

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF LAW – DARTMOUTH: CAREER SERVICES OFFICE
JOB SEARCHING USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET

If used wisely, the internet can be a very powerful tool in your job search. You can use the internet not only to directly search for jobs, but also to develop your professional network and connect with other professionals. Be mindful, however, in your online activities to avoid creating a negative first impression with a prospective employer.

YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

It is important to actively manage your online reputation and to use the internet in a manner consistent with your professional goals. Many employers conduct internet searches during the hiring process to evaluate a candidate's character and qualifications. Remember that the law is a very conservative profession, and that something you do online may follow you – for better or for worse – for the rest of your career.

Establishing A Positive Reputation

- Use the internet to your advantage by establishing a positive online reputation with a professional profile that highlights your strengths, skills, and achievements
- A blog with thoughtful ideas and comments can also enhance your professional reputation
- Consider joining professional networking sites or groups to help develop your professional network

Exercise Good Judgment When Posting Online

- Be aware of the privacy policies and accessibility of your accounts and keep this in mind when online
- Carefully consider the possible professional implications of what you are going to post online
- If you are using a work computer only use online resources related to your employment
- Before posting online, ask if you would want your supervisor to see it and if you have any doubt do not post it
- Potential employers may view grammatical and spelling errors in online content to indicate an overall lack of attention to detail

Protecting Your Reputation

- Regularly search for your name on different search engines and set up an alert for your name to track new content
- Search variations of your name such as common misspellings, nicknames, and maiden names
- If there is online content that may reflect poorly on your character or judgment, remove it
- If you are uncertain as to how to remove content from the internet, consider using a reputation defense firm

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be either an asset or a liability when looking for a job. Business-oriented sites such as LinkedIn can assist you in building your professional network and connecting with other professionals. You can use such sites to build your professional reputation by including your professional experience and pro bono activities. These sites can also be used to find individuals working at companies that interest you or in areas that you find interesting. Consider actively utilizing these resources by asking your current contacts to introduce you to others and by requesting informational interviews. Be careful what you post however, as it may cast doubt on your professionalism.

Facebook, Friendster And MySpace (And Similar Sites For Personal Use)

- Use restrictive settings with respect to information others may post to your account
- Remember that 'friends' may not have the same privacy settings as you, so use discretion in linking content
- Carefully consider who to 'friend' or grant access to your profile as well as the implications of 'friending' colleagues
- Consider 'de-friending' individuals you do not know well to avoid potential problems
- Exercise discretion as candidates have been denied jobs and employees have been fired over social media content
- Be aware that even if something is deleted, it may still be archived or otherwise preserved

LinkedIn (And Similar Professional Sites)

- It is important to keep your profile updated and professional - do not include personal content
- Be honest and consistent – employers may match resumes to online profiles
- Draft a summary statement that focuses on your skills and uses industry buzz words
- Include volunteer/pro bono activities, co-curricular activities, and professional associations in your profile
- If you are going to post a picture, make sure that it is professional
- Constantly be building relationships – do not just contact people when you want something
- Become part of groups related to topics in which you are interested
- Consider writing recommendations for people you know well - the system will prompt them to return the favor
- Be sure to be respectful and considerate of your contacts and connections – treat them in a professional manner
- Since LinkedIn has an optimization tool that puts it at the top of search results you can use a strong LinkedIn profile to establish a professional reputation
- LinkedIn has a learning center where you can learn more, including tutorials specifically for attorneys at <http://learn.linkedin.com/attorneys/>

Twitter

- Twitter can be used to enhance your professional reputation if you have thoughtful and creative posts
- Consider carefully whether you want your tweets to be protected or not – leaving them unprotected means anyone can read them while protecting them may prevent professional contacts from reading them
- Remember that Twitter is a public domain – all tweets are now being catalogued by the Library of Congress

JOB SEARCHING ONLINE

All job seekers should regularly check the law school's job postings on Symplicity or set up a "Job Search Agent" on Symplicity to have job postings delivered to their email. Additionally, a listing of online job search resources can be found on the Career Services Office website at <http://www.umassd.edu/law/careers/careerhandouts/>.

Email

- If your email address sounds less than professional, set up a second address for job seeking
- Use a subject line that clearly identifies the content
- Assume that any message you send will be forwarded, so be judicious about what you write in an email
- Make sure that attachments, such as your resume, are properly formatted and appropriately named
- If you use a signature block, keep it simple and omit potentially controversial content
- Be very careful about using the "reply all" button
- Do not use work email for personal conversations

BLOGGING

Blogging can be used to project a positive image by thoughtfully expressing ideas and showcasing your knowledge in a particular area. You don't need to be an expert in an area as long as you are interested and articulate. If you do have a blog, be prepared to discuss the contents in an interview. Remember though, as with social media, blog content may be publicly accessible and it may be difficult or even impossible to delete what has been written, so exercise discretion with what you post online.