

Netrepping – The Pitfalls

Many employers are now taking advantage of social networking websites, such as Bebo, Myspace and Facebook to vet job candidates. This practice is known as netrepping. Individuals should be aware that the contents of their social networking profile may be publicly available and may impact on their reputation and future employment prospects. These online profiles can provide potential employers with access to a myriad of personal (and probably irrelevant) information about a prospective employee in a matter of seconds.

Employers are advised to exercise caution prior to undertaking any such online investigations, as the information obtained about a candidate may influence their opinion or impact upon the hiring decision.

Prior to undertaking any search, an employer should have already drawn up a job spec identifying key requirements for the job relevant to the candidate's ability to do the job. Issues relating to social behaviour should not be taken into consideration. The reality is that if information concerning protected characteristics under the Employment Equality Acts (such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.) is disclosed on a website and the individual is not hired or perceived not to be hired because of this, an employer may be exposed for a claim under the Acts.

By documenting and having an objective and transparent recruitment process based on a candidates ability to do the job in question and providing feedback, this will reduce the risk of a discrimination claim.