

JOB INNERVIEW

Laura Moscone, Human Resources (HR) Director for a small firm, sits at her desk pondering applications of a set of finalists for an outside sales position. After screening dozens of resumes, she had requested her company's standard scan of social media by a designated HR research staffer who otherwise has no role in the hiring decision. The research staffer gathered publicly available information about applicants using Google, Facebook, LinkedIn and other such sites. This scan generally resulted in a specific set of information, on a form approved by the firm's lawyers and precluding any information "protected" under federal law (for example, gender, age, race/ethnicity, religion, and so forth). Laura uses the information presented in making a final hiring decision. All of the firm's application forms state that the hiring process includes a search of social media and certain other Internet resources.

Laura is considering four finalists she had interviewed. Jack Friendly, the standout applicant for the position, submitted appropriate credentials, presented himself well, and impressed the department manager. The information from the social media search on Jack, however, worries Laura. The researcher noted that Jack's Facebook profile picture is sexually suggestive and his wall contains posts regarding a recent drunken evening at a local ball game and a subsequent arrest for drunk driving. Other entries, clearly posted during working hours at Jack's current place of employment, suggest time taken from that job for social internet and non-work related activity. Google also revealed Jack's postings on his blog complaining about his current employer.

Laura's company requires collection of Internet information in all job searches. Laura knows that if she did not have the Internet information she would definitely offer the job to Jack. She wonders about the ethics of using information gained from sources that, though admittedly readily available, the candidate may have assumed to be private.