

Bulletin Board: Social sites become part of the interview process

by Amy_Winter

Job-seekers may want to reconsider putting inappropriate photos and postings on their MySpace or Facebook profiles. A potential manager could be snooping on profile pages to find more information about personality traits or working habits.

Forty-four percent of employers admit to using social networking sites to look at job candidates' Web pages, according to a survey by Vault, a media company focused on careers, which questioned 700 employers and workers in various fields. And 39 percent of managers have seen the profile of a current employee.

Social sites are becoming of more interest to managers, according to Mark Oldman, co-founder of Vault. Facebook and MySpace aren't very strict with users viewing the sites, meaning more people have access to profile pages.

Due to limited time during the interview process, Googling or going to a social site is a quick way to learn more about applicants, compared to completing background or reference checks. With candidates putting on their "game face" during interviews, social sites serve as another method to make sure hires are a good fit for a company, according to Oldman.

One employer from the survey says he views these Web pages, "on occasion, seeking to both corroborate experience and to see if I can learn a bit more about the person."

Serving as a "playpen of expression," social sites can be a glimpse into people's lifestyles; however, sometimes users reveal too much information when their guards are down. Oldman believes these job-seekers have a "false sense of security." Therefore, never write or post anything on social sites that you wouldn't want searched on Google.

"Employers and job-seekers need to know that anything online can be forever, like an electronic tattoo," says Oldman.

Problematic behavior or feelings portrayed on profiles can be dangerous to job-seekers. Eighty-two percent of managers say if they see something negative on a profile it would influence their decision to hire the candidate.

Seventy-five percent of employees say they understand that potential employers can view their profiles. And

28 percent think something on their Web pages could be distasteful to a potential employer. Due to these results, 57 percent of employees take security measures, including using the site's privacy controls or editing profiles when applying for jobs.

When asked about pages on social sites, one worker from the survey says: "Although I have nothing to hide, I'd rather some employers not see what personal messages my friends have written me."

"Keeping profiles private is a step in the right direction," says Oldman. "It isn't airtight safety, but it can be an alternative to posting inappropriate material."

For more information, visit www.vault.com.

DON'T CLICK AND BUY WHILE ON THE JOB

Not enough time to shop during the holidays? Shopping online at work shouldn't be an option to save time, most workers agree. According to a survey by Accountemps, a staffing service that interviewed 539 workers, 79 percent of respondents will not shop online at work during the holidays.

The 21 percent of workers who plan to shop online during office hours expect to spend approximately three hours a week looking for gifts.

CareerBuilder.com recently completed a similar survey by asking 5,989 workers and 2,929 hiring managers/HR professionals whether they online shop at work. Thirty percent of respondents admitted to currently shopping online or planning to this month.

Employees may want to save shopping for non-work hours, especially since 50 percent of managers say they observe workers' Internet history.

Accountemps provides tips to balancing work and personal responsibilities:

- Avoid procrastination. Put in vacation requests early to better guarantee the desired days will be honored.

- Balance time. You may need to take a few days off to complete errands.
- Practice organization.
- Learn the office rules. Ask managers if you aren't sure what is appropriate employee usage on computers.

"The holidays place demands on people's time, making it tempting to browse for gifts online while at work," says Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of "Managing Your Career for Dummies." "But visiting shopping Web sites often is against company policy - employees should familiarize themselves with firm rules on acceptable Internet use during business hours and use good judgment in how they spend their time."

For more information visit www.accountemps.com and www.careerbuilder.com.

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