



Eugene D. Fanning Center for Business Communication
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00-07 TN

Vitruvius Sportswear, Inc.

A Question of Online Privacy

DATE: [Today's Date]

TO: Tim Kelleher
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

FROM: Ellen Marie Blystone

SUBJECT: COMPANY POLICY REGARDING ONLINE PRIVACY

This memo recommends a communication plan in response to a personal issue between Dennis Gardener and Zachary Crowell concerning online privacy. It will briefly summarize the details of the circumstance at hand, discuss its implications and their importance and provide a specific list of recommended actions.

BACKGROUND

A personal issue, concerning online privacy, has arisen between Dennis Gardner, Manager of Marketing, and Zachary Crowell, newly appointed Vice President for Sales and Marketing. Through an unauthorized conversation with Rick Sanchez, IT Systems Engineer, Gardner learned that Crowell, while evaluating the company's outbound online traffic, came across personal e-mail messages sent by Gardner to his doctor, containing information Gardener did not intend to publicly disclose. Gardner, who believes he was in accordance with personal employee computer usage guidelines, feels that his privacy has been violated through Crowell's "unethical" behavior and believes he should be compensated for infringement of his rights.

DISCUSSION

The implications relating to this circumstance (in order of importance) are as follows:

- The violation of privacy felt by Gardner;
- The unethical employee communication practices at Vitruvius Sportswear, Inc.;

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- The personal computer usage guidelines of Vitruvius Sportswear, Inc. and their implementation among employees

If one of these issues is left unattended, undesirable outcomes are likely to occur:

- If the current circumstance at hand is not resolved, a distrustful atmosphere will continue between Gardener and Crowell and inevitably spread amongst other employees. This may possibly begin the deterioration of a successful company.
- If the unethical practices (i.e. the confidentially breach by Sanchez, the appropriateness of Crowell's investigation, the appropriateness of the means chosen by Gardner to rectify the situation) are not addressed, unethical communication practices will continue, damaging a seven-year built reputation of Vitruvius Sportswear, Inc. This reputation is one that is assessed by current and potential customers, current and potential employees, and shareholders.
- If personal computer guidelines and their implementation amongst employees are left undressed, then personal computer use may be misunderstood again in the future, by ill-informed employees and/or managers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are recommended to properly deal with the implications of the initial issue:

- Speak with ALL employees that are aware of Gardner's private medical information ASAP. Each employee needs to be reminded to respect the privacy of Gardner in respect to the issue. (Action: Kelleher)
- Arrange a meeting with Gardener and Crowell ASAP. This meeting should allow both parties to present their side of the story, their beliefs behind their actions, and their suggestions on how to resolve the conflict in the presence of a mediator. (Action: Kelleher)
- Discuss Vitruvius Sportswear, Inc. ethics policy. This discussion, within the next week, should identify the guidelines comprising the company's ethics policy, evaluate if employees are abiding by these guidelines, and decide on corrective actions that should be taken if employees are not abiding. (Action: Executive Officers)

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- Assemble a memo communicating the objectives reached through the ethics policy discussion. This memo can be immediately distributed to all employees of the company after the completion of the ethics policy discussion. (Action: Kelleher)
- Reconstruct the company's vague guidelines on personal computer usage and the method(s) they are conveyed and enforced on employees. The method(s) need to be able to reach current employees, as well as, future employees. A diverse committee of employees (entry level, executive, etc.) should be consulted for unbiased input. This reconstruction should take place within the next two weeks. (Action: Employee Guidelines Committee)

ACTIONS TAKEN

Information is being gathered concerning the legality of personal privacy and company computer usage.

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