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Social Screening: What Hiring Managers Look for On Social Media

By Chad Brooks, Business News Daily Senior Writer May 11, 2016 07:10 am EST

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The number of hiring managers using social media to investigate job candidates has grown immensely over the past 10 years, according to a new CareerBuilder study.

Specifically, 60 percent of employers now turn to social networks to research job applicants, up from 52 percent last year and just 11 percent in 2006.

"Tools such as Facebook and Twitter enable employers to get a glimpse of who candidates are outside the confines of a resume or cover letter," Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer of CareerBuilder, said in a statement.

The good news for job seekers is that most hiring managers aren't checking out potential applicants' Facebook and Twitter feeds in an effort to dig up dirt. Just 21 percent of those surveyed said they use social media to specifically look for reasons not to hire an applicant. Meanwhile, 60 percent said they check out social networks as a way to find information that supports a candidate's qualifications for the job, such as a professional portfolio.

In addition, 53 percent of hiring managers said they want to see if a candidate has a professional online persona, and 30 percent want to see what other people are posting about the candidate. **[See Related Story: Social Media Success: A Guide for Job Seekers]**

While they might not be specifically looking for negative posts, nearly half of the hiring managers surveyed said they have found information on social media that has convinced them not to hire a candidate. The top types of posts that left employers with a bad impression include:

- Provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or other information
- Information about a candidate drinking or using drugs
- Discriminatory comments related to race, religion, gender, etc.
- Bad-mouthing of a previous company or fellow employee
- Poor communication skills

To avoid leaving something for a hiring manager to find that would hurt their chances of getting hired, some job seekers might be inclined to eliminate their social media presence altogether, or at the very least make it as private as possible. However, that's not the best strategy either.

More than 40 percent of the hiring managers surveyed said they are less likely to interview job candidates if they are unable to find information about that person online.

The need to hide or remove any inappropriate content should be obvious, but having a clean and private profile doesn't demonstrate who you are, and may even suggest you have something to hide, said Laura Betourne, a social media specialist at Uproar PR.

"Employers with a strong company culture are looking at more than just your job experience," Betourne told Business News Daily. "Use your personal accounts to convey your personality, and share your hobbies and favorite pastimes."

Overall, one-third of the hiring managers who screen candidates via social networks said they found information that led them to hire a certain candidate, including:

- The candidate's background information matched the job qualifications.
- The candidate's site conveyed a professional image.
- The candidate's personality came across as a good fit with company culture.
- The candidate was well-rounded and showed a wide range of interests.
- The candidate had great communication skills.

Job seekers aren't the only ones who should be taking stock of their social media presence. More than 30 percent of the employers surveyed use social networks to research current employees. Of those employers, more than 25 percent have found content that resulted in them reprimanding or firing an employee.

Betourne said it's important that job seekers and employees conduct a Google search of themselves to look for any old social-media accounts they have forgotten about.

"Most importantly, don't forget to search the Google images," Betourne said. "It's possible there are photos from your social media accounts you may have thought were private, and do not want popping up on the first page of the search results."

The study was based on surveys of 2,186 U.S.-based hiring and human resource managers.

Additional reporting by Nicole Fallon Taylor.

Chad Brooks

Chad Brooks is a Chicago-based freelance writer who has nearly 15 years experience in the media business. A graduate of Indiana University, he spent nearly a decade as a staff reporter for the Daily Herald in suburban Chicago, covering a wide array of topics including, local and state government, crime, the legal system and education. Following his years at the newspaper Chad worked in public relations, helping promote small businesses throughout the U.S. Follow him on Twitter.

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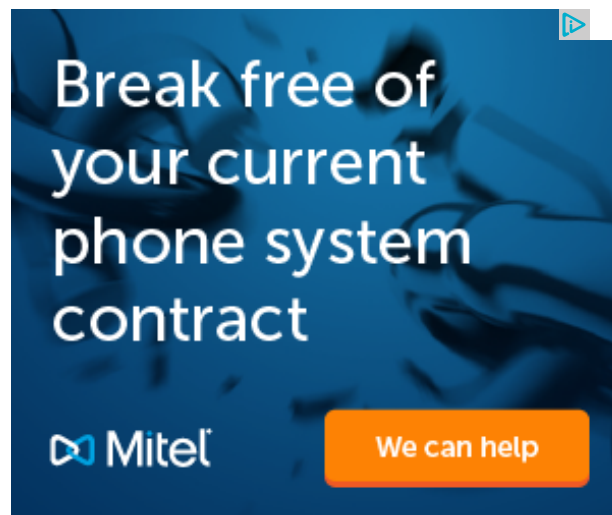### Ask This One Question to Discover a Job Candidate's Strengths

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