

## Internet Imprudence Can Ruin You With a Single Click

**D**igital Dirt is the catchphrase for unfavorable information about us that is floating around the Internet in the form of photos, blog postings, cached messages on social sites, and similar cyber trails. Technology has made it quite simple for each of us to publish and distribute our opinions and tirades to millions of people around the world, but many are discovering regrettable consequences of their ways. Want to shout to the world, *“Yes, I inhaled and I think marijuana should be legalized.”* Or, *“Check out my wild toga party pics.”* Or *“Look at me in my new sexy bikini.”* Think twice.

**Unflattering personal information on the Internet can end a job search with a single mouse click. If you’ve never heard of “digital dirt” before, it is time you understand what it is, recognize how to prevent it, know how to find it, and learn how to clean it.**

### Why Is It Important

Employers by the droves are now plugging candidate names in search engines and job applicants have actually been eliminated from consideration because of information uncovered online.

### How Do You Find It

Okay, so you think you have some digital dirt. (Oops!) How do you find it? Easy - narcisurf. What’s narcisurf...? This is when you do an Internet search on yourself. Type your name in all the popular search engines and meta search engines on a regular basis and carefully review the results. What you see is what employers see.



**HINT** - enclose your name in quotes to return results only where your first name and surname are contiguous on the Internet.

**There are two ways to control your digital dirt: preventive and eradication. As with any internal control, preventive is best, but when it is too late and the damage is done, you need to take remedial steps. But eradicating digital dirt is not easy, so take heed now and start exercising restraint when posting comments or pictures on the Internet.**

### How Do You Prevent It

- Be discreet, and refrain from posting damaging comments on blogs.
- Consider professional networks over social networks.
- Set your profile to “private” on social networks, making it viewable only by persons you choose.
- Read what you are about to post through the eyes of a prospective employer before hitting the “enter” key.
- Create your own on-line presence. Start a blog or a website and present yourself in a positive and approving light.

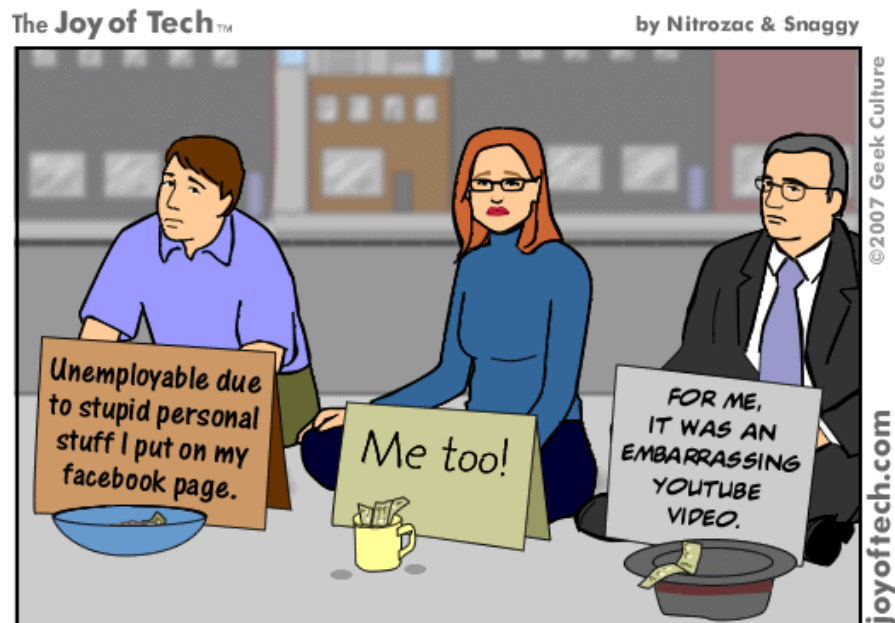
- Use only respectable e-mail addresses; not ones like sexylady@xxx.com.
- Pay attention to photos and videos you post online, and also to those posted by your paparazzi friends.
- Consider secure on-line chat tools that literally shred your chat after 10 minutes. A popular beta tool is **BIGSTRING** (<http://www.bigstringim.com/>).

### How Do You Eradicate It

- Block or delete comments about you posted by others.
- Contact the webmaster and attempt to have the information removed if you find web pages cast you in a negative light. This is not always achievable, but it is worth a try. Remember though, legally webmasters have no obligation to remove published information that is true, regardless of how unflattering it may be to you.

### The Bottom Line

Our Presidential candidates in the year 2040 will have had a My Space or a Facebook in the year 2008, so you are in plenty of good company, but if you want that job of your dreams, heed the words of Founding Father Benjamin Franklin when he said “*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,*” and start paying close attention to your surfing habits. © Dennis Abenanty: 2008



Signs of the social networking times.

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