

## 'Cyber vetting' and your 'Net rep'

Potential employers are increasingly resorting to 'cyber vetting' as a means of uncovering 'digital dirt' on future employees. This is according to headhunter Debbie Goodman-Bhyat, MD of Jack Hammer Executive Headhunters.

Noting the potential for online networking tools to backfire in the corporate world, Goodman-Bhyat MD of says, "Cyber-vetting is rife in the US and the UK and, as social networking tools gain popularity closer to home, employers in South Africa are increasingly using these tools to vet potential employees. At the same time Google is becoming ever-more revealing in the information it provides.

"In a recent poll of 500 employers in the UK, two thirds admitted to regularly carrying out Internet searches, including searches of social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and YouTube."

Goodman-Bhyat notes that an even larger poll of 2000 workers and 600 employees carried out by social networking site Viadeo suggested that one organisation in five carries out such checks – and that a quarter of those that did had rejected applicants as a result.

"Most people see these sites as a bit of harmless fun, but from a corporate perspective the information found could be quite detrimental, for example, there could be indications of alcohol abuse, a lack of respect for ones job or colleagues, or other evidence that a candidate may be involved in activities that didn't fit ethically with the hiring company. Anything that could put the company in a poor light would be frowned upon. And, with the advent of vitriolic personal blogs, 'freedom of speech' may turn out to be your enemy rather than your friend".

"As headhunters we gauge the qualities of a candidate through vigorous interviewing and reference checking, the results of which, combined with the candidates' experience, personality and work ethic, will determine whether they will be included in the shortlist we supply our client," continues Goodman-Bhyat.

"However, there is nothing stopping a prospective employer from conducting a little 'cyber investigation' of their own. And let's be honest, anything untoward they happen to stumble upon is likely to influence the decision they make."