

Social Networking Could Lead to NOT Working

Researching an organization is necessary in order to make a good impression during an interview. Asking the right questions is as important as knowing how to answer the employer's questions. To do research on an organization you may visit their website, use Internet search engines like Google, read literature published by the company, or ask others what they think of the company in general terms. All of this is perfectly acceptable. But what if the employer researches YOU?

According to a recent NACE (National Association for Colleges & Employers) survey, nearly 27% of employers visit social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook or simply Google potential candidates to learn about the candidate. Many people never consider the professional implications of what is posted on personal sites. If it is in the public domain then it is NO longer private!

While we know that work and personal lives are intertwined, we would like to think that each aspect has its own time and place. What you do away from work shouldn't necessarily matter to an employer. But it does. Employers want a candidate that will fit with the organization's culture.

If a potential employer finds explicit photos, racist jokes, political rants or other postings that are generally in poor taste, it is likely that you may never get that first interview. But you can protect your image by using some practical and easy steps to ward off "digital dirt".

- Search your name on the Internet, using a common search engine. If your name pops up on a site and you wish it didn't, contact the webmaster of that site and ask that it be removed.
- Make your social networking website profile as private as possible. Some sites will limit access to your profile for only those people that you grant "permission". This adds a layer of protection from all kinds of searches, including employers. Be aware that this will not necessarily keep everything you post private. Others can still share your information.
- If you keep a public profile, keep it clean. Would you want your grandmother to see your site? Anything you consider questionable should be avoided or restricted to private communications.

Beware! Be Positive! Be Professional!