

Researchers discover links between Facebook profiles, personality and job success

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(Phys.org) -- Employers commonly examine an applicant's resume, cover letter, references and personality to evaluate how well the potential new employee may perform. Now, the applicant's Facebook profile may play a key role as well, according to an Auburn professor.

Kevin Mossholder, a professor in the Department of Management in the College of Business, is one of three researchers who recently published a study linking [Facebook](#) profiles to job performance. Mossholder, along with lead researcher Don Kluemper of Northern Illinois University and Peter Rosen of the University of Evansville, conducted two studies of more than 500 students to find links of Facebook profiles with personality, hiring potential and job success.

Facebook is a popular [social media](#) website that allows users to connect with friends to share pictures and follow what is going on in their lives. The website has more than 850 million users and has search features to make it easy to find persons for whom you are looking.

"The study was interesting because it provided us an opportunity to determine whether Facebook profiles yielded information about users' [personality traits](#)," said Mossholder. "The results suggest Facebook profiles can be used to produce personality ratings that are comparable with those developed from students' own self-ratings on paper-and-pencil personality inventories."

Companies lose money on employee turnover annually and are always

trying to find new ways to gauge the potential success of a new employee. While personality is only a small facet of what determines an employee's success, Facebook could have the potential to affect how companies view a person's chance at a [new job](#).

The study looked at five traits often examined in organizational studies: conscientiousness, [agreeableness](#), extraversion, [emotional stability](#) and [openness](#). These traits have been variously linked to decisions to hire individuals and estimates of their job success and compatibility with other workers. The study also suggests raters can be trained to view aspects of a job-seeker's Facebook profile to produce reliable assessments on these personality traits.

"Facebook will never take the place of traditional means of assessing [personality](#) but we've opened the door to more research on how social media might be used by companies in the future," said Mossholder. "Especially with the new timeline feature, it may become easier to track someone's personal and social tendencies over time."

The research focused on patterns, which develop over a long time. The researchers not only looked at how many friends a person has on Facebook and their hobbies but how they deal with stressful situations. Party pictures are among the first things to be deleted when job-seekers begin cleaning up their Facebook pages.

"A common question is, 'Should I take all the pictures with alcohol off my Facebook?'" said Mossholder. "In many cases pictures of you at a party could indicate you are extroverted and open to experience, which are good things. Of course if your employer sees compromising or out-of-control pictures of you, that could produce a different impression. It is important to use your best judgment."

The legality of employers viewing Facebook is an emerging issue, and,

with some companies now asking applicants for their Facebook passwords, the calls for legislative protections will only get stronger. However, social media has become part of the resume for some job applicants and they may try to figure out the perfect profile to help them get hired.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this study is that it is one of the first into the subject and could open the door to specific in-depth research studies into Facebook.

"The study wasn't designed to determine how to make your Facebook more acceptable to employers," Mossholder said. "My best advice for Facebook posting is to use common sense and be true to yourself."

Provided by Auburn University

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