

To Facebook or Not to Facebook

Zheng F

[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Author Note

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Checking the social media accounts of potential employees and vetting them based on their social media presence can be a tricky prospect in the employment procedures of today. However, it is becoming more common for employers to decide the fate of candidates based on their social media presence. There is a serious dearth of privacy in the age of social media, which makes it even more important that the hiring process in companies is cognizant of the idea that vetting through social media profiles may invade candidates' privacy (Ghoshray, 2012). Both sides of the argument present logical ideas, but the disconnect between social media personas and real personalities, invasion of privacy, and the need for equal opportunities for all candidates imply that the hiring must not be refused simply based on a few Facebook posts.

The fact that people now place their thoughts and everyday happenings in their personal life continuously on an unlimited social media feed has made it very easy for anyone to learn intimate details about their private life. Coinciding this with the employment trends of today has created a situation where "cyber-vetting" is becoming increasingly common (Payne, 2014). Employers now have access to the private lives of their current and potential employees, never like before. Suppose the employers gain access to the social media feeds of their potential employees. In that case, any manner of personal life decisions or details could be used by the employer as a reason not to hire the person. Employers who use cyber-vetting as a legitimate method to determine the chances of a person joining their company often provide the logic that the social media presence of a person is an outlook on their personality, which may impact how they interact with other employees (Delarosa, 2014). For example, suppose personal qualities are found that are extreme enough to cause alarm and are believed to have the potential to harm the company's reputation. In that case, the employers may simply discard the person's candidacy and eliminate them from the hiring process.

However, the other side of the argument is that a person's personal choices do not directly reflect upon their professional skills and abilities. The hiring committee must therefore be implored to look upon the idea that the Facebook feed of a person cannot be connected to the probability of their workplace performance and interpersonal relationships. Considering the fact that the social media personas do not reflect upon the professional demeanor of a person and that their personal lives should not bear so heavily on their professional capabilities, the Facebook profile of the candidate should not be the only reason why they are not hired. People often post a designed persona on Facebook which is neither real nor aligned with their actual principles. Even practices portrayed on Facebook are often not indicative of how the person spends their time (Ghoshray, 2012). This is because the social media profile is meant to attract followers and make it look like the person is "cool" enough in front of their peers. Using an issue as casual and unrelated as a Facebook profile to refuse to hire a person will be detrimental to the future of this company. Doing so would not only be a disservice to the potential employee but also set a dangerous precedent for future hirings where cyber-vetting of the employees becomes routine procedure.

Similar to the danger of setting a precedent, losing a star potential employee over a few Facebook posts would also incur an overall loss for the company, which is categorically higher than any potential gains from preventing certain types of behaviors in the employees (Holland and Jeske, 2017). The committee should, therefore, be asked to look into the potential benefits of refusing to hire the candidate over Facebook posts and potential losses in terms of the skill, experience, and innovation they can bring to the company. Other than these benefits and losses, the company should also look at the benefits of hiring the person as well as the potential loss of hiring them in terms of the behaviors seemingly indicated by their Facebook profile.

Another reason why the hiring process needs to go on without influence from the social media feed of the potential employee is that employment acts apply to the recruiting process. The Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) legislation ensures that employers are providing all candidates with an equal opportunity to obtain a job at the company without having them face any discrimination or undue bias. Even though this primarily applies to discrimination based on race, sex, ethnicity, or religious identity, any biases preventing a candidate from getting the job they deserve can violate this law (Raymond, 2019). The purpose of this law is to make sure that candidates are judged based on their ability to carry out the tasks that are a part of the job description and that they fit the professional requirements of education, experience, and skill. Stopping or putting hurdles in the hiring process for an employee, whether it is because of a social identity marker or because of a personal choice that has no bearing on their professional capability, is antithetical to the law that mandates equal opportunity for all.

It is, therefore, clear that the hiring process involving cyber-vetting is a problematic practice that only legitimizes undue invasion of privacy and conflates social media personas with real personalities. Hiring should be based on professional skills relevant to the job and not based on a few Facebook posts.

References

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