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Graves, Ranallo situation proves WWE needs stronger social media policy

By [JOHN POWELL](#) - SLAM! Wrestling



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Mauro Ranallo. Photo Courtesy: WWE.

Here's a "What If?"

What if I, as SLAM! Wrestling's Editor-in-Chief had a professional, business disagreement with one of my best friends and colleagues SLAM! Wrestling's Producer, Greg Oliver?

What if instead of meeting, speaking with him about it privately and working things out, I spouted off on Twitter bitterly complaining about the situation?

What should SLAM! Wrestling and our parent company, Postmedia Network, do? In all fairness, I should be sanctioned, disciplined or even fired, depending how far I took things.

As an employee and a professional who takes my career very seriously, if I have any kind of dispute with Greg or on the rare occasion Postmedia, I bring up my issues with him or them and we talk it out, figure it out, as we have done successfully for 20+ years.

No working partnership is without its big or small disagreements. There is no reason for me to discuss what should be a private matter on social media. It makes me look bad for not being able to exercise restraint or good personal and professional judgment. There is no doubt that it makes the colleague I am at odds with look awful and the company I am working for as well. If you publicly damage the reputation of the company you work for in any way, you should be fired. These days, companies spend



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WWE SummerSlam

millions on promoting and protecting their brands. No company wants to appear to be letting the inmates are run the asylum or that they cannot operate their business competently.

What happened between Smackdown announcer Corey Graves and NXT announcer Mauro Ranallo over Survivor Series weekend is just the latest embarrassing professional implosion on social media involving WWE talent.

In a Twitter post made during NXT TakeOver: WarGames, Graves wrote: "Just for the record guys, I know you wouldn't know it, but there's actually a WWE Hall of Famer AND a former Ring of Honor Champion on commentary. I'd imagine they have a lot to offer." The suggestion being that Graves believes that as the lead announcer Mauro Ranallo is dominating the commentary not permitting Beth Phoenix (the Hall of Famer) and Nigel McGuinness (ROH champ) to get a word in edgewise. Why Graves couldn't just name the people he was talking about, felt the need to speak for McGuinness and Phoenix or why he needed to publicly publish and air his criticism of a fellow WWE employee is anyone's guess.



Sami Zayn as a guest on Graves' The Electric Chair segment on Raw. Photo Courtesy: WWE.

It is curious that during the recent Saudi Arabia fiasco, Graves said on a podcast: "All these conspiracy theories that have been drawn up... and half of it comes from some of the boys that were on the plane. If you are that insecure and you feel so strongly that you're going to get on Twitter and complain that our flight got screwed up, what's Twitter gonna do? All it is fuel for these 'journalists,' and then everyone puts their two cents in and starts coming up with their conspiracy theories. If you're mad that your flight got delayed and you weren't one of the Saudi 20, that's on you. Quit crying about it on Twitter."

It is clear that Graves doesn't really heed his own advice.

For the record Graves has been sitting behind the announce desk for five years. Ranallo has been plying his trade for 30 years according to his Wikipedia entry.

In response, Ranallo, who has been very public about his personal battles with depression and anxiety, deactivated his Twitter account and did not appear on Sunday's WWE Survivor Series broadcast. Removing himself from the mostly venomous and noxious environment that is Twitter is probably the best thing Ranallo or any public figure can do besides NOT creating a Twitter account in the first place. When Disney CEO Bob Iger says

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the reason the company didn't go through with purchasing Twitter was because "the nastiness is extraordinary," you know it is probably a place you should avoid, which most Canadians do. Ranallo joins the 65% of his fellow Canadians who don't even have a Twitter account.

It is also very curious that in a media call to hype NXT's TakeOver: WarGames, Triple H, the Executive Vice President of Talent, Live Events and Creative at WWE, said: "I don't understand people airing issues. If you have one talk to us. If you put that out there in the media that's not a way to go about business. If I had a complaint with a talent I don't go on Twitter and complain to them, I speak to them. I've never understood that process if it's legit."

He went on to say: "There's silliness to it, a maturity issue of it's not how you handle business. Anybody that is out there that is serious about it [gaining their release] that's talking on the internet, using their phones; you handle your business like a professional. We're in professional wrestling and the keyword there is professional. That's what we are trying to change about the business and make people more professional."

Thus far, there has been no word if WWE will be addressing the Graves, Ranallo situation, another social media mishap for World Wrestling Entertainment. November, for example, was dominated by a back and forth, sometimes heated dispute between NXT superstar ACH (known as Jordan Myles in the WWE) and WWE management over a T-shirt design ACH believed was racist in nature. The two have since parted ways but not before ACH unleashed an angry tirade against the company on Twitter.

WWE employees griping about their jobs, the company or fellow employees has unfortunately become a regular occurrence on social media, especially on Twitter. It has become such an issue that the WWE's digital media department apparently has all of the superstars' passwords, to not only publish Tweets as per the company's storylines and angles but also to monitor those accounts too.

The trouble the WWE has found themselves in is almost the same situation DC Comics stumbled into with their employees. Due to some of their talent being unable to refrain from getting into nasty social media interactions with critical fans or other comic book professionals, DC Comics issued a new social media policy to its talent in 2018.

"Comments that may be considered defamatory, libelous, discriminatory, harassing, hateful, or that incite violence are unacceptable and may result in civil or criminal action. In addition, comments that may be considered insulting, cruel, rude, crass and mean spirited are against company policy and guidelines. We ask, and expect, that you will help to create an online environment that is inclusive, supportive and safe," wrote DC introducing the new policy.

The policy included such guidelines as:

- "Stay positive when you post. We also recommend that you avoid negative comments in this very public forum. You may want to refrain from engaging with individuals who may be speaking negatively about you, other talent, DC, our fans and the comics industry as this is a no-win situation. If there has been a personal threat to you or those around you then in addition to alerting DC, please

involve the proper law enforcement authorities."

- "Use good judgment when posting, reposting and liking comments, photos and videos as these may have unintended consequences. Talent should take special care when using social media to ensure that comments and postings made by you are not associated with DC. Under all circumstances, please indicate that you do work for DC, but that your comments are your own and do not reflect those of the company."
- "The internet is permanent regardless of 'privacy settings' or other limits you may try to place on your posting. Think before you post, comment, retweet or like something."

All of these policies make good sense to any professional in any industry. In fact, such social media policies are the standard at most companies whether you are a full-time, part-time or freelance employee. Everyone is held to the same professional standard.

The WWE views itself as the upper echelon, the pinnacle of pro wrestling promotions. Despite being a world class company, the WWE cannot seem to cage, solve the nagging problem that is social media and the negative effect it is having on the company's reputation. Triple H's statement didn't seem to have any impact at all on Corey Graves or his decision to publicly take a shot at a fellow employee. It seems speaking out about the problem is clearly not enough any more.

There is no reason why the WWE couldn't tell all of its employees that they aren't permitted to discuss company business, criticize the company or other WWE talent on social media and if anyone does, they could be sanctioned or maybe fired. Such behaviour is harming the brand itself and will continue to do so until the WWE gets a firm handle on this issue so that their dirty laundry is not hung out to dry, the stains and blemishes laid out for everyone to see.

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