Managing your Online Reputation

There are many ways you can help your job search. Using the Career Resource Center on campus to have a resume reviewed, do a mock interview, or utilize any other of the many services are great ways to enhance your career. One important step in your job search might be less obvious, but no less important - managing your online presence. In addition to keeping up your reputation in the classroom and elsewhere, it is vital to represent yourself in the best way possible online. Employers and graduate schools have commonly searched Google, Yahoo! and other search engines to find out more about potential candidates. A new wave of background search is now being done through online communities. Your Facebook or MySpace account is at risk of being evaluated by a potential employer. Although there are questions as to whether this practice is ethical or acceptable, the fact remains that 35% of hiring managers use Google to do online background checks on job candidates, and 23% look people up on social networking sites according to a survey done in March 2007 by the Ponemon Institute, a privacy think tank. About one-third of those Web searches lead to rejections according to the same survey. Although there is no need to immediately cancel all of your accounts there is some action you should take to manage your online presence. The first step is to use your common sense. Yes, this is a free country and yes, these are your private accounts. However, the simple fact is that people have access to your information when you post it on the World Wide Web. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that the internet is not private, nor do you have control over what ends up available for the world to see. Manage your reputation by doing a search of your name. Be aware of what comes up in Google, Yahoo! or any other search engine. Edit your wall or your comments section of your page making sure what your friends say is not inappropriate. Do not use violent, racist or demeaning comments in blogs, profiles or personal pages. Even if you are not serious, these comments can negatively affect your job search. Also, make sure you set your profile to the highest security settings possible. Every day we are trying to manage our reputations. It is important to remember that the image we present in cyberspace often tell more about who we are than our resumes or graduate school applications. Recruiters are under pressure to find quality candidates and they do not want to be responsible for tarnishing their company or university’s reputation or their own. “The term they’ve (employers) used over and over is red flags,” said Trudy Steinfeld, executive director of New York Universities Center for Career Development. “Is there something about their lifestyle that we might find questionable or that we might find goes against the core values of our corporation?” Remember two things and you can’t go wrong; integrity and good judgment. Both are vital qualities recruiters look for in a candidate for any position. If you are having a hard time figuring out what would be acceptable on your personal page, consider if it is something you would be comfortable sharing with your grandmother. For more information on managing your online profile please contact the Career Resource Center at (801) 832-2590.

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