

## **Journal #3: What is the most interesting thing I have learned through my career research? How does the information in this article relate to my future career?**

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### **How Social Media Can Help (Or Hurt) You In Your Job Search**

Social media is a key player in the job search process today.

Sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+ allow employers to get a glimpse of who you are outside the confines of a résumé, cover letter, or interview—while they offer job seekers the opportunity to learn about companies they're interested in; connect with current and former employees; and hear about job openings instantaneously, among other things.

That's probably why half of all job seekers are active on social networking sites on a daily basis, and more than a third of all employers utilize these sites in their hiring process.

Career transition and talent development consulting firm Lee Hecht Harrison asked hundreds of job seekers via an online poll, "How active are you on social networking sites?" Forty-eight percent said they're very active on a daily basis, while 19% said they log on about two or three times per week. Another 22% said they use social networking sites one to three times per month, or less. Only 11% of job seekers said they never use social networking websites.

"I was really excited to see how many job seekers are active on social media," says Helene Cavalli, vice president of marketing at Lee Hecht Harrison. "As strong advocates, we spend a lot of time coaching job seekers on how to develop a solid social media strategy. While it isn't the only strategy for finding a job, it's becoming increasingly important."

Greg Simpson, a senior vice president at Lee Hecht Harrison, said in a press statement that job seekers must understand how hiring managers and recruiters are using social media in all phases of the selection process.

To help job seekers better understand the role of social media in their job search, [CareerBuilder.com](http://CareerBuilder.com) conducted a survey last year that asked 2,303 hiring managers and human resource professionals if, how, and why they incorporate social media into their hiring process.

First they found that 37% of employers use social networks to screen potential job candidates. That means about two in five companies browse your social media profiles to evaluate your character and personality—and some even base their hiring decision on what they find.

"Social media is a primary vehicle of communication today, and because much of that communication is public, it's no surprise some recruiters and hiring managers are tuning in," says Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder.

CareerBuilder also asked employers why they use social networks to research candidates, and 65% said they do it to see if the job seeker presents himself or herself professionally. About half (51%) want to know if the candidate is a good fit for the company culture, and another 45% want to learn more about his or her qualifications. Some cited “to see if the candidate is well-rounded” and “to look for reasons not to hire the candidate,” as their motives.

So, if you’re among the 89% of job seekers that use social networking sites (daily, sometimes, or rarely), you’ll want to be careful.

A third (34%) of employers who scan social media profiles said they have found content that has caused them not to hire the candidate. About half of those employers said they didn’t offer a job candidate the position because of provocative or inappropriate photos and information posted on his or her profile; while 45% said they chose not to hire someone because of evidence of drinking and/or drug use on his or her social profiles. Other reasons they decided not to offer the job: the candidate’s profile displayed poor communication skills, he or she bad mouthed previous employers, made discriminatory comments related to race, gender, or religion, or lied about qualifications.

(Haefner says no matter what information is found on a candidate, and regardless of where it’s found, the process has to abide by fair and equal hiring practices.)

“If you choose to share content publicly on social media, make sure it’s working to your advantage,” Haefner says. “Take down or secure anything that could potentially be viewed by an employer as unprofessional and share content that highlights your accomplishments and qualifications in a positive way.”

Brad Schepp, co-author of *How To Find A Job On LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google+*, adds: “Make sure any profiles you write are free of typos, the information is coherent and applicable to your industry [or job you’re trying to land], and your photos present you in a favorable light. You can verify the applicability of the information by checking profiles of others in the same field.”

The information you provide online about your job background and accomplishments should also be consistent, he says. “Don’t assume an employer will only be checking you out on LinkedIn. They may also check Facebook, or even Twitter and Google+. The story you tell on each site should be pretty much the same, although it’s fine to adapt the material for the site.”

The good news is that hiring managers aren’t just screening your social media profiles to dig up dirt; they’re also looking for information that could possibly give you an advantage. The CareerBuilder survey revealed that 29% of surveyed hiring managers found something positive on a profile that drove them to offer the candidate a job.

In some cases it was that the employer got a good feel for the candidate’s personality. Others chose to hire because the profile conveyed a professional image. In some instances it was because background information supported professional qualifications, other people posted great references about the candidate, or because the profile showed that the job seeker is creative, well-rounded, or has great communication skills.

This means the job seekers shouldn't just focus on hiding or removing inappropriate content; they should work on building strong social networks and creating online profiles that do a really good job of representing their skills and experience in the workplace, Simpson said in a press statement. "Job seekers who are silent or invisible online may be at a disadvantage. They need to engage on social networking sites to increase their visibility and searchability with prospective employers," he said.

Cavalli agrees. "It's not enough to only post a profile and check your news feed. There are a lot of lurkers—people who have an online profile but don't do anything or engage in any meaningful way. You need to give to the social networking communities, participate in group discussions, share expertise, point someone to an article. You have to work it. While it can feel uncomfortable putting yourself out there, if you're looking for a job, it's not the time to be timid."

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