

Source Material #1

Email From: Justine Timmons, CEO Sent: Monday, September 24

To: Employees of Niagara Equipment Corp.

Subject: Workplace Internet Use

Beginning next month, we are instituting a new policy for all employees regarding Internet use at work. To limit access to inappropriate and social media websites, we are installing new filtering software that will block those sites on every company-owned computer.

Although management recognizes that the Internet is a valuable tool, especially for our creative department and sales team, we are also aware of the potentially costly downsides to unlimited access. According to a survey by Salary.com, at least 64 percent of employees nationwide admit to visiting non-work-related websites while on the job. This “cyberslacking,” as it is called, hurts productivity and wastes company resources. Workers who are distracted by checking their social media sites are clearly not giving their full attention to their jobs.

The other important reason that we are installing filters is to promote a positive workplace for all of our valued employees. When staff members use their computers to access offensive or inappropriate material that can be seen by their fellow workers, this creates a hostile workplace environment, thereby exposing the company to expensive and demoralizing lawsuits. Even social networking sites can lead to legal jeopardy if they are used to bully fellow workers. Other businesses have already faced harassment suits for just such activities.

A committee comprising representatives of each team will be formed to determine which sites to block. Please tell your team leader if you are interested in serving on this committee.

Thank you all for your cooperation and for your commitment to making Niagara Equipment the best place to work in Buffalo!

Best,
Justine Timmons, CEO

Source Material #2

From: Honoria Bell Sent: Tuesday, September 25

To: Justine Timmons, CEO CC: Employees of Niagara Equipment Corp.

Subject: Workplace Internet Use

Dear Ms. Timmons,

We, the undersigned employees of Niagara Equipment Corp., urge management to reconsider the installation of Internet-filtering software. While we recognize that it is in all our interests to promote productivity and a positive workplace environment, we believe that blocking our free access to the Internet is the wrong way to go about this. First, there is more to that Salary.com statistic that you cite than meets the eye. Most of the “cyberslackers” in that survey surf the Internet for only one hour per week. This is comparable to taking a walk to the water cooler or chatting about last night’s game with a colleague. According to author Laura Vanderkam, “no one can get through a whole workday without taking a break.” In fact, one 2009 study found that workers who could occasionally check the Internet were happier at work than those who could not. Another study, this one from the National University of Singapore, found that Web-surfing refreshed employees, actually making them more productive, not less.

Second, one important function of the Internet is as a communication tool, just like the telephone. Just as workers are permitted to make brief personal calls at work, so should they be allowed to use the Internet for the same purpose.

Third, we believe that the best way to grow as a business and protect the company from lawsuits is to hire responsible employees and then demonstrate your trust in them. Instead of treating us like children, why not establish clear guidelines concerning Internet use? All employees can understand the reasons that offensive websites are off limits.

Finally, installing an Internet filter may create resentment and tempt some employees to find ways around the filters. It is an unnecessary solution in search of a problem.

Thank you for your attention.

Honoria Bell, Chief Designer and the undersigned 53 employees

Extended Response Prompt:

Analyze the arguments presented in the two emails.

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Below you will find two passages in which the authors put forth differing perspectives on an issue of importance. Read both passages carefully, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each discussion. Then, you will write an essay in which you explain your own opinion on the issue.

The following articles appeared in a flyer entitled “Opposing Views on the GatesburgGoGreen Initiative” printed by a community interest group. The first piece highlights the benefits of a mandatory recycling and composting proposal, and the second piece addresses concerns with the proposal.

Going Green for Gatesburg

¶1 The GatesburgGoGreen Initiative is a joint proposal crafted by environmental groups, businesses, city officials, and citizens. The goal is to reduce the amount of waste we add to the county landfill by 90% over the next five years. This plan is ambitious but achievable. It is a goal shared by cities like San Francisco and Cleveland, both of which are much larger than Gatesburg.

¶2 The proposal began as a discussion about extending the life of the county landfill, which will close in ten years if we do nothing. Several years ago, the city banned the dumping of construction waste, such as wood, that can be effectively recycled. The city later banned yard waste and started a composting program for leaves and grass clippings. Requiring recycling and composting is nothing new. We are just taking the idea to the next level to save our landfill.

¶3 The new plan calls for every resident to have three trashcans: a green one for compost such as food waste, a blue one for recyclable paper and plastic, and a black one for the landfill. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the average American produces more than four pounds of trash each day and recycles only about a third of that amount. Those daily pounds of trash add up. They result in tons added unnecessarily to our landfill each year.

¶4 Purchasing bins and hiring staff will cost money. However, those investments will pay dividends. The city will follow the example of Phoenix, Arizona, which has made more than 500 million dollars in a year by selling its recyclables. We will produce compost that citizens can use in their gardens. We will save money by not having to open a new landfill. We will improve the environment and our budget at the same time.

No Recycling Laws for Gatesburg

¶1 Recycling is a great idea. Americans already recycle at a high rate, which is around 95% of lead-acid batteries and 70% of steel cans and newspapers. That is one reason we oppose the GatesburgGoGreen Initiative. It burdens citizens by taking a good idea to ridiculous extremes.

¶2 The so-called initiative is a law, plain and simple. If passed, it would criminalize violations of its complicated rules. A newspaper goes into the blue bin, but what about a flyer insert? Well, it depends. Coffee grounds go in the green bin, but what about a plastic container of yogurt that has gone out of date? Careful — make a mistake, and you will be fined. Those fines, along with the increased taxes to pay for the services and personnel, make this a bad idea for taxpayers.

¶3 Privacy is another concern. The proposal requires that radio-frequency identification computer chips be attached to each bin. These chips track the pounds of trash each person discards versus how much is recycled. City officials know the average weights thrown out per day, and they know what the numbers should be with mandatory recycling and composting. Falling outside of acceptable ranges summons the trash police to check your bins to see if you have thrown a banana peel into the trash bin instead of the compost bin. The law calls for “administrative personnel” who will have the authority to write tickets. If we aren’t careful, Gatesburg will start to feel like the United Kingdom. In some locations in the UK, compliance with trash laws is monitored with surveillance cameras.

¶4 This proposed law is not only unnecessary but also radical in how it sacrifices the needs and comfort of citizens to reach an impossible ideal. We already recycle, and we do not need a law forcing us to go beyond what is reasonable.

Write an essay in which you explain your own position on the issue of whether or not recycling and composting initiatives such as the one described in the flyer should be adopted and put into practice in communities throughout the United States.

Be sure to use specific reasons and examples from your own experience and knowledge to support your position. Evidence from the passages provided should also be used to support your ideas. Remember that every position exists within the context of a larger discussion of the issue, so your essay should, at minimum, acknowledge alternate and/or opposing ideas. When you have finished your essay, review your writing to check for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.