

Study: Facebook profile beats IQ test in predicting job performance

March 2 2012, By Deborah Netburn

Can a person's Facebook profile reveal what kind of employee he or she might be? The answer is yes, and with unnerving accuracy, according to a new paper published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*.

And if you are smugly thinking to yourself, "I've carefully wiped my Facebook page of any incriminating photos, comments and wall posts," - well, it turns out you may still not have hidden your true nature from future employers: On a rating scale that examines key personality attributes that indicate future job success, you might get rated high in conscientiousness and possibly low on extroversion.

Other things a prospective employer might be able to glean from your Facebook profile is openness to new experiences (vacation pictures from a glacier off New Zealand), [emotional stability](#) (are your friends constantly offering you words of comfort?) and [agreeableness](#) (are you constantly arguing with "friends?").

In a series of two studies conducted by researchers at Northern Illinois University, the University of Evansville and Auburn University, six people with experience in human resources were asked to rate a sample of 500 people in terms of key personality traits using only the sample group's Facebook pages as a guideline.

The raters were told to spend roughly five to 10 minutes with each person's Facebook page, and work on the project for no longer than one and a half hours per day to avoid fatigue. They were asked to rate

members of the sample group on what is known as the "Big Five" personality traits, which includes extroversion, [conscientiousness](#), emotional stability, agreeableness and openness to new experiences. High scores on these traits are generally accepted by human resources managers as an indication of future good job performance.

Members of the sample group were asked to give a self-evaluation and took an [IQ test](#). In one study, researchers followed up with the employers of people in the sample group six months after their personality traits were rated, to ask questions about job performance.

The researchers found that the raters were generally in agreement about the personality traits expressed in the sample group's Facebook page, and that their ratings correlated strongly with self-rated [personality traits](#). More importantly, they also found that the Facebook ratings were a more accurate way of predicting a person's job performance than an IQ test.

Although the study does suggest that looking at a job applicant's Facebook page can prove useful for employers, Donald Kluemper, the lead researcher on the study, said employers need to tread carefully here.

A Facebook page can provide a lot of information that it would be illegal for an employer to ask of a candidate in a phone interview. For instance, a person's gender, race, age and whether they have a disability might all be visible on that person's Facebook page.

Still, a 2011 study conducted by the social media service Reppler found that 90 percent of recruiters and hiring managers look at an applicant's Facebook page whether they should or not.

"This was an effort to provide some evidence that checking on a person's Facebook page might be valuable and might be useful," Kluemper said.

"But I wouldn't go so far as to say that one study should be used as a reason to start using [Facebook](#) in hiring.

"Any other selection tool that is out there has been studied hundreds of thousands of times. Basically, there needs to be a lot more work done in this area."

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