

References 2.0

According to a CareerBuilder Survey of 2600 Hiring Managers, 45% used Social Networking sites to screen candidates in 2009, up from 1 in 10 in 2006. One employer in 3 said that the information found excluded candidates for one of the following reasons: information about drug and alcohol use, poor communication skills, bad-mouthing former employers, inappropriate photos, inappropriate screen names, inaccurate qualifications and links to criminal behavior. About 1 in 4 employers said the content they found online convinced them to hire a candidate, due to professional image and profile, solid references and communication skills. Did you know that LinkedIn has an easy online form to specifically check references using the contacts in your network? Will you even know these checks are being done? Probably not. With the availability of detailed information at the click of a button, more job seekers are getting smart--ensuring that their online profiles work for them, rather than against them.

Whether you are in an active job search, may make a job change in the future or if you are like the majority of people who are not actively searching for employment but would like to hear about exciting job opportunities, you can take the proper steps to ensure that your online profile is reflecting exactly what you want it to. Here are some steps you can take:

1. Conduct a Google or Yasni Search on yourself. This is free, very simple to do and will yield a good amount of information to start with. Much of your information will come up—blogs, pictures, and just about anything posted online that your name has been attached to. Many people have profiles, accounts and other information online that they've long forgotten about. If there are items that need to be cleaned up, make sure you do so promptly.
2. Update your Social Networking Profiles LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and MySpace are all used extensively to conduct reference checks. The content, pictures, links, etc of these profiles are in your control. As we've seen, the information contained in these profiles can eliminate you from consideration for a position, or may convince someone that you are the right person for the job. Check the accuracy of the information; update your profile with awards, achievements, degrees, interests, technologies, etc.
3. Ask your coworkers, managers, professors and clients for recommendations. On LinkedIn, your references/recommendations are in plain sight and are often taken into consideration by potential employers. Be proactive in soliciting good information from colleagues who really know your work. The effectiveness of the reference will depend on the quality of the relationship—

so choose carefully. Also, be willing to take the time to provide references for others as well.

You work hard. You work harder to identify potential positions and companies you are interested in joining and even harder during the interview process to be considered for an offer. Don't let negative or sloppy online information prevent you from obtaining the career opportunity you deserve!