

THE INDELIBLE RAMIFICATIONS OF INTERNET COMMUNICATION

As a parent of young children growing up in the age of technology, you read more and more about the long term implications of what they place on the internet after the creation and evolution of websites such as "My Space". I just recently attended an internet research seminar that was both enlightening and terrifying at the same time. The amount of information that is available on the internet to those who know where to look is awe inspiring and everyone must remember that anything placed on the internet can never truly be deleted. Working with tools such as "wayback machines" that allow you to go back in time on a certain website to access information from a certain date and time is just one way that information is gathered unbeknownst to most average web users who are not technological gurus. You see, the average person is not told about the latest tracking devices because that would defeat the purpose of the creator.

Why am I stating this? Because as employers and parents we must stay current on what is out there so that we can adequately do our jobs and yet protect those from the impact of thoughtless indiscretions. Future employers of this generation will no doubt retrieve information publicly accessible on the web and archived in available search engines to determine whether or not an individual is a good candidate. Employers are already scouting "My Space" to see what prospective candidates are posting and probably for good reason. What can this information tell you? It is fathomable that information as to honor, integrity and judgment might be attainable as perceived by the reader but at the same time, what discretionary filters will you use not to negate a candidate that just made a prior poor judgment? How much information, as the future of this technology evolves at an ever startling rate, will employers be required to know about so that they are not determined to be negligent in hiring? I raise these issues because no matter whether we like it or not, we have to stay on top of this technological revolution enough to know what's out there to protect our workplaces and our personal lives.

I say these things to get you thinking because the law has not yet caught up. Information on credit history, criminal history, ordinance citations, personal information on "My Space", etc. is all readily available. People can track if they want to, where you live, what property you own (including boats, houses, land), etc. We still have to protect information that is legally legislated as protected information but how much protection applies to information that is publicly and willingly transmitted by the individual?

I have personally instructed my children never to ever put personal information on any website. This may seem fun, but the permanency of the action is not reversible. Seemingly innocent juvenile acts may come back to haunt into the future. None of us are just employers, we are also Aunts, Uncles, grandparents, parents and friends. While I don't have any answers, I do have one word of advice, keep up to date in some manner on the pluses and minuses of the technology available and set consistent practices as to how you are going to use it.