

Social Media Screening: Better Understand Candidates and Employees

Tips for using social media searches to hire and manage your workforce.

Social media is ubiquitous in today's global society. It's everywhere and used by nearly everybody. Knowing this, 90% of employers believe it's important to review the content candidates share via social media when evaluating them for a position, according to a [2020 employer survey](#).¹ If you're not already incorporating a social media review in your background check strategy, here's why you should along with smart tips for securely leveraging this powerful screening tool.

Your candidates and employees are using it—a lot.

A global [social media report](#) shows that more than half of the world's population uses social media, with some areas in Asia Pacific registering higher percentages—63% in Eastern and Southeastern Asia and 56% in Oceania.² Of those global users, 88% have actively engaged with or contributed to social media within the past month. Sought-after Gen Y and Millennial workers are spending well over two hours a day on social media.

Further, COVID-19 is driving increased social media use. Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Singapore are all seeing double-digit rises in social media use since the onset of the pandemic, with the Philippines and India showing soaring increases of 64% and 59%, respectively.

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of employers believe it's important to review a candidate's social media content.

—Source: [2020 employer survey](#) performed by The Manifest

With the majority of today's global talent pool engaging with this highly public medium for multiple hours every day, employers are increasingly interested in what they're doing and saying.

It can help you better understand candidates.

Given its widespread use, social media can help employers acquire a more well-rounded understanding of candidates. For example, some may display leadership qualities on social media by organising community groups or leading fundraising efforts, while others may reveal red flags such as substance abuse issues, misogynist behaviours or threats to former employers.

Ultimately, 79% of HR professionals admit to not hiring candidates due to perceived inappropriate social media content, according to the [2020 employer survey](#). The survey cites content that includes “hate speech, images of heavy partying or drug use, illegal or illicit content, poor grammar and confidential or sensitive content about a former employer.”

More specifically, social media screens can help hiring managers better understand candidates and employee in different ways.

- **Pre-employment screening** can help organisations analyse a candidate's public online and social media presence for indicators of risk, culture fit and high performance.
- **Post-hire employment screening** can help organisations avoid surprise headlines and reduce the incidence of potential corporate policy violations.

Social media insights can help fill information gaps.

Many businesses and agencies have been closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which can cause delays in traditional background checks. However, other issues such as political unrest or natural disasters can also

present screening obstacles. Regardless of the challenge or delay, organisations still need to screen and hire workers.

Social media screens can sometimes help in these cases by offering additional insights that help fill critical information gaps when traditional background checks are delayed or simply unavailable in a jurisdiction. To be clear, social media screens should never be used “in lieu of” traditional background checks such as criminal checks or education and employment verifications; however, they can sometimes provide enough insight to help HR make a provisional job offer until other searches can be performed.

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of HR professionals who haven't hired candidates due to perceived inappropriate social media content.

—Source: [2020 employer survey](#) performed by The Manifest

Know what can be used and what can't.

Laws and rules governing the access and use of social media information in employment situations can vary from country to country. As with any background check, organisations should consult with a legal expert or in-house counsel to ensure a thorough understanding of relevant, jurisdiction-specific laws such as the EU General Data Protection Act (GDPR), Japan's Act on the Protection of Personal Information (APPI), Hong Kong's Personal Data Privacy Ordinance (PDPO), the Australian Privacy Principles (APP) and others, to name a few.

In addition, consider developing an overarching, documented social media policy that is enforced by a dedicated policy manager. The policy manager should

work with the organisation's legal counsel to set standards for data accuracy and stay current on social media trends and regulation changes.

You can't “unsee” personal information, so have a plan.

Knowing that employers can't use a lot of the personal information posted on social media in their hiring decisions, the question becomes: how do you “unsee” information you were not supposed to see and prevent it from impacting the hiring decision?

The truth is, if you see personal information while reviewing a candidate's social media, it can be hard to prove that you didn't use it in an employment decision. In fact, laws in some countries assume that if you accessed it, you used it.

Instead of taking this chance, organisations should consider outsourcing their social media screens to a professional background screening provider. They can offer specialised expertise and technology to help protect organisations from accessing the wrong information, while still delivering robust, insightful results. Using built-in controls to ensure compliance and advanced artificial intelligence technology, the social media screens available through screening providers can help ensure that hiring managers never see protected personal information, only the information deemed as work-related. Results can include:

- Links to all social media profiles confirmed for the candidate
- Content of all posts matching the organisation's search criteria
- Reasons why the post was flagged
- Links to all news and web items confirmed for the candidate
- Snippets of the contents of the article
- Indicators for any flags appearing in the article

To explore how outsourcing this task can help your organisation, contact us today.

We can help. For more information, contact First Advantage today:

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¹ <https://themanifest.com/digital-marketing/5-personal-branding-tips-job-search>
² <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot>