Adults entering today's workforce must contend with the impact of social networking tools. Current research indicates, "37% of firms across industries browse social media profiles to evaluate each candidate's character and personality." Source: Forbes.com. Companies are now posting potential job opportunities through social networking mediums – making participation in the Web 2.0 world almost a requirement in order to be connected to the right person at the right time. The way we behave in a social media environment can have lasting, even permanent, effects.

What should we, as educators, be sure to explore with our adult education and family literacy students so that they are better equipped to correctly handle their social media experiences and so they can educate and model for their children appropriate behavior on social media sites? Explore the following list of Social Media Awareness Topics and Strategies for playing it safe.

Privacy Settings:

- Play it safe and forego the default settings within social media sites. Give some thought toward how much information you want to make public to Internet surfers. By customizing your privacy settings you control the information that select people can view.
- Keep identity information that could be a security threat such as your birth year excluded and be mindful of other personal contact information that should be concealed from those outside of your immediate social circle.
- Consider creating photo albums with more restricted privacy settings.
- Use caution in downloading apps that ask to have access to your privacy settings. While getting a birthday or anniversary calendar may be fun – you are opening up your privacy settings. We don't necessarily need to be scared of every app, but be aware of what you are doing if it asks to open your privacy settings.

Sharing Information:

- Beware of "over-sharing". Don't let sharing turn into spamming. Be careful of what you announce publicly and think twice about posting a minute-by-minute detail of your whereabouts. This can be a threat to your personal safety as well as alert a thief to an empty home.
- Consider creating a Private Group within your account. This will allow only you to be more free with what you share inside of this customized group. Facebook and other social media sites offer this kind of option.
- Social networking can feel like you are communicating with one person and therefore private. Despite amped up privacy settings, social media sites are a public domain. Be extremely mindful of the fact that except for private messaging, all posts and pictures are public.
- Privacy settings help, but they do not eliminate friends or friends of friends from viewing, saving, copying and sharing information (e.g., venting about work, sharing news that is too personal, gossip, etc.) that is in a post or uploaded. Use discretion about what you share in an email and what you post, upload or tweet publicly.
- Think about group pages you "like". You can find out a lot about a person by what they "like". Think about why you are linking yourself to a page. What does that public "like" say about you?

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Friends and Friends of Friends:

- Use common sense when accepting 'friend' invitations and when sending them.
    - Do you know the person in any capacity offline or are they a complete stranger?
    - Are they a friend, a casual acquaintance you just met, or a friend of a friend?
    - Is there or would there be a potential for a business or professional connection?
- Think about how communication with this person would help or hinder your social media experience.
- Consider what might happen if you 'friend' fellow students. What about your bosses, should they be on your friends list?
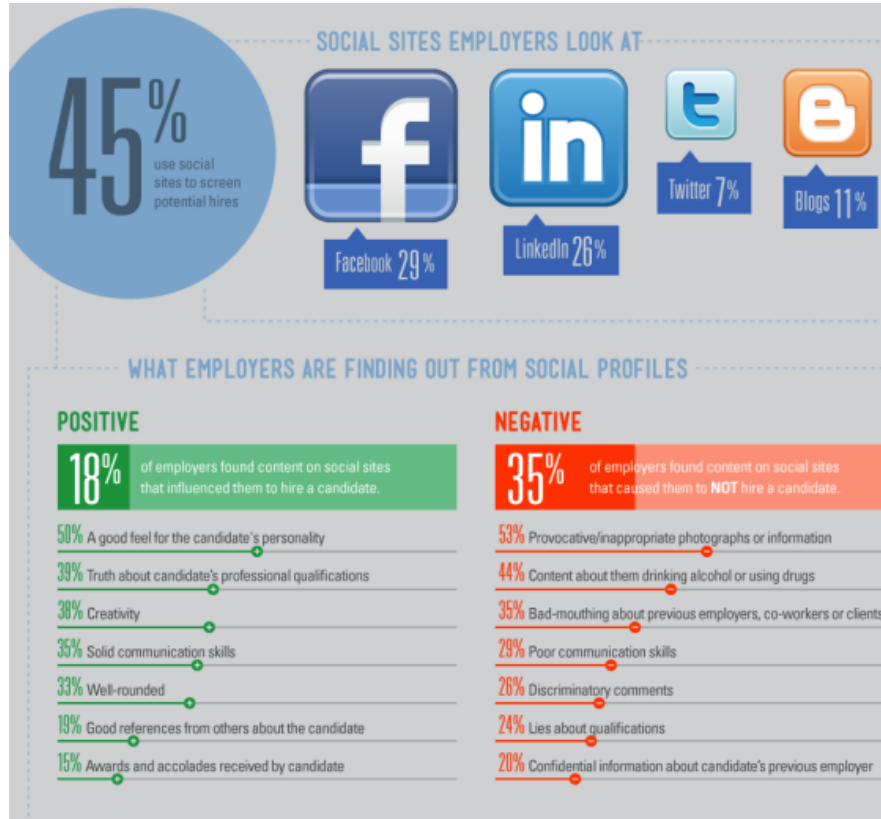
Editing/Purging Content:

- Keep your social networking media up to date.
- Update your profile pictures, revisit and adjust privacy settings (they change from time to time without notice).
- Delete or archive old photos into albums. Yet all the social media experts are saying to show your personality. If a site is too clean, then they are suspicious. Think about the image the photo is projecting and do you want that image to be shared.

Tone of Voice:

- Using too much sarcasm, negative comments, cursing and other offensive uses of text is easily misconstrued. With the exception of voice or video conferencing, most of the communication online is text-based.
- The way we read and interpret text is largely based on language communication styles and cues that are missing in the social media forum. Since you can't actually hear the other person's voice tone, nor can you see the body language that would accompany a particular text, there is the potential for misunderstandings and miscommunication.

Photos: Profile/ Tagging/Posting/Albums:

- Choose a profile photo that is in good taste, especially if you are job hunting. Your profile picture is the first impression to those who don't know you (employers, referral source or business associates).
- Be considerate when tagging photos. Tagging unflattering pictures can hurt feelings and is considered rude.
- Posting photos of yourself and your friends after a late night of partying and drinking may seem harmless, but it could cause a potential employer to see you (or your friends) as a "not so good fit" for their job opening.
- Be careful of the overall personal/professional image your posted photos and photo albums reflect. While it might not seem fair, the lines can become easily blurred when trying to draw the line between your online social media persona and your offline personal/professional character. While it may not seem fair or even an offense to your personal rights, it is very difficult to keep the lines from crossing within the popular social media sites.

SOCIAL SITES EMPLOYERS LOOK AT

45% use social sites to screen potential hires

Facebook 29%
LinkedIn 26%
Twitter 7%
Blogs 11%

WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE FINDING OUT FROM SOCIAL PROFILES

POSITIVE

18% of employers found content on social sites that influenced them to hire a candidate.

50% A good feel for the candidate's personality
39% Truth about candidate's professional qualifications
38% Creativity
35% Solid communication skills
33% Well-rounded
19% Good references from others about the candidate
15% Awards and accolades received by candidate

NEGATIVE

35% of employers found content on social sites that caused them to **NOT** hire a candidate.

53% Provocative/inappropriate photographs or information
44% Content about them drinking alcohol or using drugs
35% Bad-mouthing about previous employers, co-workers or clients
29% Poor communication skills
26% Discriminatory comments
24% Lies about qualifications
20% Confidential information about candidate's previous employer

A new law was recently passed allowing third-party companies to begin compiling social media reports for other companies to use in order to screen potential hires. With this service becoming available in the near future, it's even more important than ever to keep your social media presence as clean as possible, says the Daily Muse.

Source: http://www.thedailymuse.com/job-search/social-screening-social-media