

The top 3 social media fails to avoid

Imagine a potential new boss looking over your social media profiles – does it make you uneasy? Any posts you wish you'd deleted?

Social media gives us a platform to connect and express ourselves. But while you might think of your profiles as mostly personal, they can make a crucial impression professionally.

An employer may search for you on social media, so applying for a job can be a timely reminder to make sure nothing about your online presence could hold you back from landing a role.

Here are the top three social media fails to avoid, and how you can turn your profiles into a tool to help your job search.

1. Discrepancies in your career story

If the way you present your work history in your applications doesn't match up with your online profiles, that could be a red flag to employers. Eliza Kirkby, regional director at recruitment company Hays, says she's seen job seekers not make it through shortlists because of discrepancies that show up through their social media accounts. For example, covering up gaps or short contracts in their resume but forgetting to align this information in their online profiles, or vice versa.

You might find an employer puts you on the spot to explain the discrepancy, Kirkby says. "The worst case, and we have seen it happen, is that you're removed from the shortlist." All it takes to avoid this is to make a quick check of your social media profiles, [SEEK Profile](#), resume and other documents to ensure they all tell the same story. If you are concerned about a gap in your job history, remember, it's nothing to be ashamed of – you can read up on [how to explain that you've taken a career break](#) or [how to address gaps in your resume](#).

2. Posting inappropriate material

This might seem obvious, but it's important. Having any material on your profiles that's traditionally inappropriate or potentially offensive – sexist, racist, pornographic or sharing extreme views – could make an employer reconsider hiring you.

Less obvious, but also potentially problematic, are your interactions. Kirkby cites the example of an Australian candidate who had a marketing director role offer withdrawn after the employer checked out their social media. The candidate had made scathing posts with profanities after getting poor service from an organisation. They'd also captured and posted screenshots of conversations.

“This raised legal and privacy issues and the organisation (that had offered the job) was alarmed about the appropriateness of that candidate’s communication,” Kirkby says.

3. **Bad timing for posts**

What you’re posting matters, but it’s also worth giving thought to the *when*. The timing of your posts could give a bad impression. Kirkby has seen instances where a hiring manager has turned down a contender for a job because it appeared that they spent too much time on social media during work hours. “The employer might have a question mark around their focus,” she says.

How to use social media to help your job search

Fails aside, social media can be a useful tool to inform your job search and promote yourself professionally. Here’s how:

- **Do a clean-up**

First, check all your accounts and profiles. It’s important to know what others can see. Delete or hide posts or photos on your profile or public groups you’ve had second thoughts about. Then check the privacy settings of your accounts – who can see what you post?

Consider also changing settings so photos or posts others tag you in aren’t automatically added to your profile. Next, get rid of old or out-of-date accounts. Finally, search for yourself to see if you’ve missed anything.

- **Create a positive brand image**

Social media is a great way to position yourself as interested in your work and involved in your industry. Join groups relevant to your career or field. Post updates on your industry, share positive and interesting content.

Connect with colleagues and associates, but consider keeping separate professional and personal accounts. Take a moment to get your SEEK Profile up to date with your work history and achievements and [read about what a personal brand is, why it’s so important now and how to build it](#).

- **Research your target**

Your own profiles aside, social media can be a tool to help you learn more about an organisation you’re applying to. Scan it to find out about their work, their aims, and the leaders working there. This will help you discover shared contacts, prepare for an interview and have some good questions to ask. But avoid being too enthusiastic,

Kirkby says, and don't send friend requests to people at the organisation or business before you get the job.

Social media can be a great tool for connection and expression, but can expose us to professional blunders if not handled carefully. By checking your accounts to make sure nothing can take you out of the running for a role, you can then turn your profiles into a positive tool to help you land that next opportunity.

Read more:

- [Should I add my colleagues on social media?](#)
- [7 tips to build a network for the new world of work](#)
- [Do these three tests before you submit your resume](#)