



Point of View

The Invasion of Your Space: Employers Use Social Networking Sites for Recruiting Purposes

The contents of social networking sites are in the public domain and available for all to see, including prospective employers. Whether an employer uses the information to actively recruit you or even screen you out can depend on how your content portrays you.

It's no secret that there's a growing trend among employers to conduct Google searches as part of their hiring process. The newest twist is that this practice is beginning to seep into social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and Friendster.

In fact, a recent Spherion® survey found that almost 20% of workers would post their resumes on social networking site for employers to see, and a third would remove certain content from these sites if they knew their employer (or prospective employers) could see it.

Should you do the same? The short answer is yes, according to many experts.

The World Wide Web is public domain and users should assume that anything on it can be seen by anyone, including prospective employers. With more than 93 million profiles posted, MySpace is the third most popular site in the U.S. after Yahoo and Google, according to the Internet analysis company Alexa. It was only a matter of time before employers realized the recruiting benefits of this resource and began using these sites not only to screen out candidates, but also to actively recruit them.

Take the U.S. Marine Corps, for example, which maintains a MySpace profile that includes streaming video of daily life as a Marine and a link to "contact a recruiter." According to the Associated Press, more than 430 people contacted Marine recruiters this way in the first five months after the page went live. The U.S. Armed Forces are widely recognized for innovative recruiting techniques, and companies tend to follow their lead when it comes to recruitment tactics. The use of social networking sites seems to be no exception.

So, if you are an active job-seeker who also uses sites such as MySpace, Facebook or Friendster for social networking, consider the following:

- Be sure your profile and chat content reflect the image you wish to portray during your job search.
- When posting messages to friends, remember that prospective employers may be watching.

- Don't let your screen name give you a false sense of privacy; there are many ways someone can learn your identity despite use of screen names.
- Get the most out of your social networking page. More than just a place to gather online with friends, it's an opportunity to introduce yourself to prospective employers as well!

Making a good impression on social networking sites can help in your job search efforts. At the very least, you won't be passed over for a job based on questionable information in your profile. If you play your cards right, it may not be long before employers will be chatting with you!