To Blog or Not to Blog?

How Blogging and Social Networking Can Impact Your Job Search

Allison Doyle | About.com Guide

Employees have been fired when their employer construed their blog posts as sharing confidential information, making inappropriate comments about the company, or both. Posting company news, pictures, and even making positive comments about a company have cost bloggers their jobs.

Job Search Blogging How about job seekers? Can having a blog, a personal web site, or an account on a social networking site impact your job search, for better or for worse? It could. One blogger posted recently that he lies in interviews. That wouldn't thrill a prospective employer if they knew about it. Another job seeker's blog mentions that she loves to party all night, drinks to excess on a regular basis, and steals on occasion. Again, not a profile that would thrill most employers.

Privacy Issues Should prospective employers be reading your personal information? Maybe not, but, if you put it on the Internet and it's readily accessible, they can and they might. Some people list their personal web site or blog on their resume and most of us Google people we're interested in knowing more about. There's nothing to stop a hiring manager from doing the same.

If it's on your resume, the employer will look at it. One hiring manager I spoke to always looks at the applicant's web site if it's listed. Another told me that she would try to find out as much about the candidate as she could, including looking up the person online.

Even if it's not on your resume, if your blog, web site or profile contains information on your real identity, the people you least expect, and those that you certainly don't want reading it, may find it. Not only your boss and prospective employers, but, also your customers, colleagues and coworkers.

Facebook, Web Site, and Blog Do's and Don'ts

Don't include a link on your resume to any site which includes inappropriate content that is not appropriate for a business audience.

Be very careful what you put online. If you have a MySpace or Facebook account, people you won't want to be reading your profile may be able to access it, even if you think nobody will read it. Make your account private, so only your friends can access it. Be extra careful, and don't post anything that you don't want a prospective employer (or your mom!) to read.

Facebook Privacy Settings
MySpace Privacy Settings

Do consider creating a personal web site, if you're unemployed, specifically related to your job search including your resume, samples, your portfolio, and certifications. Include only professional and academic information. Or use your profile on sites like LinkedIn to promote your experience.
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Don't list your blog on your resume unless it's relevant to the career field / position that you are interviewing for. For example, if you are seeking employment as a financial planner and you have a personal finance blog, include it. If you have a blog about your dog, don't.

Consider starting a blog related to your career interests. If you, for example, are interested in a career in real estate, consider blogging about industry trends, news and related topics.

Write a job search blog. There's a trend toward job seekers blogging to track their job search and market their skills. A job search blog can help with your job search and give you exposure, but, again, consider who else might read it before you start blogging.

Post in haste, repent in leisure. Remember that a hastily written blog post critical of your job or detailing your wild night with a hot date can be read today, regardless of when it was posted. You may not even remember posting it, but, a potential employer will certainly keep it mind.

Do be careful what you write. Keep in mind that just about anything that is online can be read by someone - or everyone. If you don't want the world to read what you've posted, make sure they can't. Don't put it online or post it anonymously.

How to Blog Safely The Electronic Frontier Foundation has information on how to blog safely and how to blog without getting fired. These suggestions include blogging anonymously, making your blog not searchable, limiting who can read your blog, and, when employed, focusing your blog on protected topics that you can't be fired for writing about.

Read Job Search Blogs There are many blogs dedicated to job searching and career building. Monster has a job search blog, as do a variety of other mainstream and niche sites. Read these job search blogs on a regular basis, review the advice that is offered, and pick up tips that will aid your job search.

Blogging can become a passion, but, don't let that passion hinder your employment prospects. Keep blogging, but, blog safely, securely and carefully, so your current or future career opportunities aren't jeopardized.