

## Law Students: Go Beyond Your Resume

In the past six months, I've read several newspaper stories about college seniors losing out on job interviews -- and even jobs -- after prospective employers have looked them up on the Internet.

And I thought that was a good subject to bring up to law graduates sending out resumes for their first post law school jobs. Heck, this will apply even if you've been in practice for a while.

More and more, employers are looking to supplement resumes with mini background checks on the Internet. It costs them nothing and can tell enormous tales.

Take the college senior who applied for a good job and had two interviews. She thought she was on her way. She was wrong.

What stopped her was a rather raucous photo from spring break several years earlier that had been posted online. While the photo could be seen as youthful natural abandon, prospective employers viewed it as poor judgment and immaturity. Two qualities they definitely don't want to hire.

There are many web sites in cyberspace catering to students: Facebook and My Space are just two of them.

According to a recent article in the Richmond Times Dispatch, sites like these attract young people who tend to swagger online. Personal pages can be filled with bravado about drugs, drinking and sex and photos can be uploaded and shared with the community.

But it isn't just the My Space community you're sharing the photos with. It's future employers, too.

It's "dig me" and "how cool am I?" from the sixties all over again.

Take this test: Google yourself. Go on ? type your name into Google's search engine and see what comes up. Put it in quotes so your name stays together and you don't get separate hits for your first name and last name independently.

When I put my name in, 431 hits come back. Some of them aren't me ? some hits are for a Victoria Rosendahl in Europe. But most of the hits reference articles and books I've written as well as my web site. Cool.

What's the Big Deal?

The big deal, really, is credibility. Let's say you posted to My Space or Facebook when you were in high school or college and forgot all about it. And let's say you embellished the truth. Explainable? Maybe not.

Let me spin a legal case analogy for you. You have your first case with minor soft tissue injuries. You take the deposition of the plaintiff and ask if she ever had any other accidents that caused similar injuries. She says no and proceeds to say how badly she's injured from this accident. The complaint asks for more money than you know the accident is worth based on medical opinion.

Is she embellishing to collect more than she's entitled to? In the process of discovery, you find out that she'd been tagged for shoplifting three years ago. So is this helpful in a PI case?

Extremely helpful. Stealing is considered a "truth" crime and you can now call her veracity into question. Do you listen to what she says in deposition and/or arbitration or trial if she stole merchandise? In other words, she failed to be truthful and pay for what she wanted from the store. So how can we be sure she's telling the truth now?

I had a case just like that as a young associate and it settled for a nominal amount instead of the approximately \$25,000 in injuries and pain-and-suffering the plaintiff wanted.

How did I get the information about her background of shoplifting? Not from answers to interrogatories, that's for sure. I put her name into the local database to find out if she had ever had any lawsuits filed against her and the suit came up. It never went to trial so she wasn't convicted but it was still a useful tool.

Now, truly, if the personal injury case had gone to trial, she would need to have been convicted of shoplifting for me use against her in open court. But I was able to get the case settled by bringing the evidence up to opposing counsel who then had to worry about the truth of the information his client was giving him.

#### It's All About Face

Most law firms worry about face ? or how they looked prospective clients. Hiring a new attorney who bragged about things like drugs, sex or alcohol on a web site doesn't look good. And that's not all.

A published paper or article that's contrary to the core beliefs of the firm or organization can be just as damaging.

Do yourself a favor. Google yourself. If there something you'd rather not have prospective employers see, remove it from the web site where it appears.

Your face is just as critical and could be the difference between a cool job offer and none all.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

#### About the Author

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