

10 Quick Ways to Clean Up Your Social Media Profiles Before Your Next Interview

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Picture this scenario: after weeks of sending out applications and cover letters, you finally land a job interview with your dream employer. You are all ready to go – dressed up, resumes in hand, your winning smile and firm handshake in perfect form – when you realize that you forgot to go through your social media profile with a fine-toothed comb the way you had planned.

This is a common situation among job hunters. You get so caught up in looking for employment opportunities and making contacts that it's easy to overlook the things closest to yourself – ostensibly, your Facebook profile, your Twitter feed, your YouTube account, or your blog – that could posit you as a less-than-desirable employee. With hiring managers in the modern age looking toward social media and the Internet to learn who their applicants are in real-life, it's a commonly heard mantra that cleaning up your social media profiles is an important step before you start applying for jobs or going on interviews.

Luckily, in case you've neglected your social media wipe down up to this point and don't have time to whitewash the entire thing before your upcoming interview, there are quick fixes and momentary strategies you can take to turn your Facebook into a resume booster rather than an employment disqualifier. Once you get home from your interview, you can do a more thorough inspection of your social profiles to make sure that they aren't damaging your job chances. Sometimes though, speed is the key, and these 10 quick social media steps could save your job chances if you remember to run through them in the minutes before you head out the door to your interview.

1. Change your profile picture: Here's the big one. If you are really cutting it close with your social media clean up, you may not have time to sort through the 1,000+ photos that you have been tagged in over the years to make sure none of them are offering an unflattering impression of you. However, if you make one change to your Facebook before heading to an interview, make it your profile picture. Your so-called "prof pic" is the first thing anyone will see when looking you up or interacting with you on Facebook. It's the face of your profile, and by extension, the face of who you are online. The picture doesn't have to be a formal headshot, but make sure it shows you off in a good light.

2. Check your recent statuses and comments: Similarly to checking pictures, you may not have time to read back through months and years of statuses, so hedge your bets and do a quick run-through of your last month on Facebook. If any of your recent statuses have been offensive in any way – whether due to profane language or because they dissed your boss or place of work – delete them and make a note not to post content like that in the future.

3. Speed read through your "Info" section: On Facebook, not many people pay much attention to the info section unless they are looking for contact information. However, if you've listed something in your interests or career information that may conflict with what you are hoping to say in a job interview, do some quick editing or deleting to make sure your profile represents who you are today.

4. Trim your group list...: No employer wants to see an applicant who spends all of his or her time on Facebook. A person who is a member of a bunch of nonsensical groups automatically looks less professional in an employer's mind, so trim the list.

5. ...And your app list: This is the same situation as number five, except that applications and Facebook games tend to look even worse to employers than groups.

6. Update your LinkedIn page: Leave Facebook for a second and head to LinkedIn, the “professional” social network where your prospective employer will probably not only look up your profile, but will also seek to connect with you. Most Internet socialites wouldn’t post inappropriate or offensive content on LinkedIn in the first place because that style doesn’t jibe with the site’s atmosphere and mission statement. However, most people also don’t spend as much time on LinkedIn as other social networks, meaning that it may need a few quick updates. Having your most up-to-date job information on LinkedIn shows you as a person who is on top of things.

7. Control who can add things to your page: Now head back to Facebook and start playing around with your profile posting settings. You don’t want a friend to hinder your newly clean Facebook page by posting a racist or sexist comment, so put limits on who can and cannot post comments, photos, or other content to your profile.

8. Turn on Facebook’s “Manage Tags” function: Though rarely used, Facebook’s “Manage Tags” feature is one of the most useful tools in a job hunter’s arsenal. By enabling this feature, you get to see what your friends are tagging you in before it ends up on your profile, so if there’s a picture you don’t want the whole world to see, it’s a good failsafe to keep it from being broadcast on your page.

9. Edit your privacy settings: Facebook’s privacy settings allow you to control who sees your content and who can look you up your profile. Whether you use these functions to make it difficult for your prospective employer to find you on Facebook, or simply use them to hide your photos and statuses from non-friends, they can be a great firewall to protect your private content and information from prying eyes.

10. Do a quick survey of your other social pages: Since Facebook is the most popular social media outlet, it’s where employers will concentrate most of their efforts if they look you up online. However, do a quick survey of your other sites – Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, blog clients, Flickr, etc. – to make sure you haven’t been sharing any inappropriate or offensive content lately.

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