

## **The Unseen Power of Facebook**

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Recently, I accepted a Facebook friend request from a former high school classmate that I had not seen since graduation. After accepting the request I went to this person's page to view pictures, statuses and other information- to get caught up on what has been going on with my former classmate. I read this person's statuses and found out a lot that I did not know, including relationship problems, substance abuse problems, and an excessive use of obscene and profanity laced words when frustrated at people or things. The pictures that I saw of my high school classmate were an eyeful, including pictures of smoking and drinking, provocative positions in a bedroom and bathroom, and with sums of money.

I use my Facebook profile as a tool to not only stay in contact with friends and family but also to share information about jobs, connect with employers and communicate with other professionals. Commonly, I post information about job fairs, community events, and free training programs. Regularly, I get messages from people inquiring about the job opportunities that I post. The former high school classmate I previously spoke about messaged me about a position and submitting a resume for the person to an employer I have in my professional network. This was something I did not feel comfortable doing because of the information this person has posted on Facebook. This person seemed more like an angry substance abuser who partied and disrespected people than a person looking for a serious job.

According to Tim DeMello, who owns internet company Ziggs, which lets people post an online business-oriented profile that the company says will come up first in most internet searches, *"about 20 percent of companies are secretly scanning online profiles before they interview applicants. What they often find is shocking — including profiles that detail drug use, orgies and illegal behavior."* If your privacy settings are in place and you do not add potential employers as friends, they cannot see your Facebook profile. According to another recent survey (unknown), 60% of employers look at candidate's social network profiles, including Facebook, to determine a candidate's employability. What an employer sees on Facebook, which is public information because the account holder voluntarily posted it, can be used to determine a candidate's employability and can have an adverse impact on the candidate. From looking at profiles on a social network of candidates, employers can see things about a candidate not listed on a resume that include character, lifestyle and imagery. An employer may think someone is perfect for the job from the candidate's experience and interview but may have a complete change of mind after viewing a profile on a social network.

I agree that what a person does at home or in private is his/her business. However, when someone posts/publishes things, as words in a status or a picture on Facebook, which is on the "public internet" (borderless and accessible by the entire world) the information is no longer private or his/her own information. So, job seekers need to be cautious of what they would like to share. For example, if you like to take provocative pictures, "getting wasted at the club" or bent over to touch your toes, that is your right and if it makes you happy keep doing it. If you are having relationship problems with a mate or family issues, I recommend you work on resolving them. But, these are not things you should share with everyone in the world, or better yet,

everyone on your Facebook friend's list or anyone with a Facebook profile (if your page is not private, which many are not).

Everyone has the right, as all should, to share information about him/her as one feels. However, you must consider the ramifications of sharing some information with everyone as well as be prepared to suffer the consequences of what you decide to share. Your Facebook profile is a representation of you. People will see it and will determine what type of person you are. So, with this in mind, make sure it represents you in a way that you want people to know you. When using social networks, specifically Facebook, I advise you to follow these rules when doing so:

1. Only accept friend requests from people you know;
2. Change your privacy settings to only allow your friends and family to see your profile;
3. Do not post statuses with profanity or obscenity;
4. Do not post provocative pictures;
5. Do not post a picture of you bending over or pointing to your butt;
6. Do not make any negative statements against a person or group based upon ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or any of the other protected classes;
7. Do not insult or argue with anyone on a Facebook status;
8. Do not end a relationship or talk about an ex-mate on Facebook;
9. Do not post a picture or let someone tag you in a picture that also includes drugs, money, alcohol, gang signs, obscene gestures or wanted criminals;