How Will Your Online Profile Affect Potential Job Offers?

Exactly who is looking at your profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok? There is no way to be sure, and that is the problem. Social media feels informal, which gives users a false sense of privacy - but unless your settings are carefully managed, what you post is public.

EMPLOYERS ARE VIEWING YOUR PROFILE

Surveys consistently show that a majority of HR professionals and hiring managers research candidates on social media during the hiring process, and a large share have rejected candidates because of what they found: inappropriate photos, posts about drug or alcohol use, or negative comments about a former employer.

BUT WHAT IF I KEEP MY INFORMATION PRIVATE?

Privacy settings help, but your information can still reach people outside your intended audience. Platforms change their privacy defaults and add sharing features over time, often without users noticing, and a friend can screenshot or reshare anything you post. Liking or commenting on someone else's post can surface your activity in the feeds of people you do not know. In other words, your information is never truly private. In a job search, photos, posts, and comments that reach the wrong audience can have a profound effect on your prospects.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

5 STEPS

1. **Use your privacy settings.** They cannot guarantee privacy, but they reduce the chance your information travels beyond its intended audience. Platforms change their settings over time, so review yours regularly.
2. **Watch your pictures.** A photo that is funny among friends can read as immature or unprofessional in a workplace context. Be careful what you post and what you are tagged in.
3. **Stay positive.** No one wants to hire someone who is always complaining. Watch your comments online, and never criticize a current or former employer.
4. **Make LinkedIn work for you.** Used well, it strengthens your search: a professional photo, an up-to-date profile, and recommendations are exactly what you want employers to find.
5. **Assume everything is public.** Never post anything you would not want on the front page of the newspaper. Follow that rule and you almost cannot go wrong.

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