

SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENING



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AS AN EMPLOYER

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENING

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have given people the opportunity to share their lives with huge numbers of people. For better or worse, that includes employers. Although many employers don't believe in using social media as a means of researching job applicants, others believe there's a wealth of information that can be gained through it. Here are some of the pros, cons and guidelines employers should consider when it comes to screening job applicants' social media pages.

THE PROS

Of Social Media Screening

- It can reveal details about a candidate's skills and abilities.
- It can provide insight into how the candidate gets along with others.
- It can shed light on red flags of which employers want to steer clear, such as behavioral issues, poor lifestyle concerns, social intolerance and personality conflicts.
- It can enhance an employer's impression of a candidate.
- It is relatively easy compared with background checks.

THE CONS

Of Social Media Screening

- It may cross an ethical line by invading a candidate's privacy.
- It can reveal protected information about a candidate such as race or gender, leading to other concerns such as providing equal opportunity.
- It is easy for misleading or easily misconstrued information to appear on social media.
- It may open an employer to concerns over equal opportunity.
- It is just as easy for a candidate to doctor a social media feed as it is to lie on a resume.

GUIDELINES EMPLOYERS NEED TO FOLLOW

- **Keep your research legal.** It's recommended that employers only research a candidate's social media presence after meeting that candidate face to face. Otherwise, it could appear that the candidate was considered or disqualified based on protected information such as age, gender or race.
- **Give candidates fair warning.** Job seekers have a right to know if an employer is going to be looking at their social media profiles, so be sure to publicize it if you will be doing so.
- **Take social media with a grain of salt.** You may come across a photo of a time when your candidate's guard was down and think it's a red flag that should disqualify them. Yet without context, it's easy for social media posts to become misconstrued. People don't always have full control over what is posted to their feeds, so be wary.
- **Take a close look at your own social media.** Turnabout is fair play, and candidates may be evaluating an employer based on its social media presence, just as the employer is evaluating them. Be sure that all information disseminated through your corporate profiles is accurate and conforms to legal standards.