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Pros and Cons of Social Media When Job Searching

“According to a survey of more than 2,300 hiring managers conducted for CareerBuilder by Harris Poll between Feb. 6 and March 19, 70 percent of employers use social media to screen candidates before hiring, up significantly from 60 percent last year and 11 percent in 2006. Some 3 out of 10 actually have someone dedicated to the task,” (Ed Zwirn). Many millennials have various forms of social media that they start when they are young, not searching for a job. On the other hand, people of older generations may not have any forms of social media at all. Society is in a time of transition where it is becoming imperative for companies and employees to have some forms of social media, however there are many restriction as to what potential employees can have on their accounts. Because social media has become so widespread in society, employers can easily find information on potential employees. It could skew employers’ perception of the potential candidate in both good and bad ways. In this essay I am going to talk about what aspects of social media can help and hurt potential job seekers when searching for a job.

Being active on social media is somewhat essential to young people today when looking for a job. “3 in 10 employers have someone dedicated to solely getting the scoop on your online persona,” (Salm). This fact shows that it is important to have social media, so there is some information to find. Employers want their employees to be active on various social media

platforms in order to make sure they are up to date on recent events happening, so it is important for young people to have developed a social media presence when beginning their job search. Another reason job seekers should have social media is because if they do not have it, employers may think that they have something to hide. Chief human resources officer at CareerBuilder, Rosemary Haefner stated, “Most workers have some sort of online presence today and more than half of employers won’t hire those without one,” (qtd. In Zwirn article).

In recent years, people have been increasingly using online platforms to get their information. Whether it be reading the news on Twitter or Skim, or looking at popular brands on Instagram, there are a plethora of ways for a company to show their products, news, and images to the world. If the employer sees that a job applicant is already social media savvy, that takes care of a whole bit of training they would have to give to someone who was not knowledgeable on social media. Vice president of marketing at Lee Hecht Harrison Helene Cavalli said, “I was really excited to see how many job seekers are active on social media. As strong advocates, we spend a lot of time coaching job seekers on how to develop a solid social media strategy. While it isn’t the only strategy for finding a job, it’s becoming increasingly important,” (qtd. in Smith article).

There are many reasons why having social media can be positive for job seeker. Careerbuilder.com lists specific attributes that employers look for when they browse through potential employees’ social media accounts. To reiterate what was previously stated, careerbuilder.com says 50 percent of employers look to see if the candidate has social media at all; however, the number one facet they look for is, “Information that supports their qualifications for the job,” (Salm). When people think of social media, they oftentimes don’t

think of a professional platform; however, one can have a social media account on Twitter, for example, that is solely dedicated to their job. Some employers may find this impressive. If someone looking for a job is already involved and up to date on the field they are interested in working in, that makes them that much more desirable. Even before someone is hired, they should be following, retweeting, liking, reblogging, and posting about accounts that relate to their desired job field. Almost all companies or organizations have some sort of social media to follow. Even if employers do not look at someone's social media account, it is still beneficial to follow accounts that relate to their field because that could give them more knowledge to pull from when in a interview for a job.

Another characteristic employers look for when scanning potential employees' social media, according to careerbuilder.com, is "what other people are posting about the candidate." (Salm). Even if someone cleans up their own social media, it is important to make sure there is no inappropriate or unappealing content that someone else has included them in. This could be a positive or a negative, depending on what the potential employee is tagged in. If they are tagged in photos of them at networking events or a post about them being employee of the month at their previous job, it would be positive. On the other hand, if there are photos of them doing something illegal or inappropriate or they are viewed negatively by their past employees, that would hurt their chances of getting a job.

Though it is essential to have a positive presence on social media, there are certain posts that job seekers should steer clear of. The top reason careerbuilder.com stated as to why employers do not hire someone is, "Candidate posted provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or information," (Salm). Keeping personal life personal is something that many young

people on social media struggle with. Many of them have had social media for years and perhaps posted an inappropriate photo years ago that they forgot existed. That is why it is important for employees to go back through old accounts and look for inappropriate photos that they may have forgotten about. “People today live in a virtual online aquarium, and chances are good that one of the people watching you is probably your current or potential employer,” (Kumar). Often when people begin a social media account, they do not think about how their posts will look to a potential employer. It is very easy to access old photos on others’ social media, so before going into a job interview people should look through all their old pictures to make sure there is nothing that could hurt their chances at a job.

The other top reason employers chose not to hire a candidate is if the “Candidate posted information about them drinking or using drugs,” (Salm). This can slip a potential employee's mind as many times people can forget that it is illegal to drink until they are 21 years old. Other people may have posted a picture with the job candidate of them drinking or doing drugs, so that is another reason for a job seeker to monitor what photos they are tagged in.

There are some that argue that looking at an employee's social media is unnecessary, and is even perhaps an invasion of privacy. In an Article by Time Magazine called “Why Monitoring Employees’ Social Media Is a Bad Idea,” the author talks about how bias can be an issue when employers look at candidates’ social media. “In some cases, employers may even be supportive, such as if a job candidate works tirelessly to raise money for breast cancer research, but in other cases, there is a real danger of people being penalized for their personal views on things like politics, race, or religion,” (Kumar). Though it can be helpful to use social media to

find more information out about a candidate, it can also be viewed as a negative in that people are being penalized for sharing their beliefs.

When looking for a job, social media plays a huge role in what employers think about someone before going into a potential interview. When employers view someone's social media accounts, it automatically gives them a preconceived notion about a candidate, whether it be a good or bad one. In today's world, it is important for job seekers to be aware of the effects all their social media posts have or will have in the future.