

Social Networking Users Advised Against Provocative Content

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If you put your pictures up on social networking sites such as Facebook or Myspace, be aware. More and more employers are checking up on prospective employees' sites before hiring. So those party pictures you put up for a laugh might just cost you that new job you've been hoping for. This doesn't just extend to outside jobs, either. An RA on campus lost their position recently, allegedly due to content on their Facebook.

Most claim that they are safe, due to it being "illegal" for an employer to view their pages. The problem is that this assertion rests on hazy legal grounds. According to the official Facebook policy, the site can only be used for "personal and non-commercial use". However, it also states that it is not responsible for any circumvention of privacy or security on the site. They are also not responsible for "...any loss or damage, including any loss or damage to any User Content or personal injury or death, resulting from anyone's use of the Site or the Service." Facebook has made it clear that they are in no way responsible for any of the information that you post about yourself, so post at your own peril.

Facebook also owns any content you post to the site. To quote the official terms of use, "By posting User Content to any part of the Site, you automatically grant, and you represent and warrant that you have the right to grant, to the Company an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, transferable, fully paid, worldwide license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, publicly perform, publicly display, reformat, translate, excerpt (in whole or in part) and distribute such User Content for any purpose, commercial, advertising, or otherwise, on or in connection with the Site or the promotion thereof, to prepare derivative works of, or incorporate into other works, such User Content, and to grant and authorize sublicenses of the foregoing." Once you post anything to the site, it is theirs. It goes on to state that once you remove the content, their license expires. People posting art or any other intellectual property are advised to not do it, as you give Facebook ownership over it.

Myspace has a similar but less restrictive terms of use. They claim no ownership of your content, but still reserve the right to use it as they choose. They also are in no way responsible for anything bad that happens as a result of you using the site. "MySpace.com assumes no responsibility for any error, omission, interruption, deletion, defect, delay in operation or transmission, communications line failure, theft or destruction or unauthorized access to, or alteration of, any User or Member communication."

Social networking site can be a lot of fun, but posting anything that could potentially be harmful to you if it got out is a bad idea. Anything you wouldn't want a potential employer, boss, or anyone to find is not advisable. Any personal information is also fair game for hackers and other such people. When using social networking sites, let the users beware.