



because it has also become a “farcebook” of sorts, with ridiculous and comical posts. The courts will need to decide the ethical culpability of Facebook and other platform providers for monitoring site content.

And users can’t shrug their responsibility when it comes to checking the accuracy of items viewed and for demonstrating intelligence and wisdom in what they post. Users often show a disregard for facts, reach conclusions without credible evidence, and show an ignorance of history and the lessons learned from the past. Will this characterize their judgment in conducting company business? And what about the false stories that spread quickly and alter societal views and cultural values? Social media hastens such changes with unprecedented speed. A false narrative took a whole country captive and thrust it headlong into World War II. It proved even smart people are gullible.

Truth, honesty and integrity are hitched to the same post, and individuals who are willing to form conclusions without intelligent thought will always be subject to ethical disconnects. If committed to good ethics, Facebook can be an incredible tool in building positive relationships, making smart choices and engaging our world to make it better. Hmmm. That sounds a lot like IRWA’s mission too. 🌟

The Impact of Social Media

With great power comes great responsibility

BY BRAD YARBROUGH

In 2003, the website Facemash was created to give Harvard students the prankish opportunity to score the ‘hotness’ of one another. Mark Zuckerberg, its inventor, wrote, “But one thing is certain—it’s that I’m a jerk for making this site. Oh well.”

From the beginning, he faced accusations of wrongdoing. Amid controversy, Zuckerberg launched Facebook in 2004. Now a social networking juggernaut, it has surpassed predictions for its potential.

Yet, as one of the most successful companies in history, it continues to face ethical challenges. These are primarily about user privacy, data collection and the control of content. Most recently the site was accused of permitting fake news reports about presidential candidates and allowing gruesome videos to be posted.

While Facebook executives grapple with internal ethics issues, our profession must also address serious concerns about its prolific use among our employees and associates. Why? Because Facebook has become a powerful “forcebook.” By definition, force is the capacity to persuade or convince.

Impact on People

Consider that there are nearly two billion users worldwide with over half of them actively using the site daily. Evan Asano,

CEO of Mediakix, reported that of the two hours the average person uses social media daily, 35 minutes is on Facebook. Recently, a former Google product manager revealed that Facebook is purposely designed to produce an addictive need to use it. Mental health professionals are universally expressing concern. In 2010, Dr. Brent Conrad, a clinical psychologist who founded TechAddiction, wrote an eye opening series on the subject and lists 21 reasons why people have become obsessed with it. It’s a must read for company executives.

Facebook holds countless individuals in its alluring grip. You might be one of those—or have them working in your organization. Besides distracting your employees and robbing the company of their time and focus, think about the most basic ethics threats. Users can leverage what they find to sabotage a company’s reputation. They can access coworker profiles and use their preferences, beliefs and convictions against them. And if an employee videos and uploads a company-related event, a disastrous outcome can easily follow.

A Disregard for Facts

Indeed, with great power comes great responsibility. Facebook is a powerful tool, and as users and employers of users, there is a tremendous responsibility to face the ethical issues with proactive training, intervention and policy-making. That’s



Brad Yarbrough is the Owner and CEO of Pilgrim Land Services, a right of way services company in Oklahoma City. With over 35 years experience in oil and gas, he has clients nationwide and an extensive network of landmen and agents.