

Using Social Media to Screen Job Applicants



"No matter what I do, I cannot seem to find the right employees for my business."

There are a lot of employers out there who believe that quality employees are nearly impossible to come by these days. In fact, many straight believe that "they just don't make them like they used to..."

I find this to be a defeatist attitude and I don't buy it. There's no doubt that finding the *right person* for a position is challenging because oftentimes employers are looking for very specific experience and character traits to fit the role. However, rather than wasting time assuming that no one can actually satisfy the criteria, why not spend the time properly researching the pool of applicants? There's an easy venue for this search: it's called *social media*, and in many cases it can be quite telling about various aspects of a person's personality and experience.

What do I mean by this? Well let's take me as an example. I'm a lawyer and the Vice President of Business Development for LegalLinkup.com, the website that intelligently matches lawyers and clients based on needs and expertise. I'm very active on LinkedIn, reasonably active on Twitter, and not so much on Facebook anymore. LinkedIn is the network for building professional connections, Facebook revolves around socializing, and Twitter can be used for anything.

What kind of content do I post? My postings often revolve around the intersection of law and technology. I also help facilitate online discussion groups in this emerging field and post information relating to company promotions and announcements. It's very rare that I post about things relating to my family or social life. I am also careful to never post anything political.

In terms of what we can take from my social media presence, first off, I clearly read a lot of content relating to my field. Therefore an employer can rightfully assume that I am engaged in my field and eager to learn. When I post articles and other items, I often engage in conversations about the content. This shows an element of sociability. On a final note, when it comes to social media, I'm all business. This shows that my professional ambitions are my top priority. Let's not forget that I have my entire resume posted on LinkedIn, which gives an employer almost everything they need to know about my background.

But is it legal to use social media to "analyze" potential employees? To put it

simply, if someone chooses to keep an open profile, you have the right to view the content and draw your own conclusions. It's the choice they made as a user and a right you have as a member of the public.

It begs the question, still, what if someone can't be found on social media at all? That in itself shows that the person likely values their privacy and enjoys doing things offline or away from the computer. It may also mean that the person invoked their privacy settings, which to many is a sign of caution and maturity. Therefore, although one's use of social media isn't necessarily determinative of who that person is, it serves as a starting point to ask the right questions, to find the right candidate.

By Joshua Slayen

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