

What Happens in Vegas. . . ? Why Your Employer Might Know More Than You Think

If you think you're searching for your next new job on the sly, you might want to think again. These days, employers may know more about you than you realize—including your job search, your relationship status, or even your bad habits.

It's smart to look for a new job (or at least keep an eye on the market) while you're still employed. But there are certain caveats that apply. Even if you're not involved in a job search, it's a good idea to be aware of these potential pitfalls.

1. Job posting boards are a two-way street.

Maybe you posted your resume on Monster.com, figuring it couldn't hurt to keep yourself out there. But in the meantime, your current employer did a search to find a new candidate for a job—and your name popped up. Not good.

Human resources departments may even proactively search for their employees' names on job boards. They hope to determine which employees are "dedicated" to the company and which aren't. Guess which ones get promoted?

If you're engaged in a job search, you will probably be better served by answering specific advertisements or by contacting a recruiter. Don't make it easy for your boss to know you are looking for a new job.

2. Your email may say more than you think.

It is far more common than it used to be for companies to use software to analyze outgoing email automatically. The software can be set up to flag all types of things, including specific keywords, types of attachments, or number of addressees. You

may think you're telling your best buddy about Friday night's fun—but in reality, you may be telling your boss too.

Keep your private emails private. Don't use your business email for anything but business. If you really need to send personal emails while you're at work, get a cell phone that will allow you to check and send email outside of the office network.

3. MySpace is your space too.

It's a pretty common practice for employers to Google your name before they hire or promote you. It serves as sort of a free background check, an easy way to determine whether you have potential issues outside the workplace. They may also check Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and other networking sites. Unfortunately, if your friends can find you, so can your boss.

While your personal time is indeed personal, you might want to ensure that your online image is a relatively benign one. Take a few minutes to do a search on yourself, and see what comes up. Keep anything truly private on a password-protected space. Be smart about what you post and where you post it.

Don't let your current or prospective employer know *too* much about you. Be prepared, and you'll stay a step ahead of these technology tricks. You'll be more likely to be hired and promoted in the long run.

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