

MySpace Is Public Space When It Comes To Job Search

Entry Level Job Seekers - It's Time To Reconsider the Web

MILWAUKEE, WI--July 26, 2006--In a recent survey, CollegeGrad.com, the #1 Entry Level Job site, found that 47% of college grad job seekers who use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have either already changed or plan to change the content of their pages as a result of their job search.

"There is a growing trend in the number of employers who are Googling candidates to research for additional information," said Brian Krueger, President of CollegeGrad.com. "This trend has now spilled over to the use of Internet social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, for screening potential candidates."

MySpace has become the most popular social networking site in the world, with more than 95 million members. It accounts for 80% of all visits to online social networking sites, according to Wikipedia. Facebook has the largest number of registered users among college-focused networking sites, also according to Wikipedia.

Are social networking sites private or public? It depends on who you ask.

"It violates the privacy of the applicants," said Shantice Bates, a Mass Communication Major from Virginia Commonwealth University. "A person's MySpace or Facebook pages really have nothing to do with their work personality."

Yet the information is still in the public domain. Is it truly private? "The thought of an employer reviewing your information can be a very scary thought to a candidate, especially in the case of a college student or recent grad," commented Krueger. "But as long as the information is posted publicly, it is available to others and could potentially be a liability to you in your job search. It could keep you from getting the job. Or, worse yet, from even getting the interview in the first place—and usually you wouldn't even know why."

So what about the employee who was asked to change the content of her MySpace page as a condition of her continued employment? Sound a little invasive?

Steven Jungman, Division Director of ChaseSource, LP explained that a client of theirs conducted an Internet search for a current project, using the code name of the project as the keyword. Surprisingly, a project team member's MySpace page was found in the search results. Not only had she listed her role in the project as her current work experience, but also included on the site were some very revealing photographs of her in addition to other very personal information. She was required to remove mention of the employer and the project as a condition of her continued employment.

"My professional recommendation is that individuals realize that the World Wide Web is exactly that, and personal information is a key click away," said Jungman. "Common sense should prevail when someone posts something on the web that they would not put on a resume."

Krueger recommends, "Entry level job seekers who use MySpace and Facebook should update their pages to reflect their job search image. If you don't want information seen by employers, don't publish it publicly."

Those who have followed the prevailing advice and cleaned up their personal Web pages have been rewarded, sometimes using the Internet to their networking advantage. Consider Catherine Germann, a 2005 Information Technology graduate from Rochester Institute of Technology. While she was in the midst of her job search, she was contacted out of the blue by a recruiter. He had seen Germann's resume on a job board and promptly Googled her name, finding her personal website, her live journal and noticed that they had a mutual friend. Germann had already cleaned up her personal pages and adjusted the privacy settings to project a more professional image. Her site helped her in a positive way to build a potential job connection.

"I always advise my friends to clean up their pages, even if they aren't using their name," said Germann. "There are plenty of ways to figure out who someone is even if they are hiding behind a nondescript screen name."

Krueger advises college grad job seekers to beware of the image they project. "College grad job seekers should avoid anything that might cause a recruiter to say 'Yikes!' when they found you on the Web," said Krueger. "Like it or not, MySpace and Facebook are public sites. Instead of posting information and photos from that all night party, job seekers can stand out from the crowd by using these sites as an opportunity to generate a positive first impression. If you wouldn't put it in your resume, don't put it on the Web."

Following are the overall survey results:

Have you changed your content at MySpace or Facebook because of your job search?

- No - 39.9%
- Yes - 25.9%
- No, but I plan to - 9.4%
- I don't use either MySpace or Facebook - 24.8%

The survey was conducted nationally using an online poll placed on the CollegeGrad.com home page during June 2006. The results are based on more than 1600 respondents.

About CollegeGrad.com:

CollegeGrad.com is the #1 entry level job site on the Internet and is the leader in the field of entry level job search. Brian Krueger is President and Founder of CollegeGrad.com and author of the best-selling book for entry level job search, College Grad Job Hunter.

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CONTACT INFO: Heidi Hanisko, CollegeGrad.com, 262-375-6700 or [contact us online](#).

Additional employer quotes

We have a first-hand experience of how a candidate's Facebook profile ruined his chances of securing a JobBound internship. Right before we interviewed a recent college graduate, we discovered that one of his interests listed on his profile is " Smokin' blunts with the homies and bustin' caps in whitey" and one of his favorite quotes is "Beware of big butts and a smile." Our "first impression" of our candidate was officially tainted, and he had little hope of regaining a professional image in our eyes. He was not hired.

An organization is only as good as its people, so hiring a new employee is a huge responsibility. We figured he was probably just trying to be funny on Facebook, but his online profile raised doubts about his judgement and professionalism. Fortunately, our online search gave us an insight that we discovered before it was too late.

Brad Karsh
President
JobBound

It is so important to remember what information is accessible through the Internet. As a recruiter we need as much information about our candidates as possible, so we go beyond reference checks and perform Internet searches. It is alarming to see what some of the recent college grads have posted on sites such as MySpace and Facebook.

Brooke Schara
Marketing Specialist
NorthStar Express

I like to take a look and see what information is out there about the candidates by performing a Google search. If they have recognitions through sports or the community, that's great information that adds credibility to the candidate. It also helps me create a bond with that candidate because sometimes this information is more telling than a resume and cover letter. It also shows them that our company cares about who they are. People don't join companies - they join people.

The candidate's MySpace page can also give great background information as to who this person really is and what kind of friends they have. Because MySpace allows for lots of customization and personal touches, candidates should realize that recruiters, clients, business associates and colleagues all have access to the Internet and may see how this person "acts outside of work." Make sure the image you portray on the Internet is how you want people to see you in all aspects of your life. Keep your page professional and change your voicemail greeting.

By no means would information (positive or negative) found on the Internet make or break my decision.

Nic Romero
Talent Acquisition Specialist
North Star Resource Group

I personally think it is not the best way to screen a candidate. If someone has not met with a candidate face to face, but you have looked at pictures (potentially) on the Internet that may or may not be flattering, I think you are opening yourself up to scrutiny about hiring practices, and are you discriminating in some way based on what you saw in those pictures (i.e. didn't like how they looked, looked like a "wild" person, etc).

I think most employers should be able to screen candidates out from the questions they ask during the interview process, information from the resume and/or transcripts, and feedback from references or professors.

I can see a need, and have researched more senior candidates on the Internet for articles, publications, etc, and see a big value in this type of "screening". If and when you have a similar need from a college student, this would be useful as well. If a recruiter is relying on information from a personal page to make their ultimate decision, they should be careful.

As far as giving advice to students, you could look at the adage of "Don't put anything out on the Internet that you would not want to have to explain to your mother, father, grandparents, priest, boss, judge, etc, etc."

Logan Maienschein
College Relations Manager
Tyson Foods, Inc

My general theme is that employers should NOT be looking at MySpace and other social networking pages to find candidates, but rather should be pushing content out TO students through these venues. Screening candidates by looking at these pages is not a particularly good way to determine bona fide occupational qualifications. I call this the your-best-candidate-doing-keg-stands-in-a-hula-skirt phenomenon. If as an employer you see this, what do you do with the information? In many cases, the answer is nothing, because it is not related to their occupational qualifications.

Also, I think it is so important that students understand that we are now Googling for candidates---- posting resumes on line (and with privacy protections) is now a very popular way for recruiters to find candidates. I would never Google a candidate to see what their web presence is but in looking for on-line resumes, other pages could come up.

Maureen Crawford
Manager of Talent Acquisition
Osram Sylvania, Inc.

I would recommend that job seekers use the "parent test". If you are not concerned that your parents will see your online profile, then you should not be concerned that your future employer sees it. Because in many cases they will!

John Capozzi
Director of Recruiting
Platinum Solutions, Inc.

I do not use MySpace or Facebook as part of the screening process. On the other hand, my son, who is entering college in the fall has shown me the pages of people he knows, the content of which I would give serious question to if I was looking to recruit them.

Keith M. Bloomfield
Director of Human Resources
DeSimone Consulting Engineers, PLLC

Career Center Quotes

The scariest thing about Internet social networking sites is that students have no idea that anyone other than friends are watching. There is a false feeling of safety attached to the network you create with these systems. While employers may not have access to these programs, newly hired graduates do and they may be more apt to naturally utilize them. As career counseling professionals, we here at Babson will certainly be communicating with our students about the dangers of getting too personal on social networking sites. I am afraid that until something happens to someone they know, many students will dismiss the warnings to beware.

Megan Houlker
Director, Center for Career Development
Babson College

I think that information found on social networking sites should not be used by employers when considering candidates for employment. The networks are exactly that, social ones, and should not be considered as a measure of professional worth. However, since some employers may use social networking sites to gain information regarding job applicants, I would strongly advise students to remove any potentially incriminating information that would adversely affect their ability to get the interview.

Cary E. Smedley
Employer Relations Coordinator
Towson University

In my Senior Seminar course, I have added a discussion about Facebook and MySpace to the course content. When I first mentioned it in class, I could see by the expression on a couple of student's faces that they probably had information on the web, that they wouldn't want anyone to see. This is just another area that Career Services staff need to be aware of so we can inform our students of the potential harm in a job search. With the increasing technology, everyone needs to think through the information that they put on the web.

Marcia Foss
Director of Career Services
Valley City State University

Consider... if you were a commercial banker and someone came in with a well-documented business plan, I suspect that you would also "Google" them and their business ideas to be sure you were considering giving your bank's money to the same person who was in your office. In the 21st century, reference checking will include more and more online research.

Doug Poad
Associate Professor and Internship Coordinator
Mount Union College

I advise students to "clean up their digital dirt!" One of my students LOST a great job because he slandered his company on MySpace.com. We advise students to "Google" themselves to see what comes up. This is yet another step in the job search process.

Rae Ann Ianniello
Director, Career Development Center
California State University, East Bay

I work with a lot of recruiters coming to ASU to either interview or attend our career events and job fairs, and I've not heard from any yet who've said they actually use Internet Social Networking sites to obtain info on potential candidates. Of course, they may be doing this and just not telling us...but I think we would be hearing about it if they were!

Elaine Stover
Associate Director, Career Services
Arizona State University

It is always better to be safe than sorry. If there is the slightest possibility that an employer may get the urge to look at your information on Facebook/MySpace, pictures included, then make sure what's on there is what you don't mind them viewing. Believe me there will be some employers that will view it and there is nothing you as a job seeker can do about it.

Marion Hill
Director, Career Services
Dallas Baptist University

Most employers I have spoken with cannot afford the time to go "sleuthing" on the Internet. But in some cases, especially where one's character is an area of the utmost concern for employers, this may be useful in gaining a window into a side of the candidate that would otherwise be unknown. Voyeurism? Perhaps, but it is foolish for a person to allow this to happen. My advice? Be careful with what you publish, and choose friends who respect your privacy and reputation. Someday it may make all the difference.

Joan Gallagher
Career Counselor
Loyola University New Orleans

With the hype about various information resources comes familiarization. Employers who may not have known that external sources of information were so easily accessed may now become fervent researchers. As a result of this new found knowledge on behalf of employers, more of our job seekers need to be constantly reviewing the "public" information that may be obtained by perspective employers about them. Everything from the resume, Facebook, MySpace, Web pages, to the recorded message on the answering machine at home or on the cell phone provides information about them to whoever has access to that information. Bottom line to all of this is; let the job seeker beware!

Ross Meloan
Career Services
Murray State University

College students have naively posted incriminating pictures and personal information, believing all the while that it only would be viewed by their fellow college students. Their naivety has blinded them to the fact that many of these sites are in the public domain. Although to their credit, who would ever have suspected that employers would turn to such a method to garner information about a candidate? While some sources don't believe the trend of recruiters using these sites in their recruiting efforts is widespread, it can't be underestimated, and it may also be much more wide spread than many people want to believe.

This fall, in our Professional Development Seminar (PDS) Program (a series of 4 courses in career development that are required of every student), we will be teaching our students how to use these sites to their advantage by posting positive, informative career information about themselves. If recruiters are going to use these sites for background checks, then why not have them find important items like a student's career goals, their GPA, their internship and work experience, and their specialized skills?

Dawn C. Sherman
Director of Career Services
Nichols College

Employers are within their rights to research people online. The Internet is a public forum, where one's expectation of privacy is almost nonexistent. The trouble with the Information Superhighway is that because we don't readily see the message recipient, we don't have any real concept as to who might be reading our websites. Unless your website is password-protected, personal webpage postings are the cyber equivalent of grabbing the microphone in the announcer's box at Yankee Stadium and broadcasting your content for all to hear. Are you comfortable with all 50,000+ listening in--regardless of their potential reaction? If the answer is anything but an unqualified YES, then it might be a good idea to keep it to yourself for the time being, at least until you have secured a job.

Theresa O'Neill
Career Counselor
Rutgers University-Newark

When it comes to employers using Google and Facebook, I feel they are opening themselves up to lawsuits. In the U.S., students are discouraged from attaching a photo to their resume or revealing personal information that employers can't ask about- marital status, age, race, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, etc; however that information is readily available on Facebook. So employers that use Facebook or even Google may find information that they could never inquire about in the interview. I'm sure there are lawsuits looming on the horizon. A wise company should "just say no" when it comes to using Facebook.

Dawna Milligan
Associate Director, Career Center
Johns Hopkins University

Anyone entering the job market should realize that everything posted online to websites, weblogs, or electronic bulletin boards are fair game and open to public scrutiny. For years we have cautioned college graduates to select professional e-mail addresses and to take a serious approach at the messages recorded on voice mail and answering machines. This is simply a new venue to be aware of.

The great news is, these sites provide a real opportunity for self-marketing and promotion. Consider this an opportunity for "Employment Judo." College grads who take a professional approach at their personal blogs and webspace have an opportunity to post and advertise components of their qualifications typically truncated from a typical resume or application. Be aware that everything you do on the web may be scrutinized and take advantage of the opportunity!

John F. Brown
Director, College & Career Guidance
Oral Roberts University

I think that employers who are using these sites as part of their screening process are swimming in very muddy ethical waters and frankly, are going to be hard pressed to demonstrate a fair and consistent hiring process should they be challenged in a legal action.

On the other hand, students need to realize that the Internet blurs the line between public and private. Anything that they post, or even that their friends post about them, is potentially viewable by the entire planet. I've always been a strong advocate of free speech, but it's important to recognize that whether it's ethical or unethical for them to do so, people who you may not want to see it, can and in some cases will."

John Fracchia
Assistant Director for Employer Relations, Career Services
Ithaca College

My 17 year old son and his friends got into Facebook by pretending to be at a University called Superior Quinones with an AOL email address. It would be very easy for an employer to get what ever information they want.

Shelly Holly
University of Tulsa

We think it's acceptable for employers to Google or do an Internet search of our students and alumni as part of their background check. If the student has photos or personal items on My Space or Facebook that they don't want employers or their parents to see, then they shouldn't put them up there. We've added this information to our 2006-07 Career Guide, career center website and recent workshops. We've also recently heard about a student who checked out a recruiter's MySpace website and found information and photos that were not in good taste. They decided not to continue the interview process with the recruiter or his/her company. So I guess it works both ways!!

Sue H. Strup
Director, Experiential Education and Career Services
University of Kentucky

Religion teaches the golden rule that philosophically translates into an ethic of reciprocity. To prepare for interviews, many students "Google" the individual who will be interviewing them and they can expect the same action from employers. At this point in time, much of the Internet is a free exchange of information. If you don't want something known about you don't post it.

Karin S. Ash
Director, MBA Career Management Center
Johnson School, Cornell University

"Put anything you want on your Facebook and MySpace -anything you want your mom, your grandmother and your dream job recruiter to see."

Judith Carruthers
Director, Career Development
Castleton State College

Entry-Level Candidate Quotes

Using the Internet to identify and eliminate candidates is a great idea. When you sign up for Facebook or MySpace you are essentially voiding all rights to privacy. Anyone who puts questionable pictures, info, and/or quotes on their site are foolish to think that what they do on their own time won't affect their business life.

L.Mauro

B.A. Psychology, 2004

Millersville University of Pennsylvania

I think it violates the privacy of applicants, and crosses the boundary between work life and personal life. Furthermore, a person's myspace or facebook pages really have nothing to do with their work personality. Employers who screen out applicants based on personal Internet pages are practicing discrimination, and unfairly judging potential applicants. Overall, if employers and hiring managers are going to judge us on our MySpace page, then there's no point in perfecting my cover letter and resume.

1976: An applicant should have a perfect resume, and professional appearance.

2006: An applicant should have a perfect resume, a Ph.D and not reveal anything potentially fun or unique about themselves on MySpace.

Shantice Bates

Mass Communication Major, Class of 2006

Virginia Commonwealth University

The only aspects of our lives that are private, thanks to technology, are the aspects that we choose to keep private and take measures to do so. While I agree that it is a bit invasive for an employer to use social networking sites to "screen" potential employees, those individuals made the choice to post information about themselves on public websites that are accessible to anyone, anywhere. They did it willingly, and should be willing to accept that people who accept their resumes are not prohibited to view their MySpace or to Google them. Privacy is becoming more about how much information we reveal rather than how easy it is to find it out. There are ways to make your personal social networking page "less public", so there ARE options for those of us who simply can't go without having that drunk picture from spring break as our Facebook photo.

Leslie Lash

Marketing, Class of 2005

University of North Carolina at Charlotte - Belk College of Business

Theoretically, whatever your life is like outside of work should be independent of your life at work, but employers don't have much to go off of, and having controversial, publicly available, information about you just opens areas for doubt. Thus, I advocate playing it safe and not posting anything controversial.

Jengyee Liang

Industrial Engineering & Operations Research 2005

University of California - Berkeley

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