

## SOCIAL MEDIA

## Social networking for recruiting: Gold mine or land mine?



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July 01, 2010

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**ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Avoid using social networking sites as your only tool for sourcing candidates
- Ask whether or not the use of social networks is really necessary, or whether an alternate approach can be considered
- Keep detailed records that demonstrate your hiring decisions were based on consistent, objective, and job-relevant screening practices

According to a recent survey conducted by executive search firm ExecuNet, a striking 77 percent of respondents indicated that they use the web for screening potential job candidates.

Social networks are a convenient and free way to verify a candidate's résumé claims, unearth undesirable behaviors, and gain insight into their skills, personality, and potential cultural fit. As a result, there has been a growing trend in using networking sites including [Facebook](#), MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn to make hiring decisions.

While it makes sense for HR, staffing, and recruiting practitioners to leverage all publicly available information about candidates to make critical hiring decisions, organizations can easily get themselves into legal hot water if these sites are used inappropriately. Remembering to use common sense and treading carefully when accessing social technologies can go a long way toward avoiding major legal entanglements.

Here are six tips to keep in mind as you navigate the social networking minefield:

To mitigate risk, seek advice from your legal counsel before using social networking sites as a component of your employment screening process. Of particular importance is the accuracy of information found on these sites and the relevance of this information to job performance, both of which are critical to avoiding discrimination and negligent hiring lawsuits that could cost thousands, or even millions of dollars.

When it comes to screening, ask whether or not the use of social networks is really necessary, or whether an alternate approach can be considered. For example, if drug use is a concern, there are well established approaches to drug screening that pose no legal risk and provide extremely accurate results.

Keep detailed records that demonstrate your hiring decisions were based on consistent, objective, and job-relevant screening practices. Should your hiring decisions be called into question, these records can help you prove that discrimination was not a factor.

Go the extra mile to ensure your candidates are treated fairly by adhering to [the same standards set forth by the FCRA](#). Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, having a permissible purpose, disclosing to the applicant the sources of information that will be searched, obtaining the candidate's signed authorization, and providing them a chance to dispute disqualifying information.

Avoid using social networking sites as your only tool for sourcing candidates. The labor pool available through social networking sites does not reflect the demographics of the general population, so sourcing candidates through these sites alone could be deemed as having a disparate impact. Social networking combined with employee referral programs and a traditional job board or two, for example, can help widen your employment opportunities to all classes of society.

Develop a formal policy around the proper use of social networking sites for your company, and publicize it. Beyond sourcing and screening candidates, social networking sites can be used in myriad ways across your organization, such as product development collaboration, customer forums, and promotional vehicles for your offerings. Despite the growing popularity of these sites, most employees are still unclear about how to use them properly. HR can play a leading role with not only setting a social networking policy that is clear and actionable, but also communicating the policy across the organization to ensure greater compliance and further mitigate risk.

As social networking continues to gain in popularity, it will no doubt become an essential part of the employment recruiting and screening process. Job seekers must be cautious of their online footprint, and HR professionals must understand how and when to use this valuable information.

*To further support your efforts, TalentWise and Taleo Business Edition are proud to offer you a [complimentary copy](#) of Taleo Business Edition's Summary Report - Social Network Recruiting: Managing Compliance Issues.*

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