Social media in the hiring process

[Media](#), [Social Media](#)

A current and somewhat controversial topic regarding the hiring process is employers' use ofsocial mediascreening. The most popular sites to be checked are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter and now more than ever, companies are looking on the Internet to see if applicants are active on these social media websites (Swallow). Harris Interactive conducted a survey of 2, 303 respondents from February 9, 2012 through March 2, 2012 to find out how many companies used social media sites to check on job applicants.

The results showed that 37 percent of respondents indicated their companies used social media web sites to check on job candidates. Sixty-five percent indicated they were looking to see if a job candidate appeared professional and 51 percent indicated that they were checking to see if the candidate would be a good match in the company'sculture(" Social Media A Big Part of Hiring Process"). Another survey done by a social media monitoring service, Reppler, reveals even higher results.

Their study found that over 90 percent of recruiters and hiring managers have visited a potential candidate's profile on a social network as part of the screening process. The study also shows that 69 percent of recruiters have rejected a candidate based on content found on his or hersocial networkingprofiles although 68 percent say that they have actually hired a candidate based on his or her activity on those sites. The most common reasons for rejection include lies about qualifications, inappropriate photos (racy or indicative of drug or alcohol use), negative comments about a previous employer, and poorcommunicationskills.

The most common reasons that an employer has hired someone after viewing his or her social media profile include demonstration of a

positivepersonalityand good organizational fit, evident creativity, and good references posted by others (Swallow). Although screening social media profiles can provide employers with a wealth of useful information, it also comes with some potential pitfalls. Employers can get in trouble by obtaining information that is unlawful to consider in an employment decision such as an applicant's race, religion, national origin, age, pregnancy status, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, and gender.

In order to decrease the likelihood of adiscriminationcharge, employers sometimes have a person not involved with the hiring process review social media sites in order to filter out information about inclusion in a protected class (Michale). There are also social media screening services that claim to filter out any information pertaining to a protected class (Sterling Infosystems). As was mentioned earlier, one of the reasons for employers choosing not to hire someone based on their social media profile is inappropriate photos, including those in which alcohol use is shown.

Using this as a reason to reject an applicant can put the employer in a sticky situation depending on the particular state's " off-duty" laws. In over half the states it is unlawful for an employer to take an adverse employment action based on an employee's lawful conduct on their own time, even if the employee is only prospective. In " Using Facebook to Screen Potential Hires Can Get You Sued," Robert Michale cites Minnesota as an example. In this state it is unlawful for an employer to prohibit a prospective employee from using lawful products such as alcohol and tobacco.

So how can applicants protect themselves or best represent themselves within the social media domain? Renee Jackson, a Labor and Employment

lawyer with Nixon Peabody LLP, has some advice to give. Jackson recommends that applicants assume that companies are looking for information about applicants online, whether or not it's true. Another tip is to try displaying " the most professional online image possible. " In order to get a glimpse of one's image, Jackson encourages job seekers toGooglethemselves and some keywords from their resumes and see what results come up (Quast).

Chirag Nangia, CEO of the social media screening service Reppify, offers advice similar to Renee Jackson's. Nangia encourages job seekers to try to depict themselves in a manner that would be attractive to the company they want to be a part of. A ZDNet study indicated that British Facebook users are drunk in 76 percent of their photos. It doesn't take a Human Resources guru to know that this is probably not the best representation of professional behavior (Quast). Finally, a prospective that hasn't been touched on is that of the applicants.

A study presented at the 27th Annual Society for Industrial and OrganizationalPsychologyConference in April 2012 shows that employers that use online screening practices may be " unattractive or reduce their attractiveness to job applicants and current employees alike. " The study involved 175 students who applied for a fictitious job they believed to be real and were later informed they were screened. Applicants were " less willing to take a job offer after being screened, perceiving the action to reflect on the organization's fairness and treatment of employees based on a post-study questionnaire.

They also felt their privacy was invaded. " Works Cited Ahearn, Tom. " Social Network Screening by Employers May Make Companies Unattractive to Job Applicants. " ESR News: Background Check News from Employment Screening Resources (ESR) A». N. p. , 10 July 2012. Web. 18 Oct. 2012. . Michale, Robert. " Using Facebook To Screen Potential Hires Can Get You Sued. " Fast Company. N. p. , 20 July 2012. Web. 8 Oct. 2012. . Quast, Lisa. " Recruiting, Reinvented: How Companies Are Using Social Media In The Hiring Process. " Forbes. Forbes Magazine, 21 May 2012. Web. 18 Oct. 2012. . Quast, Lisa. " Social Media, Passwords, and the Hiring Process: Privacy and Other Legal Rights. " Forbes. Forbes Magazine, 28 May 2012.

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