

How your virtual life can affect your real-life family law disputes

Written by Australian Business

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Logging on to a favorite social networking site - either for personal or business purposes - can be a way to forge new relationships or a fun way to pass the time. They can be both enjoyable and productive, letting you keep in touch with distant family members, make new business contacts and make new friends who share your interests. Sounds pretty good, right?

There is a downside to social networking: it is easy to forget how very public our online activity is, especially when involved in a family-related legal dispute like a divorce, custody fight or a child support/alimony action. A single moment of weakness during which you express frustration with the way your case is going (even if your frustration is warranted) or insult your former spouse can have a huge impact on your case if your comment ends up in the courtroom.

Keeping a handle on your online personality

Social media evidence has become so prevalent that anyone involved in a legal case needs to use discretion when posting comments, pictures or location "check-ins" online. It can be helpful for those dealing with legal issues in any area of the law - but particularly family law - to write and post everything as if the judge or other authority figure would later read it. That piece of advice goes a long way toward tempering anger and the instinctive reaction to "lash out" at the situation or person that is causing us distress. Temperance can be difficult these days, since we live in a digital age where people are comfortable putting intimate details of their lives online, some preferring to do that instead of talking out problems with a friend or loved one.

Even if comments are deleted almost immediately after posting them, it is still possible that there is a digital record. Perhaps that is why it can be a good idea to take a break from non-business-related social networking and blogging while you are dealing with legal issues.

Deactivating your accounts can help protect you from several common types of online evidence seen in divorce and family law cases, including: -Location information that could put you in a bad light (for example, if your social network profile shows that you are spending 12 hours a day

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on the job and leaving your children in the care of a loved one, your former spouse might use that information against you in a custody dispute by arguing that you are an inattentive parent)-Being "tagged" or "tweeted" by friends posting photos of you that could be potentially embarrassing-Having others - your online friends and family - post derogatory comments about your ex-spouse on your profile without your knowledge-Losing your temper and ranting about your situation

Do you have questions about how social media evidence could be used against you in a current family law dispute? Want to know how similar information about your former spouse/co-parent might bolster your case? For answers to these questions and other domestic issues, contact an experienced family law attorney in your area.