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Job hunting and social networking: Why a job seeker should let it all hang out online



Photo: [Thomas Aigner](#)

During your job hunt, your worst is better than nothing.

For anyone who is [job hunting](#), [social networking](#) can be an important tool for finding a new position. But in many cases, a job seeker may not be using social networking tools properly when they work to sanitize their photos and other [online](#) information. According to [organizational](#) leadership and development consultant [Brandon Mendelson](#), people should not scrub their online personas when they are job hunting—but instead they should just let it all hang out.

"When people look at job applicants, it's no longer about 'I found pictures of you at the local kegger'. Now hiring [managers](#) think, 'I can't find anything about you online, what are you trying to hide?'" said Mendelson. "There are going to be people that look at those photos and make the decision no matter what."

Part of what factors into making a hiring decision is how people are actually using social networking tools and how candidates can integrate their own experiences into a company's culture. If you're a job seeker sanitizing information online, Mendelson says that you are not using the tools properly. Companies want to hire real people—warts and all—so they expect to see at least some unflattering pictures of you on your [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

"If you're not being a real person, you're using the [network](#) wrong—and not only are you using it wrong, but you're putting yourself more at risk to lose your job," he said. "A lot of people are being hired for using social networks and if you're using them incorrectly, what kind of service are you doing for a company that hires you?"

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But job hunters should be careful: Although a few pictures of you with your head in the toilet on a drunken night at the strip club may be forgivable, you must also show your professional side on your social networking profiles as well.

"You should fight bad photos with good photos," Mendelson said. "You want to have as many photos of you doing something in a professional capacity as you have of you on the beach at spring break."

Another benefit to airing your dirty laundry yourself is that when you do find your [dream](#) job, people will know who you really are from day one. If you present yourself with a halo during your job search and you get a position based on that image you created, your colleagues will feel betrayed when the devil on your shoulder emerges in the [workplace](#). In this age of information, you can't hide anything, so your coworkers will eventually find out the information you initially hid from them. According to Mendelson, the last thing you want is for colleagues to be completely surprised later.

This article originally appeared on my [Workplace Communication Examiner](#) page on October 6th, 2009.