

## Social Networking Sites and Your Recruiting Process

You're probably hearing about it more and more: employers using popular social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to get more information on job candidates. If you have a strong recruiting process in place, however, online searches most likely aren't necessary. Read on for some considerations and advice.

If you search online, you'll have several things to think about if you find a candidate's profile. Are you certain the page you find is indeed that of your candidate? Can you trust what you find, or does it seem to be posted in fun only?

You should also consider the legal implications. You must be careful not to discriminate by searching for information on only specific groups of candidates or by giving more weight to information about candidates of certain groups than that of others. There may also be a question of whether this type of search qualifies as invasion of privacy.

Ultimately, you need to determine whether to base your hiring decisions on the online information you find. Think about the nature of your organization, your reputation in the community, and whether personal information is relevant to the position. You should also consider employee relations implications such as the appropriateness of online searches. Remember that for the generation just entering the workforce, it is common to have an online page as a way to meet people and communicate with friends. What you find on a particular page will likely be typical of the others, so if you use your findings against a candidate, you might miss out on a great potential employee for no real reason. You may just need to take these social networking sites for what they are: a way for friends to share personal information and photos with one another.

Additionally, if your hiring processes are robust, you shouldn't need to conduct such online research. The following are some recommendations to help you cover the bases in the hiring process.

- Start with creating a candidate profile that defines responsibilities, expectations, and key competencies.
- Develop or update the job description as needed.
- Use a behavioral interview format, which involves asking questions about past behaviors and accomplishments to predict future behavior and success.
- Include a behavioral profile or style assessment, which identifies an applicant's working and communication styles and how he or she might fit in with the rest of the group.

Finally, we recommend that you always conduct background and reference checks as an appropriate way to find out whether a candidate's experience fits with the required skills and your company culture. If you find you aren't obtaining good information from these checks, you should consider outsourcing this service.

While an online profile might give you some information that you otherwise wouldn't know about a candidate, using a solid hiring process will provide you with a strong sense of whether a candidate is a good fit for a position in your organization.