, their blogs etc) that they would never say out loud in a meeting, at a cocktail party or if they were in front of the person in question.

Before you hit "publish" or "update" you need to ask yourself these questions:

- Would I say that out loud in front of this group of people or person?
- Would I say it out loud in front of my kids?
- Would I say it out loud in front of my co-workers?
- Would I be proud to have this associated with my name for all time?

Because the truth of the matter is...you are saying in front of those people, saying it out loud in front of your kids, friends, family and peers and it will be associated with your name for all time.

Somehow the artificial "wall" that the computer screen creates makes people feel more removed and somehow immune to the consequences of their words. Of course, that's not the case at all. In fact, thanks to Google's archival abilities, if

anything – we should be more polite, more discreet, more respectful and more careful about what we say online.

But, as a society, we haven't learned that painful lesson yet.

Until the discretion gene reappears, employers need to be mindful of the risk they're at, in terms of their employees behavior. Every company should have a social media policy, much like we all have sexual harassment policies today.

You can find a good sampling of social media policy examples [here](#).

As people, we need to think before we type. And as employers, we need to protect ourselves until everyone does just that.