

# Utilizing social media as a mode to screen prospective employees

[Business](#), [Employee](#)



Employment is not an unfamiliar concept to everyone considering people either have a job or seek to attain a job within some period of his or her life. The same conditions apply to college students since ultimately our goal is to gain a job at the end of our academic journey. With the rising concerns of finding employment, the prominent concerns are passing the hiring process. Barrett-Poindexter (2012) mentions in " Why Today's Interview Process Is So Difficult" that, " Sought-after jobs often come the most difficult, rigorous, and extensive interview processes. Even some of the least-sought roles are weighed down by arduous interview procedures that put the candidate through the intellectual wringer." Regardless of the job class, each one has a rigorous and complex interview process. Barrett-Poindexter (2012) stated the reason for this rigorous process is narrow down the enormous amount of application and select the prime candidates. Some of the more prominent techniques to weed out candidates are asking brain teasers, their skillset, and level of experiences; however, a prominent hiring method is by associating social media in making hiring decisions. Segal (2018) mentions in " Legal Trends Social Media Use in Hiring: Assessing the Risks" that social media is now being incorporated in two methods one is for recruiting while the other is to check the candidate's qualifications. In spite of the increase in the difficulty of passing the hiring process, a series of questions arise. The most prominent question is whether employers should be given permission to look at personal social media posts or other digital traces when they are making a decision to hire you.

As Segal (2018) stated social media is used check the candidate's qualifications as well as their background to make sure they meet their

standards as well as receive a better understanding of who they are. In contrast, I believe that employers should approach screening applicants with a grain of salt. There is a definite advantage to utilizing social media as it can portray an idea of the applicant's behavior and their qualifications. Similarly, Root and McKay (2014) explain in " Student Awareness of the Use of Social Media Screening by Prospective Employers" that, " Hiring managers . . . see if the candidate presents him or herself professionally (65%), to see if the candidate is a good fit for the company culture (51%), to learn more about the candidate's qualifications (45%), to see if the candidate is well-rounded (35%), and to look for reasons not to hire the candidate (12%). In consideration of the Root and McKay's statistics, employers would like to see if candidates present themselves professionally.

Coupled with the flexible nature of how people utilize social media I believe that this particular aspect is the main issue. Social media is a collection of images and posts that may or may not have the intention of professionalism involved. Segal (2018) mentioned in his article that, " There can be valuable information on a candidate's social media pages that an employer lawfully can consider. Individuals have posted everything from pictures of themselves scantily clad to racist rants — reasons not to hire them!". If an applicant is not careful of what they post, these posts can reflect negatively upon them. They reflect negatively on conveying the message that they are competent and qualified for the position; however, I believe there are some things to realize about social media is that it is not infallible. Which would infer that social media is hackable and the information there is malleable?

Authors of “ Recognition of Compromised Accounts on Twitter” state, “ A compromised account is a legitimate account which has been taken over by an attacker to publish fake and harmful content . . . The same reality also was seen on Facebook where 97% of malicious accounts were not originally created to solely spamming.” Hacking into social media account is not an uncommon event and neither it the act of leaving behind malicious content on the applicant’s account. Sadly, the applicants are ones who face the brunt of consequences for these acts since the employers do not personally know the applicants. Once they get a glimpse of these particular types of content they would be seen as unqualified for the position. From an employer’s perspective, they would review the applicant’s postings and gather information about who the candidate from their social media account is. Conversely, if you consider the candidate’s position, the employer’s would be receiving the incorrect impression of the applicant. This would, in turn, prevent the applicants from qualifying for the positions. These wrongful impressions have large impacts to not only applicants but, employers. The reason is that due to these impressions they may lose out on an amazing talent who can help support achieve the companies goals further or resolve their ongoing issues within the company. Likewise, if similar companies have adopted this same principle, the applicants will be unable to pass the hiring process. Root and McKay (2014) mentioned that applicants have been conscientious of what they post and tend to customize their social media accounts due to employers viewing their accounts. Although, social media accounts like Facebook to allow users to aggregate information so that information can be private, and they can remove posts. Nevertheless, if

applicants privatize all their posts and images then, the screening process will for naught.

Although some may argue that they do not really consider the screening process through social media as a large part of the hiring process, it is quickly becoming an essential part of the hiring process. In light of this fact, the screening process will influence who will be hired and who will not be. Moreover, it is important to realize that if an applicant's account is hacked and malicious posting are found it can reflect negatively upon the candidate and result in them losing the opportunity to get the job. I believe that although the screening process is itself a good idea as it can show some insight about who the candidate is as an individual. As such, employers should not make their decisions based on what may be posted on their feed. Especially, considering that accounts can be hacked which in turn can question their credibility. On another note, I would like make note that perusing through the applicant's posts and images can indeed provide an idea of the candidate's individuality. However, that does not infer that a profile should be built from the information on their social media account.

Root and Mckay (2014) state, " students who thought that people other than their close friends were not likely to view their Facebook profile tended to post content that projected an image that was fun and friendly, appealing, or wild." When employers review the applicant's social media they may come across inappropriate images or comment threads and consider those into determining whether the candidate is qualified for the position. However, I would like to address that some postings are purposefully posted with the

intention of sharing with friends and family, not their future employers. So, some contents can have different meanings. It is important to note that candidates can come from different, so images that they believe to be appropriate to the applicant can mean something completely different to the employer. For example, an image of an applicant at a party may convey that they are wild and irresponsible whereas, in contrast, the applicant is a responsible individual who is just having fun. I believe that postings only tell one side of the story and from a third party who views this content can have a different understanding. However, there are many employers who would view these posting and make assumptions about the candidate's character and reject them. It is true that screening via social media does provide ample information regarding the candidate, which can determine whether the information provided on their application is the truth such as whether the candidate has done drugs or alcohol use. However, above all the reviewing process requires employers to physically review the content which does not remove the occurrence of involving bias. The entire process of determining whether the candidate is fit for involves the employers to view the content and make a decision based on what they see.

Dobbs (2014) states in their article, " Know How To Hire" states, " Furthermore, accessing an individual's social media page (even without a password) can provide information such as race, ethnicity, approximate age, religion, and marital status, which could lead to claims of discrimination by a candidate.". If the employer is not careful they may make incorrect assumptions regarding the content that may be on the candidate's social

media. Root and McKay (2014) support this by addressing that, “ In one study, grammar and spelling mistakes in social profiles prompted a stronger negative reaction than alcohol consumption.” Employers seem to value grammar and spelling to a higher degree than inappropriate activities which is understandable considering it puts the candidate’s communication skills into question. Yet, would social media be an appropriate place to determine their communication skills when they may mix text language together in their comment? Additionally, if the candidates are somewhat fluent and can convey their thoughts but, they have grammar issues should this detract employers from considering them? Based on Root and McKay’s statement, a candidate can communicate but, has a grammar issue or a candidate who has a slight speech impairment has a higher chance of being rejected compared to an alcohol user. With this in mind, how can employers boast or state they offer equal opportunity to candidates if they are viewing the candidate’s posting with a critical eye for grammar. Several arguments that could be made against my claims focus on the ability to identify who is the best candidate based on screening their pictures and comments.

Stoughton et al. (2013) state in “ Big Five Personality Traits Reflected in Job Applicants’ Social Media Postings” that, “ The correlations shown in Table 2 support hypotheses 1 and 2, which predicted that those lower in agreeableness and conscientiousness would engage in more online badmouthing behaviors.” Employers may argue that the best way to distinguish whether a candidate is qualified for the company is to screen the language they use in their posts or their images. So they can assess the true

characteristics of the candidate rather than accepting what the candidate may say about themselves. Stoughton et al. (2013) states, “ Unfortunately, many of these measures are at risk for faking and socially desirable responding a people strive to manage the impressions they create.” In order for applicants to successfully get the job, they may provide answers that cater to boosting their character to be more attractive. When in reality some those attributes maybe fake.

Be that as it may Blacksmith and Poepelman (2014) address in “ Three Ways Social Media and Technology Have Changed Recruitment” that, “ For example, there is a large portion of individuals who do to use social media websites for one reason or another.” The screening process would prove to be useless if the candidate does not utilize a social media platform. There is also the complication of legal concerns surrounding what is considered private information and what is public. Segal (2018) addresses, “ 74 percent of organizations said they were concerned with legal risks or discovering information about protected characteristics when perusing candidates’ social media profiles.” While screening the applicant’s social media they can easily infringe upon their privacy which may not be applicable to the hiring process.

Overall, the idea of utilizing social media as a mode to screen prospective employees to grasp an understanding of their real character and qualifications has advantages. Nonetheless, though, that would only apply if the applicant holds a social media account. Another aspect that I believe would detract employers from overtly relying on the screening process is that being too critical can cause legal issues to arise. It can span from



privacy infringement to discrimination of providing unequal treatment to those who can communicate but get rejected from grammar problems.