Some of the sources and statistics in this document are fictitious and merely exemplify a possible response.

This investigation is about the **distraction of social media websites and how it affects New Zealand businesses**. In many workplaces it is common to find workers checking their mobile phones and computers constantly for Facebook updates, tweets or Instagram feeds. Workers are off-task and being distracted by social media, causing a lack of productivity and a loss of profit for their employers.

This report investigates whether or not the use of social media websites is a problem in workplaces in New Zealand and whether it affects a range of businesses. Three solutions to this issue will be provided and I will recommend which in my opinion is the best solution.

A ==Massey University study== stated that the "proliferation of collaboration and social tools designed to increase productivity is actually costing businesses millions of dollars per year in lost productivity". It also stated that "nearly 60% of work interruptions now involve either using tools like email, social networks, text messaging and IM, or switching windows among disparate standalone tools and applications. In fact, 45% of employees work only 15 minutes or less without getting interrupted, and 53% waste at least one hour a day due to all types of distractions". ①

These distractions reduce productivity as workers are not able to complete given tasks in time due to the distractions of social media websites. The employer still has to pay the employee on an hourly rate even if the employee is not achieving the requirements of the job.

In an article titled 'Who wastes the most time at work?' published in ==NZ Investigate magazine== it was concluded that "64% of employees visit non-work related websites each day. In this category, the amount of time wasted per week on non-work related websites is as follows: less than one hour 39%, 1-2 hours 29%, 2-5 hours 21%, 6-10 hours 8% and 10+ hours 3%. Contributing to these percentages are social media networks. The winners for the time-loss warp are Tumblr (57%), Facebook (52%), Twitter (17%), Instagram (11%) and SnapChat (4%)." ①

In February and March 2015 ==salary.co.nz== surveyed more than 3,200 people to find out how and why people waste time at work on their computers. Of the top six reasons why employees waste time at work, being underpaid ranked dead last at 18 percent. Most employees - 35 percent - said they waste time at work because they're not challenged enough. That was followed closely by the 34 percent of employees who claimed they waste time because their hours are too long, 32 percent whose company gives them no incentive to work harder, and 30 percent who are unsatisfied. Additionally, 23 percent of respondents said they waste time at work simply because they're bored. ①

While this personal use of social media sites is going on, productive work is not happening. With reduced productivity, businesses cannot grow. The worst effect is that reduced productivity affects a business's profitability. A decrease in profitability affects stakeholders such as shareholders and investors, and customers. A dramatic decrease in productivity will affect shareholders who could receive lower dividends as a consequence of lower profit. Customer service may suffer if staff members are distracted by being slow to respond to emails or and not completing their work in a timely manner. Customers may take their business somewhere else, further decreasing profit. An ultimate consequence is that lower profit may mean a business has to make some staff redundant.

==*Results of student's survey of five workers from different office-based workplaces, omitted from this exemplar.*== ①

From my research, and after looking at the results of my survey of workers, I have come up with three possible solutions to the issue of distraction of social media in the workplace.

Solution 1 – ban access

Ban access to social media sites on the employer's computer system and ==make known to employees in the induction process== that social media sites cannot be accessed during working hours. The first part of this is easy as undesirable sites, ones that people waste time on, can be blocked in the computer system. The second part is hard to police because while an employee may sign the policy saying they will not use work time to visit social media sites, it is hard to prevent them from accessing them using their personal cell phones. Therefore ==it is important that the business has a policy that informs employees of the consequences of breaching the internet usage policy. There should be consequences.== ②
The advantage of a ban is that the firm's computer system will not be at threat of viruses and malware that often come from social media sites. Also, workers will be less likely to be distracted from their work. A disadvantage is that workers may feel resentful and feel that they are being treated like children.

Solution 2 – set limits and restrictions on the use of social networking sites

It is possible for a computer system to be set up so that workers have only a certain amount of "quota time" per day, such as one hour. Under this system workers may only access restricted sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TradeMe for the limited number of minutes. If the quota time is 60 minutes then this time can be used any time during the day so the person may access the sites when they should be working, not necessarily during their break times.

The advantage of this solution is that workers are less likely to be distracted during work hours and therefore are more likely to be productive. By setting boundaries on social media use, the employer is indicating some trust in employees, while ensuring they do not 'waste' an excessive amount of time using websites that are clearly not related to their work.

A disadvantage is workers might be resentful if their access is limited, their morale might be lower and they might not be any more productive. Another disadvantage is that the limit is only imposed on employees who use the workplace computer to access the sites; it does not prevent workers from wasting time on the sites using their own phones or small devices, using the workplace's wi-fi or using their own data.

Solution 3 – allow access but monitor employees' use of social networking sites

Under this solution there is free access to all sites but employees are made aware that there might be random or targeting monitoring of their use. At the time of their appointment employees would sign an internet usage policy that includes a warning that software has been installed to monitor the sites visited and the time spent at sites by each of the firm's computers. This should act as a deterrent. The policy might state that overuse of the sites will be detected and that there will be consequences for excessive usage.

The advantage of this approach to the employee is that they are allowed access and are being trusted not to abuse the access. For the employer

A disadvantage is that the monitoring software must be bought and installed and that an IT administrator must have the monitoring as part of their workload. Both of these are additional costs (capital investment in the technology and the staff expense for the administrator) which reduce profits.

Also, this solution could affect employment relations. This can reduce the morale of a hardworking staff member who gets through a lot of work but is resentful because their colleague is shirking work by spending far too much time checking their Facebook updates.

My recommended option is to set limits on social media usage by using a quota time system (solution 2). As part of a new employee's induction they should be informed in writing that automatic access to certain sites, such as Facebook, is blocked but that limited access is available to a maximum of, say, 60 minutes per day. This time is not cumulative – if it is not used in a day the time is lost. The reason for limiting access needs to be explained in the context of workers being expected to focus on their work, rather than on personal use of social networking sites. The quota time approach indicates that the business has trust in their employees and is treating them with respect. Some people may choose to go to the gym during their lunchbreak, others will read hardcopies or online versions of a newspaper, or do crosswords, so it is acceptable that workers be able to access their social networking accounts. Some workers might choose to work through their 'lunch break' and then spend time at another part of the day using quota time to explore the net or check their TradeMe listings or job-hunt on Seek. The cost of installing the Websense software will reduce profits but as it is an automated system that can produce user access reports so there is no need for an IT person to spend any of their time monitoring the employees' usage.

Employers also need to take notice of why people actually waste work time on social media. The salary.co.nz research showed that most people who waste work time do so because they are not happy in their work – they are bored, not challenged or do not feel valued. Through conversations between workers and their managers or, more formally through an appraisal process, employers should try to gather information about how workers are feeling about their work and how committed they feel to the business aims and goals.

All sources cited and a bibliography provided.