

## Your Digital Dirt — is it time to clean house?



### Want a Job? Want to **KEEP** that job?

Many people assume what they post on social networking sites is private; however, more and more employers are screening potential employees and currently employed employees.



Employers peruse social networking sites of **JOB APPLICANTS** to check for unprofessional and immature online behavior. According to Havenstein, the CareerBuilder study suggests that people whose online images reveal drug and alcohol abuse are a major concern to companies that screen applicants using social media. Other online behavior employers are concerned about include inap-

propriate information and photos, poor communication skills, bad-mouthing employees and employers, inaccurate credentials, unprofessional screen names, information regarding criminal behavior, and the posting of confidential information about previous employers.

#### Social Networking Sites and **EMPLOYEES**

As the attraction to social networking sites increases, more and more employers are finding themselves in litigious situations as employees lash out publicly against companies, against other employees and against management personnel. According to Stephanie Chan in a CNN May 10, 2010 article "Workplace Rants on Social Media are Headache for Companies," many employees do not realize that what they post on social media sites, whether it be from home or work, may be grounds for termination.

Many employers have fired people who have written negative status updates about their jobs. Derogatory comments by employees about other employees on social networking sites have also initiated harassment lawsuits, and employers are usually quick to step in and terminate perpetrators.

People should be wary when making comments about their jobs on the Internet. Even though there are privacy settings on most social networking sites, it is never safe to assume that a comment will not be copied and pasted somewhere else on the Internet.

#### References:

Chan, Stephanie. "[Workplace Rants on Social Media are Headache for Companies.](#)" CNN. (accessed May 25, 2010).

Havenstein, Heather "[One in Five Employers Uses Social Networks.](#)" *ComputerWorld*. (accessed May 25, 2010).

Portion of Cathy Herold's Employers & Social Networking Sites

### You.com: Top 10 Online Branding Tips for Students

Make no mistake about it: your professional networking contacts are Googling you. Your online image is incredibly important, and your web-based networking activities can make or break your job search.

Here are 10 tips for professionalizing your virtual presence:

#### 1. Google yourself

Google your own name and make sure the results reflect the image you want to project.



#### 2. Email impeccably

Since this is likely the primary way you'll interact with networking contacts and potential employers, make sure you always communicate in writing like the professional you want to become. Answer all emails within 24 hours and use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization and professional etiquette at all times.

#### 3. Make sure your social networking profiles are rated PG



According to a 2009 CareerBuilder survey, 45% of employers admit to using social network scouting for applicants. Would you be comfortable with a recruiter looking at any of the content you've posted online?

#### 4. Become an active user of LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest professional social network, so you need to be part of it. Set up a complete profile including keywords a recruiter might use to find someone like you.



#### 5. Tweet

Twitter is a great resource for following industry leaders, career experts and recruiters tweeting out real job opportunities.

#### 6. Bring offline relationships online

Spend 30 minutes a week sending a few "hello" emails to people you haven't spoken to in a while—former classmates, internship colleagues, family friends, and update them on your news or career goals.

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**7. Share your professional status**  
Stay on other people's radar screens and further build your personal brand is to update your status on LinkedIn or Twitter at least once a week with some career-related news.

**8. Get some online bylines**

Review books on Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com or comment on news articles and blogs related to your industry or interests. Sharing your point of view is a terrific form of networking and brand building.

**9. Add links to your email signature**

Once you've built up a professional online presence, make sure you don't get lost in cyberspace; you have to direct people to find you. Include a link to the URL of your LinkedIn, Google or Twitter profile in the signature line at the bottom of your email messages.

**10. Stay diligent about your online presence**

Just like the web itself, your online image is a never ending work in progress.

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## Protect Your Image

Not all employers search candidates and employees online, but the trend is growing. Don't let online social networking deep-six your career opportunities. Protect your image by following these simple tips:

**Be careful.** Nothing is private. Don't post anything on your site or your "friends" sites you wouldn't want a prospective employer to see. Derogatory comments, revealing or risqué photos, foul language and lewd jokes all will be viewed as a reflection of your character.



**Be discreet.** If your network offers the option, consider setting your profile to "private," so that it is viewable only by friends of your choosing. And since you can't control what other people say on your site, you may want to use the "block comments" feature. Remember, everything on the Internet is archived, and there is no eraser!

**Be prepared.** Check your profile regularly to see what comments have been posted. Use a search engine to look for online records of yourself to see what is out there about you. If you find information you feel could be detrimental to your candidacy or career, see about getting it removed -- and make sure you have an answer ready to counter or explain "digital dirt."

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## Five Tips on How to Break into Sales

Considering sales as a career path? A look at what it takes to enter the sales ranks at the tech giant IBM gives insight into what grads need to emphasize on their resumes to be noticed.

In a recent article for FINS Sales & Marketing, Shareen Pathak interviewed Bill Luse, a senior location executive for Michigan and part of IBM's sales organization, to find out 'what really blows him away when he's hiring salespeople.'

- **Emphasize your extracurricular activities**—they want to see someone who can take on challenges, extra work, and what has been done outside the classroom.
- **Make teamwork an obvious theme in your resume and interview**—working with teams is the norm at IBM. If you've taken on leadership roles or headed up a team, wave that flag during the interview.
- **Transformation is key**—have you pursued professional development? Gone back to school for an MBA, or taken on extra training courses to improve your skill level?
- **Trust**—emphasize difficult situations in your past that you worked through AS A TEAM. IBM doesn't want to see any 'lone stars', but rather how much your team trusted you when the going got tough.
- **Connect on LinkedIn**—connecting with employers is a great idea. Do not be discouraged if an employer tells you to go through human resources to apply for a job. That is protocol. But if you've made a good impression on him through a social network, and you have an impressive resume, that employer will remember you.



Content of article revised from Five Tips on How to Break into Sales at IBM from Bill Luse (By Shareen Pathak)

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