



Will Your Profile Get You Hired or Fired?

By Selena Dehne, JIST Publishing

By now, most of us have heard a handful of horror stories about how a person's online profile wrecked their job search or career. And yet, every day more and more people are on social networking websites making the exact same mistakes. Stubbornly clinging to an "It-won't-happen-to-me" attitude, many people have no idea that the derogatory statements they just posted or the lewd pictures of themselves online may cost them the job of their dreams.



Fortunately, some job seekers are wising up about how they present themselves in cyberspace. Rather than thoughtlessly creating profiles that could quickly get them fired, savvy professionals are increasingly using social networking sites to find jobs, develop key contacts, and advance their careers.

"Having an online identity is becoming increasingly important as a way to establish

your credibility and personal brand and to attract career or business opportunities," say Ellen Sautter and Diane Crompton, co-authors of *Seven Days to Online Networking* (JIST Publishing). To help ensure that people create profiles safe and savvy enough to help them land a job, they offer the following tips.

How to Get Hired

Be consistent from site to site. Too often recruiters and hiring managers get mixed messages about job candidates based on their online profiles. For example, you might have a LinkedIn profile that portrays you as a driven go-getter with an excellent sales background, but your MySpace profile suggests you are someone who lives the life of an '80s rock star. Make sure that every profile you create portrays the same person — specifically, someone who's respectable, professional, and high achieving.

Master a brief sound bite. When looking at your profile, hiring managers and recruiters want to learn more about you. The "About Me" section of your profile, then, offers the perfect opportunity to briefly describe your work history, strengths, and notable achievements. This paragraph should be similar to a thirty-second elevator speech you may have already prepared about yourself.

Develop a network. Some people prefer massive networks that consist of hundreds of strangers from around the globe. Others prefer a small network that only includes people whom they've befriended, are related to, or have worked with. Crompton and Sautter suggest developing a network of between 50 to 150 contacts through each site.

Showcase your skills through links. You should include links to your personal blog, webfolio, or website if they are relevant to your career. If you don't have any of these things, consider including links to any projects or work you might have been involved in that can be viewed online.

Strategically use keywords in the "Tags" section. Similar to using keywords in a resume, this strategy allows you to list words that help other people in your network or search engines find you. These words can include your areas of expertise, job titles, industries, hobbies, and anything else that defines you as a professional.

Of course, just as there are plenty of things a person can do with their profile to help them stand out in cyberspace, there are dozens of faux pas people commit all too often. The following five mistakes are some of the most common social networking missteps.

How to Get Fired

Post a scandalous photo. You know what I'm talking about: It's the photo of you showing off your hot, bronzed body in a barely-there bikini. It's the portrait of you — in all your glory — bonging a beer while sporting a Bears jersey at last week's tailgate. Profile pictures like these may be amusing and help you score a ton of friend requests, but they certainly won't impress your employer.

View or update your profile on company time. You can't help it. You just *have* to accept a friend request as soon as you receive it. You *have* to know who has added



Career Tips

pictures to their profile in the past hour. And as soon as you realize wakeboarding tops your list of interests, you have to immediately change your profile to reflect this. You jokingly refer to it as your Facebook addiction, but it's no laughing matter to your employer. Instead, it's considered a "waste of company time" if you're scoping out these websites while at work.

Post information that conflicts with your employer's values. Remember that any thing you wouldn't want to share with your supervisor or co-workers is better left off your profile. This information may include how you spend your leisure time, how you feel about sensitive issues, or any personal experiences you may have had. Also, be cautious about things your friends post on your profile that may portray you in a negative light.

Reveal why you're a lousy employee. Ever taken a sick day to hit the beach rather than nurse a cold? Or maybe you were supposed to work from home one afternoon, but your profile suggests you slept in and spent the afternoon catching up on your soaps. Believe

it or not, some people actually make this information public on their profiles! Whether you reveal this kind of information in your profile status or a friend has left a comment ratting you out, be aware that if others can see it, so can an employer.

Vent about your employer, boss, or job. Many social networking sites allow people to include their work history. Posting unnecessary, negative information about a particular aspect of a job, such as "Job sucks, but it pays the bills," gives an employer all the reasons they need to slap you with a pink slip.



About the Author

Selena Dehne is a career writer for JIST Publishing who shares the latest occupational, career, and job-search information available with job seekers and career changers. Her articles help people find meaningful work, develop their career and life plans, and carry out effective job-search campaigns.

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