Your Online Presence is Vital to Your Job Search

With over 37% of companies, with some estimates going as high as 97%, searching for your online profiles, specifically on Facebook and LinkedIn, you need to be fully aware of the importance of protecting your online presence. Regardless of what you feel about employers looking at your personal life, employers want to know the real you, so they will continue to use what they can find online, fairly or not.

Negative Details that Employers Look For When Reviewing your Profile

- Inappropriate or provocative photos
- Evidence of alcohol, especially underage, and drug use
- Bad-mouthing current/former employers, co-workers or clients
- Lying about qualifications
- Sharing of private company information
- Use of poor grammar or communication
- Promoting opinions on “hot” topics (i.e. religion, politics, etc.)

Privacy Settings

When you choose to use Facebook, LinkedIn or other social media, you do have a choice in what is seen. As with any social media site, stay up to date on the changes to these systems as new features are implemented that may need your review and action.

Facebook

You can set your privacy settings to allow friends, friends of friends and the public to see what you post, and you can customize your privacy settings to create lists of people to block or to allow a view into your personal information. Be aware of tagging and timelines. You can remove a tag from both a picture and your timeline if you don’t want to share that information. In fact, you can ask a friend to take down a picture completely if it makes you uncomfortable. Even if you secure your privacy settings now, it does not change what was posted in the past; use your privacy settings to limit the audience for your past posts. Finally, manually sweep your Facebook account periodically to ensure that your profile is employer-presentable. If you are still uncomfortable, you could deactivate your account; once you have a job in hand, you can reactivate it, and everything will still be in place. Find privacy support at http://www.facebook.com/help/privacy.

LinkedIn

As LinkedIn is a more professional forum, you do want others to have access to information, but you want to manage your settings to correspond best with your goals of using the system. If you are interested in an employer finding you on LinkedIn, set your privacy so that an employer can review your profile and send you communication. You can use the privacy settings to manage your LinkedIn account, including allowing your connections to see who else you are connected to, controlling what information is seen by others, selecting who can send you emails and sharing when you update your profile or status. Review information at http://learn.linkedin.com/settings/#privacy_settings.

Twitter

Twitter allows you to post 140 character tweets, links and photos, so you are in control of what you share. Avoid posting information you don’t want the public to see as this information is permanent. The tweet feed is also public, so be careful of what you post. There is a “protect my updates” function in Twitter that allows you block your tweets from the public newsfeed. Check out http://support.twitter.com/entries/14016-about-public-and-protected-accounts# for privacy information.

Other

Besides these systems, employers may find you on blogs, websites, discussion boards, Flickr, YouTube and more. Consciously keep any appearances on these sites professional in nature.

Use Social Media Wisely

Social media does have tremendous value when searching for a job, but you must ensure that you present yourself via these systems in the most professional way possible. Maintain your accounts throughout your professional job search and career. Conduct an internet search for your name to ensure that the information presented is accurate and appropriate for a potential employer to see.

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