MANAGING YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION – January 2018

Now, thanks to the internet, just about anything that's distributed online – be it a social media post, an online article or a tag in a photo – lives on forever. It's now more important than ever to be aware of what information about you, or attributed to you can be found on the internet. Erroneous, negative or simply false information could potentially be adversely affecting you without you being aware of it.

According to CareerBuilder's latest social media recruitment survey:

- 70% of employers revealed that they use social networking sites to screen job candidates
- 54% of employers have decided not to hire a candidate based on their social media profiles

A previous CareerBuilder survey showed that the number of employers using social media to screen candidates has **increased 500%** over the last decade.

Many colleges also use social media as a research tool. Results from a Kaplan Test Prep survey showed:

- 35% of admissions officers polled reported having looked at applicants' social media accounts to learn more about them
- while the percentage of admissions officers who check applicants' social media profiles has dipped (35% versus 40% last year), a greater percentage of those who do check say social media has influenced their views on applicants

While there are several companies that specialize in online reputation management, for a fee, here are some simple and FREE steps, from technology news and information provider CNET that you can take to ensure that you keep your online existence professional, non-damaging and true.

- **Google yourself** – All good online reputation management begins with a search. And we don't mean just use Google. Use every possible search engine, including people searches, social networks and forum searches to find out everything associated with you on the Internet. You can ask Google to remove your personal information from its search results, but this doesn't apply to everything. You should also comb through any social media accounts, blogs or forums that you frequent to make sure there are no damning posts or photos that you forgot about, and check the Wayback Machine to see if any of your deleted accounts are still living in cached form on the Internet.

- **Scrub your Internet presence and beef up your privacy settings** – If you've found any links, photos or blog posts that you'd rather not be seen, try to get them

removed, or at least make them private. If there's a picture floating around that you really don't want anyone to see, it's best to remove it or ask the friend who uploaded it to take it down. You can untag yourself from photos, but the photo will remain visible unless the original uploader removes it.

Here are links to adjust the privacy settings for some popular social media sites:

- o **[Facebook](#)**
- o **[Instagram](#)**
- o **[Twitter](#)**

- **Consider changing your name** – Not legally changing it but, you might want to consider using a variation of your name for professional purposes, to help keep your personal Internet life from leaking into your professional Internet life. You may want to use a variation of your name simply to distinguish yourself from others with the same name on the Internet. This can be accomplished by adding a middle name or initial to your professional name if you haven't already.

- **Build your brand** – The best online reputation management strategy is a proactive one. Instead of trying to suppress your past, focus on building your future. By adding new content in the form of new social network accounts, blog posts, articles and forum posts, you can boost your professional identity and tone down information from the past at the same time. This works because search algorithms like to see new content. In Google's eyes, an up-to-date blog is far more relevant than a years-old Facebook picture, and therefore gets prime real estate near the top of the search results.

- **Stay vigilant** – A solid online reputation is priceless, so make sure it doesn't all come tumbling down by taking protective steps:
  - o Set up a Google Alert. Google Alerts let you track search terms (such as your name), and be notified immediately when a new search with that term pops up. The Google Alerts page even has a handy "Me on the web" widget, which lets you create alerts for your name and email address.
  - o Have separate email addresses for personal and professional business.
  - o Be diplomatic. This is especially important if you're managing the online reputation of a business: words carry about 10x as much weight, and 5x less humor, especially when they're written down and posted on the Internet.

Always remember to think before you post, especially if you're responding to someone, and try to err on the side of "overly diplomatic." Think about it this way: you're not going to get in trouble for *not* tweeting something controversial.