

2016 Exemplary Award Winner (ENWR100)

Curtis Watkins

Hire me for who I am, not for who I was

Social networking tools allow us to share thoughts, information, and pictures quickly, frequently, and widely. However, it does lead to some consequences. For example, an employer can look into your digital history to influence the decision on whether or not they should hire you. More and more employers use social media as a factor to decide on who to hire. Yet, it's not right for an employer to search and make judgments on a potential employee based on his or her digital history because half of the things they post on the internet were from their teenage years; employers may find information that turns out to be irrelevant, and it's perceived as sneaky.

Mostly, half of the things employees post on the internet were from their teenage years and as a result it's outdated. In "Escaping Digital Histories", Julian B. Gewirtz and Adam B. Kern acknowledge that a sixteen-year-old girl had opposing views on abortion but her views changed as she went to college. However, she did not post her changed views. Then, she applied for a job as a teacher but when the Principal checks her Facebook, she got denied for the job. It's outrageous how an employer did not hire a certain individual due to a certain idea he or she posted when he or she was sixteen years old. Furthermore, Gewirtz and Kern note the intriguing issues of digital histories :

This digital longevity raises new issues: One is that our former selves may live on beyond their real existence. It used to be that if a teenager went through "a phase", generally only their family, friends and teachers would know or remember. Those days are gone.

Another issue is that false versions of your identity, suggested by disparate pieces of data might be contrived and proposed as the real you. Thanks to technology, someone can know more about you than you know about yourself----or, at least, think they do.

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They correctly proved that issues relating to digital history can deceive people into thinking they know enough information about you than they actually know. Plus, it connects to the previous example because the Principal may have assumed the information he found out about the employee was true. Yet, it was from the employee's digital history which results in the information being outdated.

It's problematic to think that people will not change over time. Gewirtz and Kern observe that what people did in the past is irrelevant and that people especially employers should not be concerned about what an employee did in the past. Initially, they acknowledged, "This leaves the third outcome: the idea that we must learn to care less about what people did when they were younger or otherwise different" (Gewirtz and Kern 90). Basically, they do not want employers to care about what potential employees did in high school, especially the pictures they posted back then. Also, growing up and learning from mistakes are all part of the process into adulthood.

For example, in "'Overnight, Everything I Loved Was Gone': The Internet Shaming of Lindsey Stone", Jon Ronson observes that Lindsey Stone posted a picture on the internet which got some backlash from her employer. The picture was Stone posing in front of the silence and Respect sign at Arlington and she was pretending to swear and scream---and was putting up the middle finger. It caused a problem because it looked like misconduct on Stone's part and it was disrespectful. Like everyone else, she is also a human being who made mistakes in the past and that should not be a negative factor for employers. Gewirtz and Kern also talk about everyone makes a mistake once in their lifetime which would have benefited Stone because she is flawed in some way. As they state, "Everyone makes at least one mistake, and we'd like to think that process continues into adulthood. Creativity should not be overwhelmed by the fear of what

people might one day find unpalatable” (90). Gewirtz and Kern proved that every human being is flawed in some way and should not be denied employment because of the post they made. In fact, for Lindsey Stone, what she did in the past will not be discussed as much because it happened in the past and she learned from her mistakes.

Furthermore, from looking into an employee’s digital history, employers may learn information that turns out to be irrelevant. This could be any piece of information like age, marriage status, religion, and more. An employer’s decision not to hire someone based on these pieces of information is illegal. If the employer needs a valid reason to not to hire a certain individual, it should be based on the application and the observation of the potential employee during an interview. Also, the biography a person posts on Facebook should not be crucial to the hiring process.

Employers using an employee’s digital history is perceived as sneaky. Privacy is important and employers should respect that. In addition, Gewirtz and Kern talk about privacy being challenged by new technology. They added, “In an area where regulations, privacy policies and treaties may take decades to catch up to reality, our generation needs to take the lead in negotiating a ‘cultural treaty’ endorsing a new value, related to privacy, that secures our ability to have a past captured....” (90). They proved privacy is hard to monitor because everyone uses social media daily.

Employers should not use a potential employee’s digital history to make judgments on hiring him/her. More and more employers are using social media to make hiring decisions, which is unfair. Privacy is important to employees and employers should respect that and not use it as a factor for employment. Initially, employers’ method of using a potential employee’s digital history is unfair simply because there is no such thing as forgiveness to employers. Moreover,

overlooking past mistakes made by employees is not considered a “mistake” by employers. Also, it’s not an accurate representation of how someone will act in the work place. Employers must not depend on digital histories to learn more about a potential employee.

Works Cited

Gewirtz, Julian B., and Kern, Adam B. "Escaping Digital Histories." *Intersections. Ed.*

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