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Virtual friend fires employee

Here's a story for those that were interested to read that making a comment such as "[ma job it pointLESS](#)" on Facebook might lead to dismissal.

It's a salutary tale from Switzerland, that epitome of neutrality, about a woman who lost her job after her employers noted she was using Facebook whilst allegedly suffering from a migraine.

The woman admitted to accessing Facebook from her iPhone whilst lying in bed, but complained that Nationale Suisse had created a fictitious Facebook persona in order to become her "friend" and that the company had spied on her once she accepted this virtual friend. Whilst this begs the question as to why the woman accepted the Facebook friendship of a complete stranger, the story does highlight the potentially dire consequences of using communication networks at inappropriate times or in inappropriate ways. See the BBC's report [here](#).

Whilst the government has decided not to set up a single centralised database, it does intend to ask internet service providers and mobile phone networks, amongst others, to extend the range of information they currently hold on their subscribers and to organise it in a manner that is more easily used by the police, MI5 and other public bodies investigating crime and terrorism. So, for those thinking along Orwellian lines, it is more "Surveillance Siblings" than "Big Brother".

The consultation period runs until 20 July 2009. Legislation to ensure that all data that public authorities might need, including third party data, is collected and retained by communications service providers may follow.

Those employed in the private sector should note that, under the current proposals, only the collecting communications firm and certain public authorities would have access to the information collected, to monitor an employee's Facebook usage, companies such as National Suisse will still need to create friendly fictitious Facebook personae and become virtual friends with their staff.

The story caught this Naked Lawyer's eye because it almost ties in with the [announcement](#) on 27 April that the UK government wishes to have more information about

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Footnote:

e.g. Sarah Cole, 'Virtual Friend Fires Employee' (*Naked Law*, 1 May 2009)
<<http://www.nakedlaw.com/2009/05/index.html>> accessed 19 November 2009

Bibliography:

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