

Your Online Resume

How people see you online is a lot like a resume you create to apply for a job. For a lot of people, it's the first – and sometimes the last – impression you make. A lot of the time, it's a real part of your resume, too. More than a third of university admissions officers look at applicants' social media pages and two thirds of employers do. (Under Canadian law employers are *not* allowed to make you give them access to your social networks, but they can access any public content.)

Here are some examples of things that employers look for in social media profiles:

- community participation, charitable service
- athletic accomplishments – lending credit to traits like perseverance and commitment
- giving back to their community
- articulate, professional and tastefully creative content
- thoughtful posting of articles
- kindness, compassion towards humanity issues

And some that employers *don't* want to see:

- negative comments about previous employers
- suggestive photos easily visible on Facebook. Not the image we want for our company
- a young man who had presented himself as very clean cut and well-mannered, had pictures of himself and his friends engaged in a fistfight with another group of individuals
- sexist postings objectifying women
- very angry face on the profile picture
- inappropriate posts that are opinionated and ill-informed

(Source: Bromstein, Elizabeth. "The Social Media Posts Canadian Employers Say Swayed Them For or Against Hiring a Candidate," *Workopolis*. April 9, 2015. <<http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/the-social-media-posts-canadian-employers-say-swayed-them-for-or-against-hiring-a-candidate/>>)

So how do you find out what your online resume says about you?

A good place to start is to use a search engine to see what information about you is easily available. You can start by searching for your name – but don't stop there, especially if your name is a fairly common one. Think about what search terms someone else would use if they were looking for information about you. Would they use a nickname? Your middle names or initials? A likely misspelling of your name? Maybe they might add your hometown, or your school, or where you work, or some of your hobbies.

Don't forget to do an image search as well (most search engines have an "Images" tab at the top of the search results page). How far do you have to scroll before you find pictures of you? What do the pictures of you show? Are there any pictures of anyone else who could be confused with you?

Do the same thing with any social networks where you have an account. There may have been a spoof account created with your name, or someone with a similar name whom people are likely to confuse with you.



Things that can affect your reputation:

- what you post on social media
- comments you leave on other people's social media pages
- how you behave in online games
- things by or about you that are posted or shared by other people

It's important to press the pause button and take a second to think before you post anything online. Ask yourself:

- Is this how I want people to see me?
- Could somebody use this to hurt me? Would I be upset if they shared it with others?
- What's the *worst* thing that could happen if I shared this? (For example: my parents might ground me, my friends might get mad at me, I might look silly.)

Cleaning Up

Most social networks – like Facebook – have settings to control who sees what you post. Many of them also let you set privacy settings for individual posts, so that only the people you want to can see it. It's a good idea to stay up to date with Facebook privacy settings because they change all the time.

If you're tagged in a photo you don't like, most social networks will let you remove the tag. If you don't want the photo to be up at all, ask the person who posted it to take it down – this usually works!

If that doesn't work, you can find out which ISP hosts the site and ask them to take it down. ISPs will usually only do this if the material is *defamatory* (it is untrue and hurts your reputation), if it's hate material or if what the site is doing could reasonably be called cyberbullying.

Don't forget to think about the effect you have on other people's resumes, too. Always ask *before* sharing or tagging anyone in a photo – even if it's a good one – because you never know how they're going to feel about it.

Instructions

1. Do a search engine search for yourself, following the steps above. What did you find? Is it what you wanted to find? Why or why not?
2. Do an image search on your name. What did you find? Is it what you wanted to find? Why or why not?
3. Do a search for yourself on any social networks that you or your friends use (even if you don't have an account there.)

