

## EMPLOYERS USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JOB APPLICANTS



There was a time when employers learned what they could about prospective employees with information garnered from interviews and background checks. A recent survey from CareerBuilder, however, showed that your future boss might have checked out your social media sites as well. According to the recent study, 37 percent of respondents, including hiring managers and HR professionals, admitted to researching job applicants via social networking sites. The two most popular sites checked were Facebook at 65 percent and LinkedIn at 63 percent, with Twitter hitting a lower 16 percent and other similar websites making up 17 percent. The majority of those participating in the survey were from the IT industry (52%), while the healthcare industry included the least number of professionals utilizing the sites (28%). A little more than a tenth of employers stated that they weren't currently checking social media sources but were planning to start. Approximately 12 percent of hiring managers claim that social media is a solid method for finding reasons for not hiring an applicant. Most of the hiring managers who participated in the survey stated that they are looking beyond the standard interview: to see if the prospective employee presents him/herself professionally (65%), to judge whether or not the applicant is a "good fit" for the company (51%), to uncover more of the person's qualifications (45%) and to determine whether the applicant is "well rounded" (35%). Applicants might want to be wary of what they post on social media sites. More than a third of hiring managers admitted that something found online was the reason that a candidate was not hired, including inappropriate pictures or information (49%), evidence of the person drinking or using drugs (45%), poor communication skills (35%), speaking derogatorily of a former boss (33%), discriminatory remarks based on race, religion or gender (28%) and lying about qualifications (22%).

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue square background.

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On the plus side, social media sites might improve a person's chances of gainful employment. Around 29 percent of hiring managers have found that such sites have shown them the applicant's personality (58%), an image of professionalism (55%), background information that supports the applicant's qualifications (54%), a wide range of interests (51%), superior communication skills (49%), creativity (44%) and great references from others (34%). "Because social media is a dominant form of communication today, you can certainly learn a lot about a person by viewing their public online personas," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of HR at CareerBuilder. "However, hiring managers and human resources departments have to make a careful, determined decision as to whether information found online is relevant to the candidates' qualifications for the job." Haefner warned that job candidates should be careful of what potential employees can see online. She offered suggestions: "If you choose to leave social media content public, tailor the message to your advantage. Filter out anything that can tarnish your professional reputation, and post communications, links and photos that portray you in the best possible light." The survey was conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder. It was made available online from February 9 to March 2, 2012 and included 2,303 participants.