Job Seekers: Beware of “Digital Dirt”

In this hi-tech era, the job search process for current job candidates is complicated by company access to digital dirt, random personal information obtained by using search engines such as Google, Yahoo and MSN, and other specific websites such as MySpace, and Facebook. Increasing numbers of recruiters report that they are finding personal information, including provocative photos and descriptions of excessive partying, that is helping them weed out some candidates prior to the interview.

If you are actively looking for a full-time job or internship, or are applying to graduate school, be sure to consider clearing up your “digital dirt,’’ i.e., your own information that appears on websites such as MySpace, Facebook, or Friendster. Don't let information that recruiters might consider unprofessional or inappropriate keep you from getting an interview or a job offer. If you are uncertain about the kinds of things to eliminate, feel free to consult a member of the Career Services staff for feedback.

In addition, conduct an Internet search on yourself – yes, “narcisurf’’ on a regular basis – to determine what kind of data is available about you online. Remember that public information is available via governmental and university sites. Such data as misrepresented academic qualifications, driving records, and participation in legal proceedings may be available to a competent web researcher. Finally, review your own voice mail recording and personal website; be sure that they represent you in the best professional light.

“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.”

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.”

Suggestion: We suggest changing your privacy settings so that only other students, confirmed friends can view your information.

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