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Heres A Tip: Employees Need Guidance on Social Media

If you know anything at all about the NFL, you know that Peyton Manning is one of the leagues great quarterbacks. What you may not know about Peyton is that he's a very generous tipper. Jon, a (former) server at the Angus Barn in Raleigh, NC, wanted the world to know. (Deadspin has the story [here](#)). Courtesy of Jon, a photo of Mannings restaurant receipt, showing an extremely generous tip, made it online. And now Jon, who obviously didn't think before he posted, provides a good example of why employers should educate employees on social media use and consequences.

Employees often fail to make a connection between social media use on their own time and possible ramifications in the workplace. In training employees on social media policies, I try to help them understand that *personal* use of social media is not the same as *private* use. What you post online is broadcast to the world. If you identify where you work, everything else you broadcast to the world is connected to your employer. So, for example, if an employee posts discriminatory remarks or says nasty things about a coworker online, its as if the employee is making discriminatory remarks or saying nasty things about a coworker in the office. In both cases, the employer may have a legal obligation to deal with the situation.

Setting potential legal liability aside, risks remain when employees post business information that they shouldn't. Jon may have assumed that what he was doing was harmless, and some may argue that there's a difference between posting something nice and posting something nasty. But if Peyton has a problem with the post, he's going to take it up with the restaurant, not with Jon. The Angus Barn may not have a legal obligation to keep its customer information private (although there are plenty of circumstances where employers do have such an obligation HIPAA anyone?), the restaurants reputation is at risk. The restaurant may worry that celebrities rolling through Raleigh will look for a different place to dine if they're worried about their tipping habits being made public.

Employees need to understand the legal *and* reputation-related risks that result from errant posts. Discipline helps get the point across, but pointed communication to avoid the problem in the first place serves everyone better.