

70% of employers are snooping candidates' social media profiles

By Lauren Salm, Careerbuilder

Scrolling through your photos from this past weekend and laughing at the debauchery of your Hangover-esque charades? Ranting about your current job or co-workers because you think you're just among "friends?" Think again. According to a new CareerBuilder survey, 70 percent of employers use social media to screen candidates before hiring, which is up significantly from 60 percent in 2016. So pause before you post – if you think it could be questionable or inappropriate, you should go with your gut.

So, what to flaunt vs. flop?

Social recruiting is now a "thing" when it comes to hiring candidates – 3 in 10 employers have someone dedicated to solely getting the scoop on your online persona.

Employers are searching for a few key items when researching candidates via social networking sites as good signs to hire:

Information that supports their qualifications for the job (61 percent)

If the candidate has a professional online persona at all (50 percent)

What other people are posting about the candidates (37 percent)

For any reason at all not to hire a candidate (24 percent)

And they aren't stopping there either – 69 percent are using online search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing to research candidates as well, compared to 59 percent last year.

The no-nos when using social networks

With more than half of employers (54 percent) finding content on social media that caused them not to hire a candidate, why take your chances? Pause before you post and remember these key reasons that employers were turned off by a candidate's online presence:

- Candidate posted provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or information: 39 percent
- Candidate posted information about them drinking or using drugs: 38 percent
- Candidate had discriminatory comments related to race, gender or religion: 32 percent
- Candidate bad-mouthed their previous company or fellow employee: 30 percent
- Candidate lied about qualifications: 27 percent
- Candidate had poor communication skills: 27 percent
- Candidate was linked to criminal behavior: 26 percent
- Candidate shared confidential information from previous employers: 23 percent
- Candidate's screen name was unprofessional: 22 percent
- Candidate lied about an absence: 17 percent
- Candidate posted too frequently: 17 percent

Using social media to your advantage

You don't have to look at your online persona as a problem. There are things you can do on Twitter or Facebook that can actually up your chances of employment. Use it as an opportunity to stand out in a positive way and showcase your personality. In fact, more than 44 percent of employers have found content on a social networking site that caused them to hire the candidate.

Among the primary reasons employers hired a candidate based on their social networking site were: candidate's background information supported their professional qualifications (38 percent), great communication skills (37 percent), a professional image (36 percent), and creativity (35 percent). But don't avoid the stress all together by deleting or hiding your profiles. Believe it or not, this can be even more detrimental to your brand. Fifty-seven percent of employers are less likely to call someone in if the candidate is a ghost online.

The bottom line? Think before you post, because there's always someone watching. Don't put anything online that you wouldn't want your mom, grandma, dad, uncle, best friend's mom or cat to see or read.