

1 CASE

The Use of Social Media for Employee Recruitment and Selection

Karen Johnston is a 55-year-old director of a small health planning agency in an urban area of the South. Her agency employs a total of 18 staff members, most of whom are female. As a graduate of the MBA program with a Healthcare concentration, she has been an active alumnus of that program at the local state university. She also serves as chairperson of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for the program and has taken two student interns a year for her agency over the past eight years. The CAB advises the program faculty concerning curriculum, accreditation issues, internships, job placements, scholarships, etc.

Recently, Johnston was asked by the program's internship director to select one master's student intern for the upcoming fall semester and she agreed to do so. He then forwarded to her the resumes of three students for her consideration as he had done in the past. Previously, she had considered grade point average, previous work experience, and career goals in making her decision concerning who to interview and who to select for the internship.

This time she decided to also see if any of the internship candidates had posted profiles on social media Web sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. To her surprise, all three (one male and two females) had posted profiles on at least one of these social media Web sites. Two of the three posted information regarding their student extracurricular activities, work activities, family, and friends. Karen found those to be helpful in helping her form a more complete picture of the internship applicant. However, the third profile posted on Facebook by one of the female applicants shocked her. She found semi-nude pictures, allusions to heavy drinking, and a comment that Lisa "was looking for a hot guy to bring out my wild side."

Johnston immediately called the internship coordinator and told him that she would like to interview the first two students and would select one for the internship. However, she told him that the third applicant should never have been allowed into the masters program and that he needed to have a long "heart-to-heart" talk with her if she was to have a future in the field of health services administration. She also suggested that this student might be counseled to seek employment in another field altogether. Then when the CAB met, Johnston described her experience to the faculty and executive board members. When the program director explained that faculty have little control over the personal lives of students, Johnston suggested that perhaps they need to counsel students concerning "professional behavior."

QUESTIONS

1. What lessons can you draw from this case regarding how students, employers, and faculty can use social media such as Facebook during the recruitment and selection process?
2. What policies, if any, should employers develop concerning the use of social media for various purposes, including employee recruitment and selection?