What You Do If An Employer Asks For Your Facebook Password.

As employers become increasingly selective about whom they hire, it appears that some are taking the bold step of asking applicants for full access to their Facebook profiles, which means handing over one's username and password. It is unclear how widespread this trend is, but one thing is clear: while social media has been a boon to job seekers' ability to expand and utilize their network, there are many pitfalls associated with these sites that can derail a successful job search.

Job search authority John A. Challenger, CEO of global outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc., says employers should not have the right to ask for usernames and passwords and that candidates should refused to do so, but admits that not complying is likely to result in being eliminated from consideration. That is, unless states enact laws to protect job applicants' right to privacy.

"That being said, there are plenty of people out there who leave their social media profiles open for all to see," says Challenger. "It is important to understand that more and more employers are looking at whatever they can to inform the hiring decision. Whether it is a photo from a college party posted on Facebook or incendiary comment on Twitter, employers are looking for anything that reveals more than candidates typically share in interviews. Even a seemingly innocent remark on some social or political issue could put your candidacy at risk, if the hiring manager doesn't happen to agree with your point of view."

Currently there are no laws to prevent potential employers from asking for personal login information on a candidates social networking sites. This being said, some employers are beginning to ask the question, and as a job candidate should be prepared for this possibility, says hiring expert and job search guru Scott Schwefel, author of the book Get a Job Fast.

"If asked, you can always say no, but that response may be harmful to your chances," says Schwefel. "A much better way to shine in an interview might be to edit your social networking sites in such a way that they would reflect positively on you if in fact a potential employer did have your password, and did login and review your social networking history."

So what can job seekers do to maximize the use of social media for the job search while minimizing the risk?

"As a candidate, you have the choice of sharing or not sharing your social networking sites, but as long as you know there is a possibility of being asked, or having a potential look up what information you are already sharing publicly, the best option is to make sure all your social sites reflect well on you as a candidate, or delete your social sites until you have landed the job," says Schwefel. "The good news is that it is always your choice, but remember there are consequences with every option you choose."

Source: Matt Krumrie for The Minneapolis Workplace Examiner