Sample Instant Messaging Policy

Note: This policy is for informational purposes only. No reliance should be placed on this document without legal counsel. All electronic policies should be developed with the assistance of a corporate attorney and human resources director/manager.

This policy provides employees with effective and consistent instant messaging (IM) use and content standards. This IM policy applies to all employees of ABC Co. throughout the world and messages and information created and transmitted via the company's internal IM system.

Rules

1. Employees are prohibited from downloading and using personal, consumer-grade IM software (e.g., AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo!, or MSN) to transmit messages via the public Internet. Employees who violate this rule are subject to termination.

2. All IM communications and information transmitted, received, or archived in the company's IM system belong to the company.

3. Employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy when using the company's IM system. The company reserves the right to monitor, access, and disclose all employee IM communications.

4. The IM system is intended for business use only. Employees are prohibited from wasting computer resources, colleagues' time, or their own time sending personal instant messages or engaging in unnecessary chat related to business.

5. Treat IM messages as business records that may be retained and used as evidence in litigation, audits, and investigations.

6. Employees are required to retain all business-related instant messages and delete nonessential messages in accordance with the company's written IM retention and deletion schedule. Please talk to ABC's compliance officer or chief information officer if you need a copy or have questions about ABC's IM retention and deletion policies, practices, and procedures.

7. Always use professional and appropriate language in all instant messages. Employees are prohibited from sending abusive, harassing, threatening, menacing, discriminatory, pornographic, disrespectful, or otherwise offensive instant messages.

8. Employees are prohibited from sending jokes, rumors, gossip, or unsubstantiated opinions via IM. These communications, which often contain objectionable material, are easily misconstrued when communicated electronically.

9. Employees may not use IM to transmit confidential, proprietary, personal, or potentially embarrassing information about the company, employees, clients, business associates, or other third parties.

10. Employees may not share confidential, proprietary, or potentially embarrassing business-related or personal IMs with the media, competitors, prospective employers, or other third parties.

11. Employees are to share their IM usernames with colleagues strictly on a need-to-know basis.

If you have any questions about the above policies, address them to the compliance officer or chief information officer before signing the following agreement.

I have read ABC's IM policy and agree to abide by it. I understand that violation of any of the above policies and procedures may result in discipline, up to and including my termination.

_____
Employee Name (Printed)

_____ _____
Employee Signature Date