

Postings on networking websites can kill your career...or not.



// IN THE NEWS //

Recent media coverage about social networking websites, such as MySpace.com and Facebook, featured cautionary tales about how online profiles can damage career aspirations. Seemingly qualified candidates are denied jobs because recruiters came across their risqué online photos or provocative blog postings.

This summer, the *New York Times* published an article about the phenomenon of online “persona” checking by companies, such as Microsoft, that are looking to hire summer interns and recent graduates. The article explains how candidates are damaging their professional prospects because of their uncensored postings, which in one case detailed drug use and heavy drinking. It recommends that users take advantage of the sites’ privacy settings, which can limit access to their pages.

But outrageous or illegal behavior isn’t the only reason why doors are closing for some of these connected workers.

More recently, recruiters and business experts gave their two cents about researching candidates online in a

Good or Bad, PROFILES ATTRACT ATTENTION

By Josephine Rossi

Inside INTELLIGENCE //

Global training increases	14
Dating and the holidays/ BlackBerry lawsuits	16
Inflated titles don't retain employees/ Managers need to "manage up"	18
Project management challenges/ Critical skills lacking	19

Not all workers are refining or taking down their pages. CareerJournal.com reported in August that a growing number of employers are encouraging or even requiring top employees to post.

Wall Street Journal online story. One recruiter dismissed an applicant because of the “body art” he displayed on his Tribe.net profile. Another recruiter says she is fine with a candidate’s carousing, but she has second thoughts if she finds bad grammar or typos on his (or even his friends’) pages.

A blog entry on news giant Reuters’s website reports that a managing editor for an Indiana newspaper was booted from his position partly because his employer found “questionable” content on his MySpace page. The man claimed that he used the site to publish his poetry and other writings, including “The Rectal of the Edmund Fitzgerald,” a parody of a Gordon Lightfoot song.

“The lines between personal and professional can be blurred online,” says Erika Weinstein cofounder and president of Stephen Bradford Executive Search. Therefore, she says users must assume that all of their postings will be viewed by employers. Consequently, she says, don’t dole out intimate personal details on your profile. She also recommends eliminating photos and graphics that suggest immaturity and deleting friends’ comments (because you may be judged by your associations).

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“Companies use the intranet profiles to let employees throughout the organization know about their col-

leagues’ expertise and backgrounds and to share knowledge and insights. On public websites, they’re typically intended to let customers, the media, and others know a bit about key employees,” associate editor Sarah Needleman writes.

In that article, she offers readers these seven tips for getting online profiles into professional shape:

Fill it with details. The more (professional) information available, the more likely you will be found by someone looking for your specific qualifications.

Avoid touchy subjects. Talking shop is okay, but steer clear of politics, religion, and other sensitive issues. She says hobbies are okay to discuss, so long as they don’t reflect poorly on you.

Look the part. Dress professionally (even if you typically don’t) for photos you will use in your profile.

Make it search friendly. Make sure to include key “search” words in your profile, so that you are easy to find.

Use abbreviations. Because people often use abbreviations to search, be sure to include them, too.

Say it with numbers. Show how you contributed to the bottom line with specific numbers instead of generalized phrases.

Proofread. You wouldn’t skip the process on your résumé, so don’t forget to proofread your profile.

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Getting to Know You (online)

More information on popular networking sites.



FACEBOOK >> Facebook launched in February of 2004, and the website now has more than 10 million registered users across more than 40,000 regional, work-related, collegiate and high school networks. According to comScore—a global Internet information provider, Facebook is the seventh most trafficked site on the web and the top site for photo sharing.



FRIENDSTER >> With more than 33 million members, Friendster “aims to make the world a smaller place by bringing the power of social networking to every aspect of life, one friend at a time.”



LINKEDIN >> Free to join, LinkedIn is a professional networking site with more than 7.5 million members representing 130 industries from around the world.



MYSPACE >> Arguably the most notorious of the online social networks, MySpace has an audience of more than 55 million and is gaining more users aged 35 and older. Members can access various content, including streaming video, blogs, and music.



RYZE >> Ryze is a business-oriented site with more than 250,000 members who get a free homepage and can send messages to other members. They also can join special networks related to their industry, interests, or location.



ASTD CONNECT >> Free to ASTD members, this virtual networking tool helps ASTD members locate and interact with other colleagues and experts in the field.

// IN THE NEWS //

MORE COMPANIES INVOLVED IN GLOBAL TRAINING

In October, TrainingOutsourcing.com, a company that offers guidance and consulting to buyers and sellers of outsourcing services, and outsourcing provider Expertus jointly announced the results of their latest survey that focused on global training.



THE SURVEY, WHICH DEFINED GLOBAL TRAINING as training provided to employees, customers, and partners outside of an organization's home country, found that 82 percent of companies are involved in global efforts. Questions explored a variety of issues, including

- percentage of current budget spent on training outside of home countries
- governance of global training
- use of e-learning and learning management systems
- language translations.

A total of 268 responses were received and analyzed by company size. Approximately 31 percent of survey respondents had between five and 50 locations outside of home countries, and almost 20 percent had more than 50 locations outside of home countries. However, while a vast majority of companies are now involved in global training, most training dollars are still spent on training delivered within home countries. Nearly half of responding companies spend less than 10 percent of their annual training budgets on training delivered outside of home countries. And in 37 percent of responding companies, employees outside of home countries receive less training than those employees located within home countries.

Additional survey highlights:

- Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of companies managed global training through a centralized learning organization. But 42 percent of respondents had training staff located in the United States and countries outside the United States.
- English is by far the most commonly used language for training among respondents (95 percent). But some 40 percent of companies translate training into Spanish, 30 percent translate into French, 25 percent translate into Chinese, and 25 percent translate into German.

- In 58 percent of companies, all employees have access to e-learning.

The top challenges identified by respondents are budget constraints, content localization and translation, effective learning delivery, and maximization of e-learning.

Respondents identified the major challenges related to training as:

- budget constraints, 51 percent
- lack of control, 46 percent
- distributed locations, 42 percent
- staffing constraints, 33 percent.

"Global training presents a whole new range of challenges to most companies," says Ramesh Ramani, president of Expertus. "While most companies recognize that all employees should have equal access to corporate training resources, few know how to meet this goal with existing budgets and technology infrastructures. We've seen demonstrable results from those companies that have made global training a priority, including increased revenues, reduced spending, and improved utilization of workforce resources."

And more organizations are doing just that according to Doug Harward, CEO of TrainingOutsourcing.com. "Just in the last three years, we've seen a definite increase in global training initiatives," he says. "We expect that this trend will continue, as companies open more locations worldwide and depend on the optimum use of a worldwide workforce."

MORE/ www.expertus.com/survey/results2/globaltraining.pdf

// WORKING LIFE //

'Tis the Season...

Don't be surprised if some of your colleagues are not filled with holiday cheer. According to a recent Yahoo! Personals survey, 37 percent of singles are most likely to reassess their dating life between the December holidays and Valentine's Day.

You may see some red eyes first thing Tuesday morning because the most popular day to break up is Monday. And 38 percent said they'd be very likely to go out and have a few too many drinks after a breakup.

A bit of possible good news for managers, though: 76 percent of survey respondents said that they would be very likely to immerse themselves in work after a breakup.



// TRENDS //

BlackBerry Lawsuits?

The increasing use of wireless devices, such as the BlackBerry, in the workplace could result in lawsuits against employers.

Experts assert that employees can sue for creating an allegedly dangerous environment where unpaid overwork is required for success, promotion, and job security.

"Any sort of device that arguably significantly affects an employee outside the workplace could pose a tricky legal area for employers," says Frank C. Morris, Jr., an employment attorney at Epstein Becker and Green, a firm representing employers.

More buzz about the topic was generated by Gayle Porter, a management professor at Rutgers University. In her recent study, she suggests possible liability for companies if they keep their employees on "electronic leashes" as part of their job requirements.

Porter theorizes employers may be responsible for supposed physical and psychological fallout due to potential dependency.

"In light of possible claims involving dependency, stress-related illnesses,

carpal tunnel, and overtime, companies need to be proactive to avert possible serious monetary consequences, Morris cautions employers.

In Japan, the theory of "karoshi" or death by overwork has recently fueled lawsuits on behalf of the deceased's relatives who seek compensation. Some studies assert a link between the stress of constant labor to strokes, heart attacks, and mental illness.

"While a person simply carrying an employer-provided wireless device is not actually performing any duties, the argument is that the perception employees may have of being tied to the office is psychologically damaging," Morris explains. He also adds that many employees constantly check their BlackBerry without any employer requirement to do so. Some view it as a badge of status.

Another issue for employers is whether an employee is eligible for overtime pay. Under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, certain employees can claim that they should be paid for time spent checking their BlackBerries outside of normal work hours.

Bigger Titles, Not Better Retention

MORE COMPANIES ARE AWARDING INFLATED TITLES to retain top talent, according to the latest Executive Quiz from Korn/Ferry International.

The talent management solutions provider also found that nearly half of its survey respondents were the recipients of those titles: Forty-six percent of recently promoted executives said that their responsibilities have remained roughly the same despite their new titles.

But that practice may be for not. A whopping 85 percent said that a bigger job title wouldn't entice them to stay at a job that they would otherwise leave.

"As employers compete for top talent, many

see promotions as a way to make their people feel valued, strategic, and rewarded," says Joe Griesedieck, vice chairman and head of the CEO practice at Korn/Ferry. "But we are increasingly seeing title inflation, where promotions have little impact on responsibilities. This makes it difficult to accurately gauge a person's experience and abilities, and on its own, it is an ineffective retention strategy."



// YOUR CAREER //

SPEAK UP, GET NOTICED, CLIMB THE LADDER

It's a skill all managers need to be successful. But just what is "managing up?"

"MANAGING UP IS THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE UP THE CHAIN OF COMMAND," says Sharon Daniels, CEO of international training and consulting firm AchieveGlobal. "Top leaders need timely, accurate information from their managers to decide what's best for the business."

Another level of managing up, often referred to as "leading up," involves sharing ideas with the boss. And while leading up can be more challenging, the payoff is significant, says Daniels. Providing insightful feedback and ideas to senior leadership can position managers as thought leaders, paving the way for career advancement.

Daniels explains that leading and managing up skills are necessary as senior

managers continue to oversee larger numbers of employees who represent multiple functions. And many organizations have become less hierarchical, which places more responsibility on the frontline manager to provide the right kind of information and feedback to senior leadership.

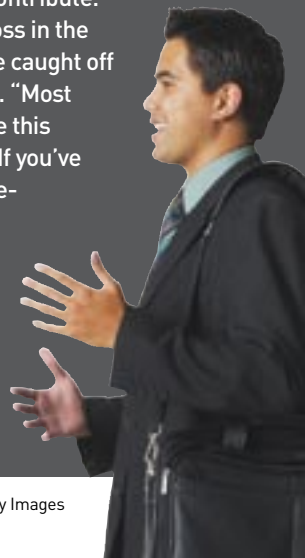
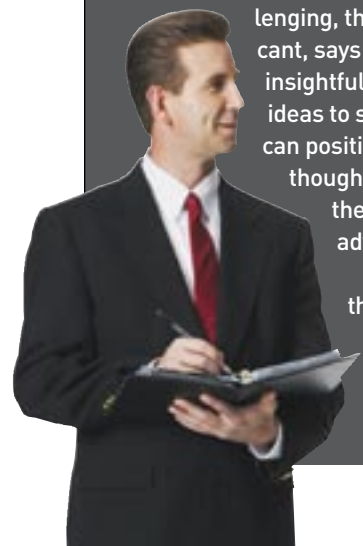
"With a fast-paced environment and so many people involved, leaders really do depend on that collaborative relationship and frank discussion about what the business needs in order to succeed and grow," Daniels adds.

The first step in successfully managing up starts with the establishment of a good working relationship with the boss. Sometimes a supportive manager will clearly articulate goals and direction for new supervisors. However, recent AchieveGlobal research indicates that many new supervisors start out without much support. Many reported a need for clearer direction or more insight into the company's strategic goals.

Daniels says to ask your manager about expectations and objectives at the beginning, even if you've been around for a while. Find out about her work style. Ask what decisions she likes to be involved in, what information she wants, and how she prefers to receive it.

She also adds that managing up is partly about timing. You don't always know the environment you're walking into, although that shouldn't stop you from being able to contribute.

"I don't know a boss in the world who likes to be caught off guard," says Daniels. "Most managers appreciate this kind of relationship. If you've established the guidelines and choose appropriate times to communicate, you'll be more likely to get the results you want."



TOP 5 CHALLENGES OF PROJECT MANAGERS

- 1 Gathering complete business requirements
- 2 Working with teams from different backgrounds and cultures
- 3 Working with geographically-dispersed team members
- 4 Establishing trust and getting buy-in from business customers
- 5 Having sponsors and business customers take responsibility for the project's requirements



Source: Watermark Learning

Young Workers Lack Critical Skills

Do America's high school and college graduates enter the workforce with the skills they need to succeed?

Not according to a survey jointly conducted by the Conference Board, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Corporate Voices for Working Families, and the Society for Human Resource Management.

In the report, *Are They Really Ready to Work?*, more than 400 employers identified professionalism and work ethic, teamwork, and oral communication as the most important current and future skill sets for a competitive workforce. They also believe that critical thinking and problem solving, information technology, teamwork, and creativity skills will increase in importance during the next five years.

More than 40 percent of respondents believe that current high school graduates are deficient in overall preparation for entry into the workforce, while less than 1 percent rated graduates as excellent. Employers say that more than 80 percent of high school graduates struggle with written communications and 70 percent lack professionalism and work ethic.

Graduates of four-year collegiate programs fared better: Twenty-four percent of employ-

ers rated their preparation as excellent. Nearly 50 percent of respondents gave four-year graduates excellent marks in information technology application, and 27 percent classified graduates as excellent at critical thinking. Interestingly, however, more than a quarter ranked these graduates as deficient in written communication and 24 percent said they do not have adequate leadership skills.

The findings are similar to those highlighted in ASTD's new white paper, *Bridging the Skills Gap*, in which learning professionals identified communication and interpersonal, managerial and supervisory, and process and project management skills as the most critical gaps to fill within their organizations.

The Conference Board report recommends that businesses work with the academic community to ensure that educators understand the needs of the future workforce. It encourages businesses to consider the types of training to provide new employees with the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace.

— **Alexandra Griffin and Kermit Kaleba**
ASTD Policy and Public Leadership

MORE/ www.conference-board.org/pdf_free/BED-06-Workforce.pdf and www.astd.org/skillsgap



// FAST FACT //

Busted!

If you lie on your résumé, chances are you will be caught, according to a new survey by Career-Builder.com.

Although just 5 percent of workers admit to fibbing on their resumes, 57 percent of hiring managers say they have caught a lie on a candidate's application. And of those hiring managers who caught a lie, 93 percent did not hire the candidate.

The survey, "Résumé Lies," was conducted from June 6 to June 16, 2006 and included more than 2,200 workers and more than 1,000 hiring managers.