

Managing Your Public Image

As social networking grows increasingly popular, more employers are utilizing websites to screen potential employees. According to the CareerBuilder survey, 70% of employers use social networking sites to research job candidates during the hiring process. The survey showed that 47% of employers say that if they can't find a candidate online, they're less likely to ask them for an interview. As many as 28% of employers use social media to gather information about the candidate before an interview and 20% are suspicious when they can't find a candidate online at all. With this in mind, it is imperative for job seekers to actively manage their personal internet presence in the best manner possible. Becoming more internet savvy will help protect the professional image of job seekers, allowing them to put their best foot forward during the job search. Your voice mail, email address, personal website, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, X, etc. are all part of your public image (also called "e-image"). Below are some helpful tips for keeping your e-image clean:

- Make sure your social networking profiles are set to private. Ensure that photo albums, wall posts, personal information, etc. are also marked as private and are only visible to friends. If you cannot limit access to certain content, make sure it is appropriate for public viewing (i.e. your profile picture, pages you are a fan of, etc.).
- Use your profile to your advantage. Post insightful comments that demonstrate your ability to articulate ideas in an intelligent manner, show examples of interests that relate to your future career, your industry of interest, etc. Avoid using derogatory language and inappropriate images.
- Use your TikTok to discuss your career goals, job search, etc. in a positive manner. Avoid talking about controversial topics, using inappropriate language, or criticizing a past/future employer.
- Create profiles on several networking sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and X to maximize your networking success (see Ready Reference D-16 on Using E-Networking for the Job Search for site-specific tips).
- Stay in touch with your peers, present and past, and be sure to keep your information up to date. Use social networking sites to network with professionals in your target industry. Ask questions about their job but don't ask for a job. Simply get to know them and let them get to know you!
- Complete the Job Seeker Self-Audit to evaluate your social networking profiles on a regular basis (see Ready Reference D-17).
- Make sure your voice mail message is professional and simple. Say something like, "Hello, you have reached the voicemail of Pistol Pete. I am unable to take your call at this time. Please leave a detailed message and I will follow up with you as soon as possible."
- Use a professional email address. Your okstate.edu email address is the best option. However, you may also consider creating an account on Yahoo, Gmail, etc. that is appropriate for long-term use. When setting up your personal email, try to use the following format: first name.last name@email.com.
- Google yourself often. Type your name in quotes for a more effective search. Check the first 3-5 pages of results. If you can find negative information about yourself, so can a potential employer.
- Assess your social networking site profiles and look for things that may turn off a potential employer. Have you posted anything that might cause a potential employer to form a negative opinion of you? Do any of your friends' posts have information that could be damaging if associated with you? Are you a member of any groups that could negatively represent you? Remember - if in doubt, take it out!

