Privacy While Seeking Employment Online

6 Tips to Protect Your Privacy

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Does the thought of posting your resume online and exposing yourself to hundreds of thousands of Internet users give you white knuckles? If so, your fears are founded. According to the FBI, identity theft is the number one fraud perpetrated on the Internet. So how do job seekers protect themselves while continuing to circulate their resumes online? The key to a successful online job search is learning to manage the risks. Here are some tips for staying safe while conducting a job search on the Internet.

1. **Check for a privacy policy.**
   If you are considering posting your resume online, make sure the job search site you are considering has a privacy policy, like CareerBuilder.com. The policy should spell out how your information will be used, stored and whether or not it will be shared. You may want to think twice about posting your resume on a site that automatically shares your information with others. You could be opening yourself up for unwanted calls from solicitors.

   When reviewing the site's privacy policy, you'll be able to delete your resume just as easily as you posted it. You won't necessarily want your resume to remain out there on the Internet once you land a job. Remember, the longer your resume remains posted on a job board, the more exposure, both positive and not-so-positive, it will receive.

2. **Take advantage of site features.**
   Legitimate job search sites offer levels of privacy protection. Before posting your resume, carefully consider your job search objectives and the level of risk you are willing to assume.

   CareerBuilder.com, for example, offers three levels of privacy from which job seekers can choose. The first is standard posting. This option gives job seekers who post their resumes the most visibility to the broadest employer audience possible.

   The second is anonymous posting. This allows job seekers the same visibility as those in the standard posting category without any of their contact information being displayed. Job seekers who wish to remain anonymous but want to share some other information may choose which pieces of contact information to display.

   The third is private posting. This option allows job seekers to post their resumes without having it searched by employers. Private posting allows job seekers to quickly and easily apply for jobs that appear on CareerBuilder.com without retyping their information.

3. **Safeguard your identity.**
   Career experts say that one of the ways job seekers can stay safe while using the Internet to search out jobs is to conceal their identities. Replace your name on your resume with a generic identifier such as:

   Confidential Candidate
   Intranet Developer Candidate
   Confidential Resume: Experienced Marketing Representative
   You should also consider eliminating the name and location of your current employer. Depending on your title, it may not be all that difficult to determine who you are once the name of your company is provided. Use a general description of the company such as:

   Major auto manufacturer
   International packaged goods supplier
   Confidential employer
   If your job title is unique, consider using the generic equivalent instead of the exact title assigned by your employer.

4. **Establish an email address for your search.**
   Another way to protect your privacy while seeking employment online is to open up a mail account specifically for your online job search. This will safeguard your existing email box in the event someone you don't know gets a hold of your email address and shares it with others.

   Using a dedicated email address specifically for your job search also eliminates the possibility that you will receive unwelcome email solicitations in your primary mailbox. When naming your new email address, be sure it is nondescript and that it doesn't contain references to your name or other information that will give away your identity. The best solution is an email address that is relevant to the job you are seeking such as salesmgr2004@provider.com.

5. **Protect your references.**
   If your resume contains a section with the names and contact information for your references, take it out. There's no sense in safeguarding your information while sharing private contact information for your references.

6. **Keep confidential information confidential.**
   Do not, under any circumstances, share your social security, driver's license, and bank account numbers or other personal information, such as marital status or eye color. Credible employers do not need this information with an initial application. Don't provide this even if they say they need it in order to conduct a background check. This is one of the oldest tricks in the book -- don't fall for it.

Most legitimate employers don't do background checks until they have met with you, conducted an extensive interview process, and decided you're the ideal candidate. Even then, you need only provide limited information. Contact an attorney if you still have concerns.