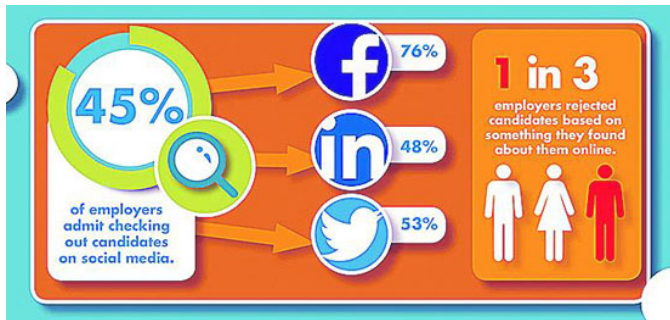


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Big Brother is Watching

By Lauren Kim



Social media pitfalls for jobseekers
#infographic from Career Savvy

his or her background. In 2012, that number was capped at 26 percent. Some admissions officers have rejected an applicant or even rescinded an admission due to inappropriate content they found on that applicant's social media account.

Whether or not they realize it, students have an easily navigable online footprint that grows each time they post on the Internet.

Many students, especially rising seniors who are mired in the college application process, understand the repercussions that may follow their social media trail.

"I share mostly personal information on social media, but never something I would regret my parents or a college admissions officer seeing," said rising Acalanes High School senior Zach Kramer. "I think it's reasonable that colleges screen social media because they have a right to see it just like everyone else does."

Just because students understand they are under close online scrutiny, however, doesn't mean they agree with the reality.

"I don't believe anyone should be judged based off their posts [on social media]," said rising Acalanes senior Sarah Moore. "Somebody could post a weird picture or say something strange on social media, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're less qualified or less likely to be academically successful."

Michael K. McKeon, dean of admissions at Saint Mary's College offers an insightful rejoinder: "You deserve the consequences if you do something mean or stupid on social media. So if you post pictures of yourself doing drugs or drinking alcohol, or if you are writing something hateful about another human being, if you have adverse consequences, you deserve them. You earned them, and you are going to have to live with them."

Contrary to popular belief, social media consciousness doesn't end after graduating from school. A person's social media footprint can have adverse consequences through retirement.

In December 2013, public relations executive Justine Sacco from the prominent Internet media company InterActive Corp was fired less than 24 hours after posting a racist tweet about AIDS in Africa.

According to Juser Essabhoj, an executive recruiter at CVPartners, a premier staffing and recruiting agency based in San Francisco and Seattle, social media screening of candidates for

While some kids believe their biggest problem regarding social media is blocking their parents to prevent the occasional embarrassing "mom comment," they will one day or another realize there are concerns of much greater magnitude when it comes to outside parties monitoring their Facebook or Twitter accounts.

Universities and employers have recognized the prevalence of social media in the lives of prospective students or staff members. Recently, they have begun to utilize social media as a tool for performing background checks on their applicants.

According to a 2013 study done by Kaplan Test Prep, high school students applying to universities are under greater online scrutiny than they may know; 31 percent of the 381 college admissions officers who responded to Kaplan's questionnaire answered that they had visited an applicant's social media page to acquire insight into

employees is common practice in headhunting firms everywhere.

"I use social media for information gathering," said Essabhoy. "It's not so much about getting to know people or chatting or those types of things. Much of it is just information that's displayed. And it all depends on each of the users on each of these sites as to how much information about themselves that they share or not."

Although Essabhoy generally only uses LinkedIn for a social media database when recruiting prospective employees, many of his headhunter colleagues use sites like Facebook and Twitter just as routinely in their recruitment process.

"I know a lot of my colleagues regularly go in and look at potential candidates' Facebook pages and Twitter accounts," said Essabhoy. "We work with a lot of companies who just make it a normal point where, when they get to a later stage of interview, they will enter the person's name into Facebook to do a background check."

Essabhoy estimates that currently, about 5 percent of potential employee candidates are disqualified due to inappropriate content posted on their social media. Although that percentage is a relatively small ratio, Essabhoy believes that quota will increase dramatically with the maturation and further popularization of social media in contemporary society.

"As social media continues to get even more mainstream, it's going to [be] even more important for people to be very judicious in what they are putting out there or what they may have out on more public sites and things that can be viewable by employers," said Essabhoy.

The best practice in regard to social media is to keep posts clean and appropriate from the start. It's impossible to track who may share or archive a post, thereby making it immortal, and sanitizing a social media account mired in sin and slander is a tedious and faulty process.

"I never post anything that I know I would regret," said rising Acalanes senior Katie McCarty. "I make sure everything I do post isn't too risqué because I know that college admissions officers look at social media accounts and I wouldn't want to jeopardize my future over a silly picture just for more likes on Facebook."

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