

60 percent of employers revealed they use social networking sites to research job candidates.

What does this mean for you -- and your hireability?

As seen on: <http://advice.careerbuilder.com/posts/60-of-employers-are-peeking-into-candidates-social-media-profiles?linkId=28170666>

According to [CareerBuilder's latest social media recruitment survey](#) of more than 2,000 hiring managers and HR professionals and more than 3,000 full-time U.S. workers, 60 percent of employers revealed that they use social networking sites to research job candidates. This is up significantly from 52 percent last year, 22 percent in 2008 and 11 percent in 2006, when the survey was first conducted. Additionally, 59 percent of hiring managers use search engines to research candidates – compared to 51 percent last year.

And if THOSE numbers don't make you pause before you post your victorious face next to a beer pong table scattered with empty cups, think of it this way: The number of employers using social media to screen candidates **has increased 500%** over the last decade. Yes, you read that correctly: 500 percent.

Forty-nine percent of hiring managers who screen candidates via social networks said they've found information that caused them not to hire a candidate – on par with the 48 percent who said the same last year. The following are the top pieces of content that turned off these employers:

- Provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or information – 46 percent
- Information about candidate drinking or using drugs – 43 percent
- Discriminatory comments related to race, religion, gender, etc. – 33 percent
- Candidate bad-mouthed previous company or fellow employee – 31 percent
- Poor communication skills – 29 percent

To be clear, most hiring managers aren't intentionally looking for negatives (only 21 percent of employers say they're looking for reasons *not* to hire a candidate) – they just stumble upon them. Hiring managers in information technology and sales are the most likely to use social networks to screen candidates, at 76 percent and 65 percent respectively.

Time to turn the tables

The lesson? Knowing that employers are lurking all over your social media profiles is actually a great opportunity for you to polish up your presence and use them as a tool to help you get hired. Look at it as a positive: These online spaces are the perfect way to set yourself apart from other candidates and [help employers see you as more than just a resume](#). Do you tutor fifth graders one night a week, or moonlight as a rising stand-up star? Highlight that work in your social profiles.

"Tools such as Facebook and Twitter enable employers to get a glimpse of who candidates are outside the confines of a resume or cover letter," said Rosemary Haefner, chief human resources officer of CareerBuilder.

Six in 10 employers who currently use social networking sites to research job candidates (60 percent) are "looking for information that supports their qualifications for the job," according to the survey.

What does that mean, exactly?

- For some occupations, this could include a professional portfolio.
- 53 percent of these hiring managers want to see if a candidate has a professional online persona.
- 30 percent want to see what other people are posting about the candidate.

Even more evidence that you should use your networking profiles as an expanded resume of sorts: More than 2 in 5 employers (41 percent) say they are less likely to interview job candidates if they are unable to find information about that person online — a 6 percent increase since last year.

What else do employers want to see?

- About one-third of employers who screen candidates via social networks (32 percent) say information that caused them to hire a candidate included:
- Candidate's background information supported job qualifications – 44 percent
- Candidate's site conveyed a professional image – 44 percent
- Candidate's personality came across as a good fit with company culture – 43 percent
- Candidate was well-rounded, showed a wide range of interests – 40 percent
- Candidate had great communication skills – 36 percent

Maintaining your digital presence

Don't view social media clean-up as a one-time deal, but instead, an extension of your professional image that needs regular maintenance and care. You don't leave the house without wearing clean underwear (right?!). Similarly, you shouldn't leave your dirty laundry all over the web.

Forty-one percent of employers say they use social networking sites to research current employees, nearly a third (32 percent) say they use search engines to check up on current employees, and more than one in four (26 percent) say they have found content online that has caused them to reprimand or fire an employee.

Employers are regularly reviewing both candidates and current employees, for various reasons. By taking control of your own digital footprint, you'll be setting yourself up for career success (and not a super awkward Instagram confrontation).