



ATTORNEY SEARCH

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What Google, MySpace, and Facebook Say About You to a Potential Employer: How to Control Your Online Footprint When Conducting a Job Search.

Are you thinking of beginning a search for a new job? You may think that having an up-to-date resume is all you need to get this ball rolling. But have you “Googled” yourself recently? Make no mistake, the firms or companies where you apply will likely run your name through a search engine if they are even *thinking* of interviewing you. At the very least, they will probably come across your profile on your law firm’s website.

As personal information becomes more and more accessible online, the opportunity for public mistakes becomes that much greater. This is the digital age, and that highly-charged political comment you posted online in 1996 can easily be found (and pondered upon by a potential employer), even if you switched your party affiliation the year you graduated from college.

As a recruiter, I find that more and more of my candidates have profiles on MySpace, LinkedIn, and Facebook. There is no doubt about it, the latest crop of attorneys are increasingly connected through cyberspace. And it’s not a declining trend, but one that is on the rise. The age demographic of individuals using social networking sites like these skews older every year.

Are firms and companies looking at these sites to gain potential information about prospective candidates? A lot of them are, and I expect this practice to grow more prevalent in the years to come.

I don’t want to give the impression that you should whitewash your personality, religious and political views, and employment history while looking for your next position. But when viewing your personal online content, it’s important to ask yourself, “Does this online presentation make me look professional? Could a reader make an assumption about me that would cause him to decline to interview me?”

Here are some simple tips for controlling your online footprint during a job search:

Google yourself. In fact, use several search engines to compile any and all information about you available to potential readers online. If a website has something you wouldn’t want an employer to see, email the website administrator and politely ask if they would remove the content.

Change your MySpace or Facebook pages to private. During a job search, MySpace isn’t really *MySpace* anymore. Only allow friends and family access to any content that you feel might appear even slightly unprofessional. If there is something particularly embarrassing on these pages, it is probably in your best interest to have it removed entirely.

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For the duration of your search, be careful about any content you add to the web. Think of it this way: if you are not comfortable putting the information on your resume, don't put it on the web either!

Do not use a bizarre email address or an email address that could be considered controversial on your resume. Use a simple email address that incorporates your name. Do not use the email account from your current law firm on your resume.

Make sure your profile on your firm's website reflects your resume. I often work with candidates who have switched their practice area, but have not updated their online profile at their law firm to show the change. If you have been doing ERISA for the past year and a half, but your profile still says you do estate planning, this would raise a "red flag" for someone seeking a potential ERISA hire.

Blog softly. If you maintain your own blog, be careful what you put on it. And be careful about what you write on other people's blogs.

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