How to protect your digital footprint

Posting that OMG status at 2am in the morning after a few too many always seems like a great idea at the time. You wake up to face the cold light of day with a slight cringe, but have you ever thought about the further implications of those 140 characters?

What is your digital footprint?

Your digital footprint is everything about you on the internet. Every inappropriate photo on facebook, every drunken tweet, every comment you have written and everything that has ever been written about you.

91% of employers said that they use social media to screen candidates before inviting them for an interview.

If you are looking for a new job, one single google search by a potential employer could massively jeopardise your career prospects. Don't let it. The internet is permanent, so be smart.

The fleeting nature of a tweet or a facebook status means you can send something offensive or incriminating without even realising it. And it's not just job seekers who need to be careful; Websites such as We Know What You Are Doing expose just how easy it is to track digital footprints, which can lead to written warnings, getting fired or even getting arrested.

However, chances are when you started using social media, sharing funny things with your pals was a much higher priority than projecting a professional front to potential employers. So, your digital footprint may already looking a bit shady.

Here's some things you can do:

1. **Google yourself.** It may seem a pretentious, but this is where recruiters will start. Use speech marks around your name when you search (e.g. "Joe Bloggs") and don't forget to check images. From here you can delete anything inappropriate.
2. **Check your privacy settings**. Make sure you know exactly what the public sees when they view your profile. A useful tool to help you with this is http://adjustyourprivacy.com/

3. **Update your profile pictures.** These are the images most likely to appear to the public. A general rule of thumb is – if your Mum wouldn't like it, don't post it (that includes the one of you passed out with the fake moustache).
4. **Do a Social Media audit.** Think of your online persona as an extension of your CV. http://www.reppler.com/ is a great tool to check our history for inappropriate stuff posted on your social media.
5. **Utilise LinkedIn.** This is a fantastic platform to really showcase your work experience and achievements. Make sure you get recommendations and connect with as many people as possible.

With a clean digital profile you can attend that interview with confidence. Remember, it's important to demonstrate professionalism on and off line.

Feel free to let us know you views (appropriately – it's all part of your footprint!) below…