

## **How to Conduct an Online Search for Prospective Employees**

Almost every adult has some online footprint—whether small or large, public or private. Simply searching first and last name can give you an enormous amount of results, but potentially none relevant to what you are looking for. By knowing some search tools and using a few extra characters in your search, you can significantly filter the hits you receive. Try the following on their own and in combination to see what gives you the best search engine results page (SERP). Also, try Bing.com and DuckDuckGo.com in addition to Google for the most thorough view at someone's online presence.

Possible results will vary from very specific to completely unrelated to the person in mind. You'll need to spend some time scanning the SERP for links that are a match. Change and use multiple identifiers (e.g., massage, sexual assault) to hone your results. Keep an eye out for news clippings, police logs, court documents, reviews, and other public posts. General searches on these sites will likely produce links to their social media profiles as well.

### **Search Tips**

#### **First and Last Name in Quotes**

- "John Smith"
- Results will be limited to those containing both words

#### **Include Identifiers**

- Massage
- Rape
- Battery
- "Sexual Assault"
- If there are 2 or more words, put the phrase in quotes

#### **Use the + sign**

- +rape +"John Smith"
- +"sexual assault" +"John Smith"
- Adding a plus symbol before a word or phrase indicates to the search engine that it is required in your search results

#### **Use the - sign**

- +"John Smith" -carpenter
- Adding a minus symbol before a word or phrase indicates to the search engine that it is to be excluded from your search results

### **Research Using Social Media**

Research potential employees with social media: Facebook\*, LinkedIn\*, Twitter\*, Instagram\*

Lesser known but popular sites: Reddit, Parler\*

(\*an account is necessary to perform the search)

Most people have at least one, if not several, social media accounts, where they share their thoughts with family, friends, colleagues, and strangers alike. Even if they haven't signed up to any of the large platforms, someone may be talking about them and tagging them online. Sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn often give snapshots of a person's background, including education and profession. Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit searches will show you a person's interests, and examples of who and what they follow online.

While searching social media sites may turn up a random article or public post about the person, the majority of results will give you an overview of their activities and priorities. You'll need to interpret what you find—both what they post and what they chose to repost. For example, if they continually post about the exciting continuing education classes they just had, this person may be a good hire. If they constantly complain about work and their boss, that may impact what kind of questions you want to ask them during an interview.

- First create/log in to your personal or business account to view all public pages
- Include location with name to limit results (e.g., Denver, CO; NYC; California)
- Try searching with their email address instead of their name, as it is more unique
- Try name variants (e.g., Jim, James, Jay; Chris, Kris, Christine)