

# Risky Business

## Avoiding the Pitfalls of Candidate Screening Via Social Networks



More than ever, employers are relying heavily on social media like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to source and prescreen talent. And with good reason. Professional and social networks provide direct, instant, and cost-effective access to information on millions of job seekers.

But with that access comes responsibility – namely, to respect candidates' rights during the screening process. Screening out potential employees based solely upon what you glean from social media leaves you open to potential discrimination charges. So protect yourself and your organization by incorporating these 10 Do's and Don'ts into your social media recruitment strategy.

### **Do:**

- Inform a candidate that you have collected personal information about him.
- Explain the purpose of gathering that information.
- Tell the candidate who else will be privy to that information.
- Only collect personal information that is necessary for your business. This

point is particularly relevant for the type of information shared on social media sites (much of which is irrelevant to a candidate's employment history or ability to perform job duties).

- Use the information you've collected only for good purposes.
- Formalize a policy within your organization for the legal and ethical use of social media as a candidate research tool.
- Realize that a job candidate is legally entitled to see notes made about them during the recruitment screening process.

### **Don't:**

- Rely solely on the information gathered from social media to screen a candidate. Use a variety of sources, including traditional references, to develop a comprehensive picture of a candidate's character, professional reputation, and abilities.
- Use a candidate's "personal" online data to assess his professional capability. While social networks offer a convenient way to find out a little more about

someone, personal information should never be used as a basis for screening.

- Intentionally expose yourself to information that you shouldn't have access to in a properly constructed application or interview (e.g., identifiers such as religion, race, pregnancy, age, and sexual orientation that may be revealed through social media). Once you've learned this information, you can't pretend you don't know it.

### **Sources:**

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