



The 7 Do's and Don'ts of Social Networking

Recruiters Increasingly Use Sites to Recruit Candidates - and Screen Their Behavior

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FaceBook, Twitter, LinkedIn -- Social-networking sites are now used both as recruitment tools for new talent and as screening sites for potential employees. As such, information security professionals should be careful to cultivate the right image on these and other popular sites.



"Securing employment is all about networking, and candidates should spend time cultivating relationships and investing in their online brand that will benefit them in the future," says Barbara Massa, VP, Global Talent Acquisition, McAfee, Inc.

A Recruiting Tool

While not all companies use social media sites in the hiring process, the numbers are growing. According to a recent survey (June, 2009) by CareerBuilder, the number of employers using social networking sites to screen candidates has more than doubled since 2008. Out of more than 2,600 hiring managers, 45 percent reported using social networking sites to research job candidates' backgrounds for information -- up from 22% in 2008.

Michele Porfilio, a strategic sourcing director for Crowe Horwath LLP, a public accounting and consulting firm, says "We leverage social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter for our information security hiring needs." Based on the skill set in need, Crowe implements the tools for target search and outreach and "within LinkedIn, we continue our visibility in creating an information security professionals pipeline," she adds.

Besides LinkedIn, companies are establishing their presence on FaceBook and Twitter by creating a corporate page to increase visibility and open opportunities to network within the information security industry.

Niche and boutique information security recruiting firms such as BC Management and the Lenzner Group both use LinkedIn extensively in their candidate search and selection process and have established a strong contact base by promoting active interaction with members and affiliated member groups.

Tracy Lenzner, president of Lenzner Group, pays close attention to a candidate's LinkedIn bio, ensuring that information on a resume is not in any way conflicting with the candidate's online profile.

Alicia Stevens, a senior recruiter with BC Management uses corporate database and LinkedIn for conducting research on prospective candidates and places a lot of emphasis on:

- Has the candidate spoken at industry events?
- Have they received any awards or public recognition?

- Do they have any relevant published papers or articles in their area of expertise?
- Are they members of any associations?
- Do they actively participate in any forums or affiliated groups?
- Do they hold professional industry certifications?

The Down Side of Social Networking

"Today, however a candidate's presence on social networking sites can even hurt them," says Eric Fiterman, CEO and President of Methodvue, a private intelligence organization. It is very easy to post information -- at times too much information -- on these sites without thinking that people may examine this information and judge their character for a potential candidacy. Candidates need to remember that the information they post remains forever, Fiterman says.

In the same CareerBuilder survey, more than one-third of employers that checked profiles said they had found content that disqualified a potential hire. The top four reasons for disqualification were that the potential candidate had posted information about themselves:

- Drinking or using drugs;
- Displaying inappropriate photographs;
- Bad-mouthing their previous employer;
- Showing poor communication skills.

"Knowing who they are and spelling that in their profile is key," says Massa.

The 7 Do's and Don'ts

1) **Do be visible and add value:** Be active in relevant member groups, forums and associations. Have a targeted list of companies and accordingly expand your network and connections to be recognized by industry associates. Creating a concise profile online is important for recruiters to find them in their searches, however, "Job prospects should never say that they are looking for a job on their profile and status update, as that gives a desperate impression to hiring managers and recruiters and often is a turnoff," says Porfilio. Add value by posting useful links or just comments that offer some information that will help establish a candidate as someone who knows things about their niche and area of expertise.

2) **Don't badmouth your current or previous employer:** Be careful and not gripe about their current or past employers in your online profiles. This usually reflects badly on the candidate and results in tarnishing their own image in the eyes of hiring managers and recruiters. Also, if you are currently employed, keep in mind any confidentiality and conduct agreements you may have signed to ensure you are not violating any terms.

3) **Do be selective:** Be careful with what information needs to be posted -- where you decide to post the information and how public you make it, says Fiterman. A good practice is to restrict posting personal information that may not be relevant to professional career growth and development. Emphasis should be placed on showcasing expertise and skill set and work-related activities, including speaking engagements, articles and papers published and core strengths.

4) **Don't let out personal information in public:** Tweet/chat/discuss regarding business and the emerging trends in their industry, but limit posting information on your personal life -- which can be a subject of major scrutiny by recruiters and hiring managers. "My hiring decision will definitely be influenced in learning that a candidate is involved in playing cards as a hobby and is a member of any affiliated association," says Stevens.

5) **Do get valuable recommendations:** getting recommendations from former employers and current supervisors is always good, says Massa. But candidates should also go outside their organizations to seek valuable recommendations and get endorsed by clients, business partners and leaders that carry weight.

6) **Don't use inappropriate language and photos:** most often candidates' use of language and choice of photographs posted are reasons for ticking off recruiters, says Stevens. You need to ensure that information posted is written professionally without use of swear words and catchy phrases. Also, be very selective in posting photographs and use your judgment to ensure that these photographs are how you want the public to see you.

7) **Do Create an Online Image:** "Creating a powerful online brand is what will truly distinguish candidates," says Massa. You need to invest in developing an online personality which will clearly set you apart from your peers. You must be:

- Thinking about the industry affiliations and groups you want to be associated with;
- What are the leading edge conferences you want to be attending and participating in?
- What kind of education and training do you want to be investing in to enhance your overall qualification?
- Invest in creating a name for yourself by blogging in recognized publications, creating an impressive following on Twitter and LinkedIn, and constantly appearing on conferences and speaking on subject matter expertise.

Creating an online personal brand can be a strong asset to a candidate's job search and a great way to toot their horn. When creating an online personal brand, job prospects need to ensure to maintain continuity between all of the sites they are using. "It's about finding the right mix of sites and content to best serve their goals," says Allison Nawoj, a senior career adviser from CareerBuilder.

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