

Trends and Implications: The Use of Facebook in the Professional World

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Abstract

The recent trend of connectivity through the Internet has served as a spark for the social media era, resulting in a number of social websites such as Xanga (social blogging site), MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and many others. Facebook specifically has become an everyday norm in the lives of most young adults. With the societal shift towards a digitally orientated lifestyle, there is an increased interaction between friends, family, and non-acquaintances via social networking sites like Facebook. As a result, the manner in which users portray themselves online becomes influential for new friends viewing their pages. Similarly, professional companies are now utilizing Facebook for marketing, promotions, and even recruiting. This becomes an issue, then, for young adults looking to launch their careers and are unaware of the way in which companies utilize Facebook. The purpose of this study was to identify how companies use Facebook and whether or not there is a “knowledge gap” between young adults and professionals. Upon learning if and how companies use Facebook, young adults can be informed on how to present themselves online so as to balance their social and professional online image. The results of the study identified a shifting trend towards companies using Facebook in the near future; as social networking merges together with professional networking, it becomes increasingly important to adopt a long-termed mindset. Cautionary tactics are recommended, such as adjusting privacy settings and removing inappropriate images.

Chapter I

Purpose of the Study

With all the recent technological advances that society has seen within the last few decades, none have experienced such an explosive, exponential growth as that of the Internet. The Internet created a societal structure that has changed the way people go about their lives, including the way they work, the way they seek information, and the way they communicate with each other. This idea of connectivity through the Internet served as a spark for the social media era, resulting in a number of social websites such as Xanga (social blogging site), MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and many others. These websites, which are so much more than your average static webpages, allow for communication and collaboration in ways that were unthinkable a decade ago. Facebook specifically has become an everyday norm in the lives of most young adults, so much so that it is typically considered unusual when a high school or college student does not have a Facebook account. Additionally, with the recent introduction of mobile connectivity Facebook users can now update and post via their mobile phones, allowing for 24/7 connectivity.

With Facebook and other social media sites, it is undeniable that society has shifted towards an incredibly digitally oriented lifestyle. This shift has created a new way of interacting with each other, and as a result social media pages have become a direct reflection of the individuals using them. The manner in which users portray themselves online, then, becomes influential for new friends viewing their pages. But why is this significant? Facebook has progressed past being solely a social media site for friends; it is now being used by professional companies to network, create a strong online presence, and in some cases is used as a tool for recruiting. Now, the manner in which one presents themselves online can potentially be seen and

evaluated by companies looking to hire them. Young adults are no longer Facebook's only demographic, and professionals have recognized the power of having a social media presence. They have also realized that Facebook is a perfect way to determine an individual's character. Just as a resume provides insight on an individual's work ethic, a look at their Facebook page provides insight on their social ethics. Hence, young adults seeking careers must be extremely wary about what they choose to post on their pages.

Though this transition has indeed taken place, young adults seeking to launch their careers have not yet realized the potential dangers of a lackadaisical attitude regarding their Facebook image. There is a significant knowledge gap between what young college students think is appropriate and what companies actually believe to be appropriate. Similarly, there is a knowledge gap between whether or not companies will take the time to perform a "social media background check" on an individual to strengthen or weaken their chances of getting hired. Hence, the purpose of this study was to discover just how large that knowledge gap is, and to reveal the best manner in which to portray oneself on Facebook. Because friends are no longer the only ones viewing Facebook pages, young adults must be wary about posting pictures of alcohol or drugs, status updates containing profanity, college parties, etc. This study focused specifically on young adults in (or recently out of) college who are currently seeking full-time jobs.

Significance of the Study

Just as the Internet has progressed through the years, Facebook has similarly grown and expanded its demographic, and in turn its services. Though perhaps not intentionally, Facebook has become a powerful tool for companies. The line between "social networking" and

“professional networking” is becoming more and more blurred and soon will be indistinguishable. Young adults must be educated on how their information can potentially impact their future careers, and realize that nothing online is really “private” anymore. Knowledge on this subject will allow Facebook users to take the necessary precautions with their pages and even to be proactive by creating a positive, professional social image. It is no longer acceptable to be uneducated on the connection between social media and company hiring tactics; this study will shed light on any uncertainties and will serve as a wake-up call for those who do not take the subject seriously.

Interest in the Study

Social media has swept the world in terms of its breadth and scope. It is changing the way businesses market and generate interest, and it has penetrated almost every industry. Websites like Facebook will continue to change the way people connect with each other, and though there are numerous benefits to a hyper-connected society, users must understand the risks and potential repercussions that accompany them. It is believed that there is a gap between what young adults know and what they think they know. There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding how companies use Facebook, and this study will benefit those who wish to protect their online image. If companies can use Facebook as a tool for recruiting, then young job seekers can use Facebook as a tool to present themselves in a professional manner if they so choose.

Chapter II

Literature review

A social networking site (SNS) is defined as a linked collection of Web pages that allow members to communicate with one another, as well as post personal information including blogs, pictures, and videos (Malesky, 2012). Though Facebook may be the first social networking site that comes to mind, there are a number of other sites that have gained millions of users by facilitating interaction between those individuals who share common interests and activities, such as YouTube, Flickr, and LinkedIn (Junghun, 2013). Because of the sheer number of users, social networking sites have become crucial to online activity; more than two-thirds of the global online population visit and participate in social networking and blogs (Junghun, 2013). To date, there are hundreds of social networking sites currently being used. The first one, classmates.com, launched its site in 1995. Many of the sites that were introduced prior to Facebook catered to specific interests, like VampireFreak.com and FilmAffinity (Junghun, 2013). What made Facebook such a popular networking site of choice was its' ability to connect anyone with any interest.

A History of Facebook

Though there are hundreds of social networking sites that cater to a variety of interests, Facebook remains one of the most popular choices amongst young adults, with over a billion registered users (Malesky, 2012). Since its beginnings in 2004, Facebook has emerged as one of the most powerful and successful corporations in this era, continuously evolving under the leadership of its' founder, Mark Zuckerberg. In today's day and age, almost one in seven people have a Facebook account; not having a one was likened to "not having a telephone in 1986"

(Melanson, 2012). In addition to individuals who use Facebook for social purposes, other users range from businesses, companies, musicians, bands, volunteer groups, and more. It has become a useful tool for marketing, promoting and spreading news. In essence, Facebook has created a way in which to be hyper-connected with an immediate, intimate group of people. But how did it get there?

Facebook began at Harvard University, and quickly expanded to other areas within Boston. Zuckerberg registered “thefacebook.com” domain on January 11, 2004, explaining that he wanted to, “Create a website that can connect people within the University” (Zeevi, 2012). Upon finishing the site, “the Facebook” (as it was previously called) was sent out in a mailing list to Harvard residents, and within 24 hours of sending it out they had between twelve and fifteen hundred registrants (Zeevi, 2012). From there, Facebook received its first private investment from Peter Theil, founder of PayPal, for \$500,000 in exchange for 10.2% of the company. By December 30, 2004 Facebook had reached over one million registered users (Zeevi, 2012).

Social Connectivity or Privacy of Information?

Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has seen little else but success. This is partially due to its transition into a business-networking site as well as a social networking site. Facebook has experienced immense growth amongst small businesses, with over 13 million local business pages (Darwell, 2012). Business utilizing Facebook are able to generate buzz within their communities by posting about their latest attractions, promoting events, and even marketing with videos. With this recent trend of businesses using Facebook for promotional purposes, the world has seemingly shrunk. Users can connect with friends, family, favorite bands, and now even their

potential employers. Though many view this as an incredible prospect, it also implies a lessening of privacy for users. The ability to connect with thousands of people with just the click of a button bodes ill for those who wish to protect their image from people whom they do not know personally. In a study titled, “*Too Many Facebook ‘Friends’? Content Sharing and Sociability Versus the Need for Privacy in Social Network Sites*”, the authors discuss the growing need to assess the role that social networking sites play in people’s privacy. They mention the “privacy dilemma”, meaning that if privacy is protected, then sociability and content sharing will be compromised, whereas if sociability and content sharing are promoted, then privacy will suffer (Brandtzæg, 2012). This is highly relevant to the study at hand; young adults seeking careers have much to gain through being connected to professional companies socially, yet it seems that if they wish to do so they must in turn give up a portion of their right to online privacy.

The solution appears to be simple: privacy settings. Facebook has fully customizable privacy options that allow users to control who sees their page; they can even go as far as blocking specific individuals from seeing posts or tagged images. Yet in an editorial titled, “*Why Facebook Privacy Settings Don’t Matter*”, author John C. Dvorak (2010) writes:

It seems as if the majority of Facebook users don't even know about or care about the privacy settings... Now there is a movement to create an open-source version of the social network to address all these (privacy) concerns, and it may or may not be successful, but it doesn't matter since most users have so little regard for their own privacy. They're too busy publishing humiliating pictures of themselves on Facebook, Flickr and elsewhere. It always seems to be a good idea at the time.

It is apparent that Dvorak believes the American culture thinks in a far too short-termed mindset, and in general must take action to educate themselves on the benefits of thinking long-term.

Privacy settings are indeed an excellent first step to protecting online image, but it is a temporary fix; it does not solve the root problem. The root problem is what users choose to post on Facebook and how they justify it. Solving the root issue will involve changing a cultural mindset.

Facebook: A Risk to Your Career?

Facebook has long since been known for its' unrestricted platform for free speech. Users can post what they want about almost anything. It has even become an outlet to express emotions; students vent about school workload, relationship issues, and even problems at work. Yet George H. Pike (2011) points out in his article *Fired Over Facebook* that the odds of risqué information remaining contained to a small friend group is close to zero. He writes, "Facebook isn't quite the same as a water cooler, where a casual conversation among three or four people will likely remain within that group. Facebook, as with email and blogging, can spread to all friends far and wide, and perhaps wider, as reposting and resending can be done with a click" (Pike, 2011). The article goes on to discuss several cases where an issue between an employee and his/her superior led to an angry Facebook post, resulting in a lost job.

Many people believe that once information is shared on the Internet it is no longer private, and that there is really no way to track how far your information goes. With search engines, this becomes a frightening reality; odds are a simple Google search on your name brings up a surprising amount of information. If personal information is so easily accessible on the Internet, and the risks of viral content is high, cautionary tactics should be common knowledge. Yet every day there are new cases of employees losing their jobs due to controversial social media posts. Hence, there must be common understanding between employees and employers concerning use of social media.

There is no way to know for sure the role that Facebook will play decades from now, but it can be assumed that it will have an increased presence in professional industries. As mentioned earlier, having an online presence has become vital if a candidate wants to be seriously considered for a job position. Companies are even beginning to request URLs for Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter profiles, as well as links to personal portfolio websites or blogs. Nowadays it is easy to connect all of one's social media platforms together so that a single post will update to each individual platform. With social media, people have the ability to be connected in ways never thought possible just a few years ago, and will continue to rapidly advance still. Society is in the midst of changing norms and must recognize the risks that come along with the benefits.

Facebook has indeed evolved as a social networking site, working continuously to provide users with a rich, unique experience. As social media becomes more entwined into everyday lifestyle, online privacy will become less and less important. Users must figure out a way to enjoy the benefits of utilizing websites like Facebook and Twitter while preserving their personal information as best they can, thus protecting their current or potential careers.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

The goal of this study was to define how professional companies utilize social media (Facebook specifically) to accompany their hiring process. Social media has become a large part of the hiring process; it is a simple and effective way to receive insight on an individual's character, interests, and hobbies. Upon learning what companies most look for, individuals will be able to determine what to include and what to avoid on their social media pages, as well as what necessary steps they personally need to take to create their desirable online image. The objectives of this study were to:

- Identify the areas of disconnect between young adults seeking careers and companies looking to hire them: are there certain things that young adults believe are “professionally acceptable” that companies do not?
- Determine how young adults can use Facebook to their professional advantage
- Distinguish the types of companies that tend to use social media for background checks
- Get a clear idea of where the future of Facebook is heading in the professional world

Data Collection Plan

An effective way to identify the areas of disconnect between companies and employees is to survey both parties on certain aspects of Facebook and compare the results, identifying where potential employees are confused about what companies look for on Facebook. For this study young adults between the ages of 18-25 were given a survey consisting of seven questions. These questions first identified the surveyor as male or female and student or non-student. Next, the survey went on to ask how many times a day the individual used Facebook, their opinion on

what Facebook is used for, what is considered to be an inappropriate Facebook post, whether or not they believe companies will perform a background check via Facebook, and finally what their level of comfort would be if an employer were to view their Facebook page.

After the student portion of the survey was complete, it was then necessary to interview companies in a similar manner, seeing if any of the responses matched up and identifying the areas that did not. The types of companies involved in the study varied, as it was desirable to identify the types of companies that do not currently use Facebook for background checks.

Data Analysis Plan

Responses from the survey were noted and compared to the general responses from the professional companies involved in the study. Once the correlations between the two parties were addressed, the data was compared to previous research done on the topic as well as current Facebook trends. Significant differentials and trends in opinions of appropriateness, decency and professionalism were noted. These trends were used to generate conclusions about how companies are currently using Facebook, whether or not they go about making a hiring decision based on their pages, and how opinions differentiate between the young college generation and industry professionals.

Chapter IV

Results

Through comparing the results of the young adult survey with general social media research and the input from several companies, some basic conclusions could be drawn about how companies are using Facebook and what users need to be aware of. This comparison shed light on a rather uncertain subject, provided a direction for where social media is heading in the professional world, and most importantly it separated fact from opinion. To get a good feel for how the data from the young adult survey matched up with actual studies, each response was compared to data acquired from previous studies on the use of Facebook.

The young adult survey began with some general questions, sorting out male from female and those who are either still in school or recently graduated. The male/female ratio was almost even, with 49.3% of surveyors being male and the other 50.6% female. The survey was also very college student heavy, with 80.26% identifying as a student at a college or university. The other 20% varied from either not being a student or being a student in graduate school.

The next question was meant to get a feel for how often these individuals check or update their Facebook pages; this was important to know because it directly relates to the number of updates/posts, increasing the chances of inappropriate content. If a Facebook user is not using their account regularly, they have a smaller chance of being impacted by negative Facebook content. Most respondents fell in either the 1-2 or 3-4 times a day category, accumulating 15-30 minutes per day spent on Facebook (36.8% and 34.2% respectively), while 26% responded that they checked their pages over 5 times a day, accumulating 45-60 minutes per day. These results were fairly consistent with the general Facebook statistics, according to a CNBC article titled, "We Spend 230,060 Years on Social Media in One Month". The article states, "The United

States spent 121 billion minutes on social media sites in July 2012 alone” (Popkin, 2012).

Because society in general is spending so much time utilizing social media, we can expect a similar trend with companies; the professional world is expanding online and that very much includes social media. Matt Maring, a recruiter for Abercrombie and Fitch’s corporate office, explains, “The line between social and professional networking is becoming blurred. Social media is just starting to be used in recruiting and there is a ton of opportunity out there” (Maring, 2013). This statement was interesting because 98% of respondents from the young adult survey answered that Facebook is first and foremost a social networking site. Similarly, 40% of respondents thought that Facebook was *only* a social networking site, disregarding it as a professional networking site or recruiting tool. This acts as one example of how the opinions of young adults differ from those of professionals.

Maring then went on describe a new application called “OpenVue”, taking the job-seeking process to the next level. OpenVue is “a game-changing social interviewing application that allows hiring companies and candidates to better connect and make “digital introductions” to each other (HireVue). The root of this application lies in an individual’s social presence, and works off the assumption that anyone hoping to be successful in today’s professional world must not only have that presence, but also to be using it in a way that betters themselves. OpenVue uses Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter integration to help the user create a their social profile, and from there are able to participate in on-demand interviews, receiving feedback in only a short amount of time. If this is the future and the process takes off, it will become absolutely imperative for Facebook users to “clean-up” their pages. Maring admitted that Abercrombie and Fitch was not currently conducting Facebook background checks prior to hiring, but he

emphasized that it is being used in other, more indirect ways and the importance of keeping your profile professional is great.

Surprisingly, Maring's conclusion was not consistent with the views of the young adults who participated in the survey. When asked whether or not they believed employers would perform social media background checks prior to hiring a candidate, only a small 1.3% of respondents said no, whereas 53% thought that it was common knowledge. 44% of respondents thought it depended on the type of company, which then begs the question: what types of companies are currently using social media background checks? In an interview with Union Bank recruitment coordinator Arielle Gout, she explained, "Union Bank does not currently rely on social media to filter through candidates. Since it is a financial service candidates seem to be, generally, a bit older. However the bank is changing and growing quickly, therefore that practice may change eventually" (Gout, 2013). It can then be assumed that companies that employ, on average, older individuals or do not rely on online media for success are not the types of companies that will utilize social media. Of course, there are always exceptions. In an article titled *And Your Facebook Password is...* author George Pike (2012) discusses the recent trend of companies requesting the Facebook passwords of potential hires. He writes:

From a legal standpoint, the private area of Facebook is also likely to be the source of posts, pictures, or comments that could lead to violations of discrimination laws, such as pictures of children, posts about the sermon last week, or likes of a gay rights organization. If employers are not legally permitted to ask about these issues in an interview, should they be permitted essentially to require a potential employee to turn the same information over through his or her Facebook page?

Though the Password Protection Act of 2012 did indeed pass, prohibiting an employer from coercing a candidate from sharing access to their social networks, the fact remains that there are employers out there who will take the extreme measures to make sure that they are hiring the right individual. Though they legally cannot request access to a user's page, they have the freedom to perform any searches or background checks that privacy settings allow.

Though in most cases, it is seemingly the individuals searching for jobs who are the victims, there are certain industries that can be negatively impacted by Facebook posts associated with their company. The industries that hire recent graduates are more aware of the social media surge and understand that there are issues to be addressed when it comes to professionalism. For example, students attending medical school need to be very careful about what they post on Facebook, as there have been patient confidentiality breaches. In a study on social media policies at US medical schools, the authors write, "A breach of patient information and derogatory humor that is easily accessible online poses ethical challenges and raises serious concerns for medical professionalism" (Kind, 2010). This is yet another example of how the social world and the professional world are overlapping in certain industries; this particular case discusses the need for social media policies to be in place within medical schools, however one might argue the need for each industry to develop their own policies specific to their trade. If social media integration is the future, which both Gout and Maring believe to be true, then what is considered to be appropriate or inappropriate must be explicit.

When asked to choose from several options what would be considered to be an unacceptable Facebook post in the eyes of an employer, most respondents all agreed that images containing drugs or obscene gestures would fall in this category, as well as status updates with profanities. This seems to be, for the most part, common knowledge amongst educated college

students and it is a positive sign that many individuals would think twice before posting these images or updates to Facebook. However, in an article titled *Now on Facebook: Your Future Doctor, Partying*, author Jill Laster writes about medical school students and residents at the University of Florida posting pictures on Facebook from “alcohol-soaked parties” and even going as far as posing with their cadavers (Laster, 2010). In this case, a medical student’s Facebook page begins to expand beyond their own personal “bubble”, and can negatively impact not only themselves, but also the organization they represent. Jill D. Austin, chief marketing officer at the University of Vanderbilt’s medical center explains, “Some of this is just reminding people that you represent yourself and you represent Vanderbilt if you're speaking about Vanderbilt, no matter what medium you're using” (Laster, 2010). Though some argue that this social media issue is largely a generational one and that the images being posted by medical students should be out of the university’s control, decency is a timeless trait. It is obvious that social media has altered what is “acceptable” for the public to view, but young adults can still choose to make a conscious effort to realize how far their information goes.

Ultimately, how one portrays their image online comes down to a conscious choice. From this study, it is evident that companies are beginning to realize the power of social media, both positive and negative. Social media will become a business norm in the near future, but *how* will companies utilize it? That much still remains unclear, but it can be assumed that Facebook will continue to be used as a way to market, generate buzz about businesses, and in some cases provide career opportunities. Though the companies who participated in this study have not yet begun to use Facebook as a way to determine the character of a candidate, it is safe to say that this will become a trend in the near future and Facebook users should indeed take caution with their online personal image. Some helpful steps to take to create a positive Facebook profile

would be to closely monitor tagged images. Since one does not have control over the images friends tag them in, this is a common way to become a victim of embarrassing or inappropriate photos. In addition, users can take care in the status' they post, specifically as they relate to their current or intended career, keeping in mind that they do not only represent themselves but the companies they work for. Lastly, always keep privacy settings up to date. This is the easiest way for users to keep unwanted eyes from viewing their profiles, yet many do not take advantage of Facebook's privacy settings. By taking these simple measures of precaution, young adults can be sure that their online social image is suitable for their careers.

But the preservation of one's image should not be the only reason to take care with Facebook posts. Facebook has sparked a societal shift; what was indecent and inappropriate a decade ago is now looked upon lightly. Young adults must realize the implications of a society controlled by the Internet, and must make an ethical decision to preserve morals and ethics within the business world. As social media and the business world merge together, it becomes increasingly important to preserve the integrity of companies by creating a clean online image.

Chapter V

Limitations

Limitations to the study include lack of company response and a general uncertainty about where Facebook fits into the professional industry right now. Several companies who were asked to contribute to the study either felt uncomfortable providing relevant information, or failed to respond to the request at all. Of the companies that did respond, both acknowledged that they were in the middle of a transitional period and emphasized Facebook playing a larger role in the near future, yet seemed at loss as to how Facebook was currently being used. This study could be strengthened with a larger sample size of company respondents, as well as information coming directly from companies who are “ahead of the curve”, so to speak, and are currently using social media as a company tool.

Concluding Remarks

There is much to be taken from this study. Social media is an area within the professional world that is continuously growing, and the manner in which businesses choose to utilize sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn will continue to change as well. It is important to note that companies are currently using Facebook in a variety of different ways, some of which do not involve the background checks that were the focus of this study. Several companies that participated in the study remarked that background checks have not yet been implemented into their hiring process, and that Facebook is currently being used in other avenues such as marketing and increasing online presence. This study highlighted specific industries where Facebook application is vague; older companies who, in the past, have not relied on online media for the success of their company seem to be in the alpha stages of utilizing Facebook to their advantage. It was also determined that legally, Facebook users are at least protected by the

Password Protection Act, so those companies that do express an interest in an individual's social networking site are limited to what they can discover on their own. Therefore, users must take action to protect their image. Making sure privacy settings are intact and monitoring tagged photos and posts are good ways to do so.

The flip side of this study involved how employees posting inappropriate photos or updates can negatively impact a company. This study looked at how medical schools are dealing with breaches in confidentiality, as well as negative online image. Current employees should have a good understanding of the industry they are in and how social media can impact it. Company reputation and image can be a huge factor in generating new customers as well as keeping old customers, so it becomes increasingly important for social media to be used proactively, with a focus on generating business rather than as purely social. Our society is connected today more than it has ever been, and young professionals can share their knowledge of social media trends with their respective companies. It is true that there is a gap between the young professionals of the world and the "veterans" so to speak. However, this gap can be bridged over time, and it will take young social media users fully realizing the potentials of social media as a positive tool to make it happen. Social media, Facebook specifically, is in a transitional period and will continue to make its presence known within the business world, as will the young adults using it.

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Appendix A

Young Adult Survey:

1. Are you currently enrolled as a student?
 - A. Yes, at a high school or equivalent.
 - B. Yes, at a college or university
 - C. Yes, in graduate school
 - D. Yes, as a part-time student
 - E. No, not currently enrolled as a student

2. Are you male or female?

3. In a typical day, how often do you check your Facebook page?
 - A. 1-2 times a day
 - B. 3-4 times a day
 - C. Over 5 times a day
 - D. Other (Please specify)

4. In your opinion, Facebook is (check all that apply):
 - A. A social networking site
 - B. A professional networking site
 - C. A recruiting tool for companies
 - D. A means to gain insight on an individual's character
 - E. Other (please specify)

5. What would you consider to be an inappropriate Facebook post in the eyes of an employer?

(Check all that apply)

- A. A picture of yourself with an alcoholic beverage
- B. A picture of yourself at a college party
- C. A picture of yourself and/or others smoking
- D. A status update with profanities
- E. A picture with skimpy attire (yourself or others)
- F. A picture of yourself or others making obscene gestures

6. In general do you feel that most employers will perform a social media background check prior to hiring a candidate?

- A. Yes, I feel that this is common knowledge
- B. No, I don't think they would take the time to do that
- C. It depends on the type of company

7. If an employer you are interested in working for were to view your Facebook page, how comfortable would you feel?

- A. Very comfortable
- B. Slightly uneasy
- C. Terrified, I would definitely be deleting some images/posts

Appendix B

Company responses: Both Gout and Maring were presented with the topic/issue at hand and asked to respond as it relates to their company and line of work.

Arielle Gout, Recruitment Coordinator, Union Bank

A: In my current role at the Bank, I work on Executive job searches only (candidates with Senior Vice President titles and above), therefore this question doesn't really apply to me or to the team of recruiters that I work for, since in the executive space, checking up on candidates via Facebook is not very useful. Sometimes Hiring Managers in the Executive Space use LinkedIn to get a look at the candidate's face, if they are curious enough, but to my knowledge, that is about it. We work with outside search firms on most of our searches, since they are so high-level, and these outside search firms are responsible for the prescreening of the candidates prior to bringing them in for interviews. However, I did ask my coworker who is working temporarily as an Associate College Recruiter (until the end of the summer when the Union Bank Internship Programs end) and she said the following: "I do not really, but I know a recruiter who will, out of curiosity, use facebook to get some information on a candidate. Or at least try to since everything is private now. This is not standard practice, but it is done". I asked a couple more recruiters on my floor, and based on the conversation that I have had today, Union Bank does not really use social media to filter through candidates...since it is a financial service, candidates seem to be, generally, a bit older. Although the bank is changing/growing quickly therefore that practice may change eventually.

Matt Maring, Recruiting, Abercrombie & Fitch

A: This is an interesting topic. Social media is just starting to be used in recruiting and there's a ton of opportunity out there. Abercrombie is a little behind the curve here but other companies are starting to use Facebook and other social networking to recruit - here are some examples:

- Gap has a “work for us” button that lists the jobs available
- Companies/services that specialize in promoting through social media are popping up all over the place - check out this funny video/company about social recruiting

<http://hirevue.com/openvue/>

The line between social and professional networking is becoming blurred - but people are mostly sticking with LinkedIn for the business networking. Rarely do I get facebook requests from candidates looking for jobs (but it happens). Twitter is not being used to evaluate candidates - but it's being used by companies to promote open jobs. Some of the major ATS (applicant tracking systems) allow you to create a job then post to Twitter, Facebook, wherever. I have not heard of Instagram being used yet.