

# I Spy

Why social media background checks count



By Jay A. Shorr, BA, MBM-C, CAC I-VI

Are you curious what that promising new nurse practitioner candidate had to say about her last employer on Facebook? What is your receptionist really posting as she or he sits at their post?

The best way to find out is to check their social media channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube.

Of course, a thorough interview, reference check, and trialing a new employee are essential aspects of hiring, but eyeballing social media presence is also important—as is taking steps to ensure that recruits use social media in appropriate manners once they are hired.



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## EVERYONE'S DOING IT

A CareerBuilder survey of about 2,300 hiring managers found that about 40% of them screen potential hires via social media.

Red flags that scream “Do Not Hire” may include:

- Provocative/inappropriate photos/comments;
- Negative comments about previous employers or colleagues;
- Drinking or using drugs;
- Poor communication skills; and
- Lying about qualifications.

That said, a solid social media profile could also be a ringing endorsement for a new hire, according to the same survey. Nearly 30% of hiring managers said they found something that caused them to hire candidates online, including:

- A good feel for the candidate’s personality;
- A professional image;
- Confirmatory background information;
- A wide range of interests and hobbies;
- Stellar communication skills; and
- Creativity.

Another survey by the Society of Human Resource Management backs up this smart practice. This survey showed that 56% of employers polled said they used social media sites when recruiting potential job candidates.

LinkedIn was the most utilized social network—with 95% of employers who conduct social media background checks using the site, while 58% used Facebook and 42% used Twitter for social media background checks.

## OFFICE SOCIAL MEDIA ROAD RULES

Once you have made hire, policies and procedures regarding employee conduct on social media should be firmly established. Mandating that employees accept you as “friends” or “contacts” is not acceptable, and, in some states, it’s illegal. That said, policies that prohibit negative posts about your practice are permissible.

It is also OK to disallow comments and/or photos of your office without your express written permission.

Nancy Flynn, founder and executive director of The ePolicy Institute, a consulting firm in Columbus, Ohio, points out that hospital employees have been criticized or fired for discussing patients on Facebook. This violates hospital policy and the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Recently, South Korean health authorities launched an investigation of a cosmetic surgery clinic in Seoul after photographs on Instagram showed staff in scrubs around a candlelit birthday cake with an apparently unconscious patient on a bed behind them.

These posts may not be meant to disrespect, but rather reflect immaturity. Nip such issues in the bud by establishing firm social media policies and making sure your staff knows and understands what is and isn’t permissible on the job. Always check with various state laws regarding what restrictions are in place. ■

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