One-in-Five Employers Use Social Networking Sites to Research Job Candidates, CareerBuilder.com Survey Finds

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Could your future boss be perusing your profile? Twenty-two percent of hiring managers said they use social networking sites to research job candidates, up from 11 percent in 2006, according to a nationwide survey of more than 3,100 employers from CareerBuilder.com. An additional 9 percent said they don't currently use social networking sites to screen potential employees, but plan to start.

Of those hiring managers who have screened job candidates via social networking profiles, one-third (34 percent) reported they found content that caused them to dismiss the candidate from consideration. Top areas for concern among these hiring managers included:

  -- 41% -- candidate posted information about them drinking or using drugs
  -- 40% -- candidate posted provocative or inappropriate photographs or
        information
  -- 29% -- candidate had poor communication skills
  -- 28% -- candidate bad-mouthed their previous company or fellow employee
  -- 27% -- candidate lied about qualifications
  -- 22% -- candidate used discriminatory remarks related to race, gender,
        religion, etc.
  -- 22% -- candidate's screen name was unprofessional
  -- 21% -- candidate was linked to criminal behavior
  -- 19% -- candidate shared confidential information from previous
        employers

On the other hand, social networking profiles gave some job seekers an edge over the competition. Twenty-four percent of hiring managers who researched job candidates via social networking sites said they found content that helped to solidify their decision to hire the candidate. Top factors that influenced their hiring decision included:

  -- 48% -- candidate's background supported their qualifications for the
        job
  -- 43% -- candidate had great communication skills
  -- 40% -- candidate was a good fit for the company's culture
  -- 36% -- candidate's site conveyed a professional image
  -- 31% -- candidate had great references posted about them by others
  -- 30% -- candidate showed a wide range of interests
  -- 29% -- candidate received awards and accolades
  -- 24% -- candidate's profile was creative

"Hiring managers are using the Internet to get a more well-rounded view of job candidates in terms of their skills, accomplishments and overall fit within the company," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder.com. "As a result, more job seekers are taking action to make their social networking profiles employer-friendly. Sixteen percent of workers who have social networking pages said they modified the content on their profile to convey a more professional image to potential employers."

Haefner recommends the following tips to keep your online persona in a favorable light:

  1) Clean up digital dirt. Make sure to remove pictures, content and links
     that can send the wrong message to a potential employer before you
     start your job search.
  2) Update your profile regularly. Make sure to include specific
     accomplishments, inside and outside of work.
  3) Monitor comments. Since you can't control what other people say on
     your site, you may want to use the "block comments" feature.
  4) Join groups selectively. While joining a group with a fun or silly

name may seem harmless, "Party Monsters R Us" may not give the best impression to a hiring manager. Also be selective about who you accept as "friends."

5) Go private. Consider setting your profile to "private," so only designated friends can view it.

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 3,169 hiring managers and human resource professionals (employed full-time; not self-employed; with at least significant involvement in hiring decisions) and 8,785 employees (employed full-time; not self-employed) ages 18 and over between May 22 and June 13, 2008, respectively. Percentages for some questions are based on a subset of U.S. employers and employees, based on their responses to certain questions. With a pure probability sample of 3,169 and 8,785, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.74 percentage points and +/- 1.05 percentage points respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

About CareerBuilder.com

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