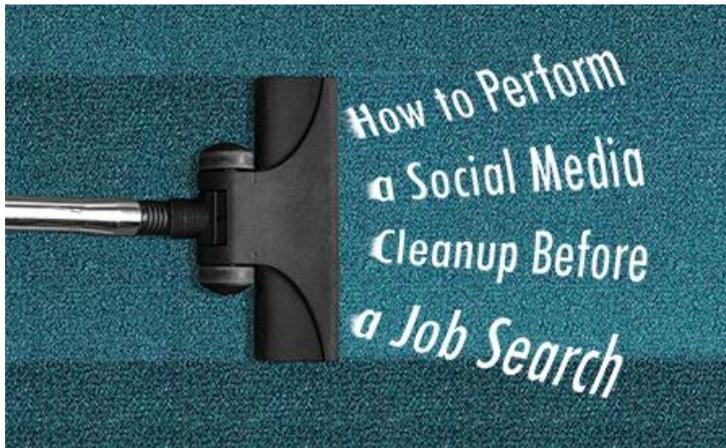# How to Perform a Social Media Cleanup Before a Job Search

By **Erica Urie** in **Business**

Performing a social media cleanup has become an important part of the job search process. Whether you realize it or not, what you post online becomes part of your personal brand, and those pictures from that one summer camping trip you barely remember from your early 20s can come back to haunt you. Potential employers can and do check job candidates' personal social media accounts, making social media etiquette an important factor to keep in mind. How you are portrayed online can affect an employer's impression of you before you even meet face-to-face.

To begin a social media cleanup, run a Google search on yourself to see what a potential employer might find. It is likely that your various social media accounts will appear, which employers will look at to gain more insight into your personality, opinions, and lifestyle. This is where understanding how to present yourself professionally via personal branding and social media etiquette is important. Note: if you aren't willing to change your online habits, consider changing your privacy settings to hide your activity.
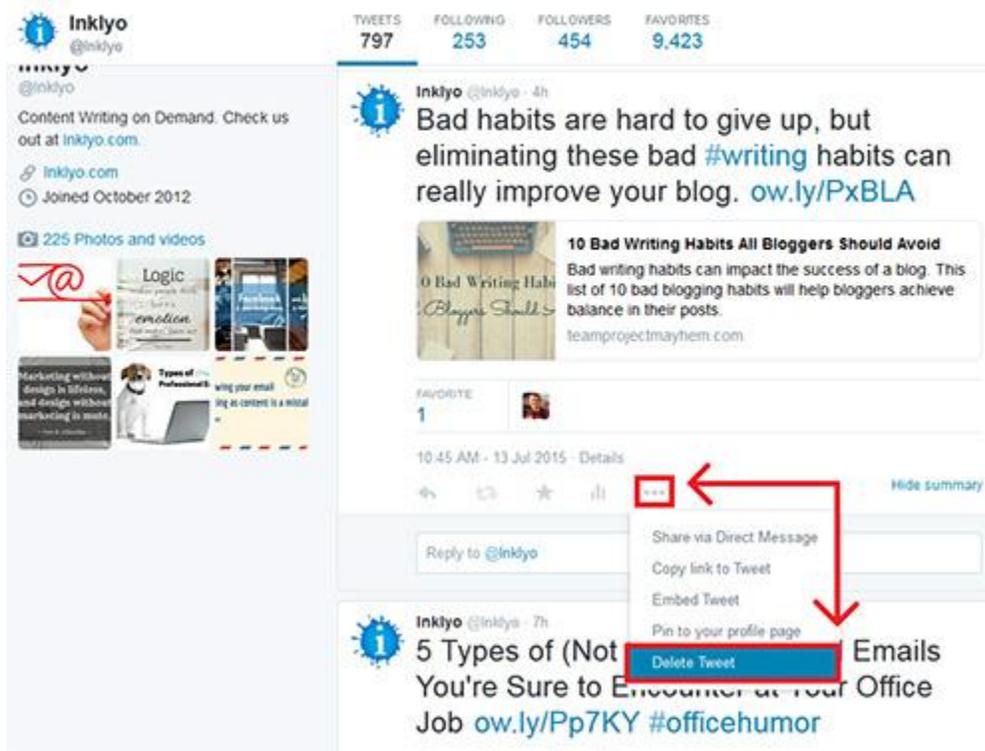
Twitter

What to remove

Everyone needs to rant sometimes, and Twitter has become an outlet for many peoples' pet peeves, strong opinions, and personal views. A well-worded tweet reflecting on a trending news story is one thing, but if an employer finds a Twitter account filled with complaints about work and coworkers, or repeated tweets to other companies in attempts to get free stuff, it might make the employer second-guess whether you're a fit with the company. It's also a good idea to make sure you're presenting a good impression of yourself, and while the occasional cat meme is harmless enough, keep the vulgar language or pictures to a minimum.

How to remove a tweet

1. Sign in to Twitter.
2. Click on your profile.
3. Choose the tweet you wish to delete, and select the ellipsis ("…") at the bottom of the tweet itself to view more options.
4. Select "Delete Tweet," and confirm that you wish to delete it.

Personal branding

Personal branding on Twitter is easy because of the simplicity of the Twitter profile. Make sure you provide a professional profile picture that reflects you, your business, and your niche. For example, if

you're a hobby photographer, make sure your profile picture showcases your photography style. Your profile bio is limited to 160 characters, but you should remember to include the most relevant keywords associated with your personal brand or niche.

Take your time writing your bio, and make it interesting by being authentic and true to your lifestyle. You can also include hashtags in your bio that directly connect to aspects of your brand. Be sure to include your website address or link to another social media account. If an employer finds a well-presented Twitter profile highlighting your accomplishments and talents, the employer is more likely to gain a good first impression of your value as an employee.

Facebook

What to remove

Facebook can be especially problematic because so many people have used the social network for years, and it is possible to be tagged in posts and pictures that you may not have written or posted. Social etiquette has changed over the years, depending on what stage of life you were in when you began using social media. For many millennials who opened their first Facebook account nearly a decade ago, this makes a social media cleanup essential.

It may be a good idea to remove or hide any questionable pictures from your college or university days. (You know—the ones that feature beer bottles and strange outfits.) It's also a good idea to scan your status updates, shares, and posts to remove anything too extreme; you want to make sure your rant about ignorant people or that post including a video of Kim Kardashian selfies isn't the first thing a potential employer sees. On Facebook, much of this information can also be hidden instead of deleted.

How to remove or hide pictures and posts

Photo Albums

1. Log in to your Facebook account, and go to your profile.
2. Select the Photos tab.
3. Select the Albums tab.
4. You can make the photo album private from the Settings menu in the bottom right-hand corner of each album.
5. You can delete an album by clicking on the album and choosing to delete it from the Settings tab in the top right-hand corner.

6. Confirm that you want to delete the album.

Pictures

1. Log in to your Facebook account, and go to your profile.
2. Select the Photos tab.
3. You can delete photos individually by going to the Photos tab (for all photos you have uploaded to an album or your timeline) or by searching for them in the Albums tab. To delete, hover over a photo, and select Delete This Photo from the Edit option found in the top right-hand corner.

4. Confirm that you want to delete the picture.
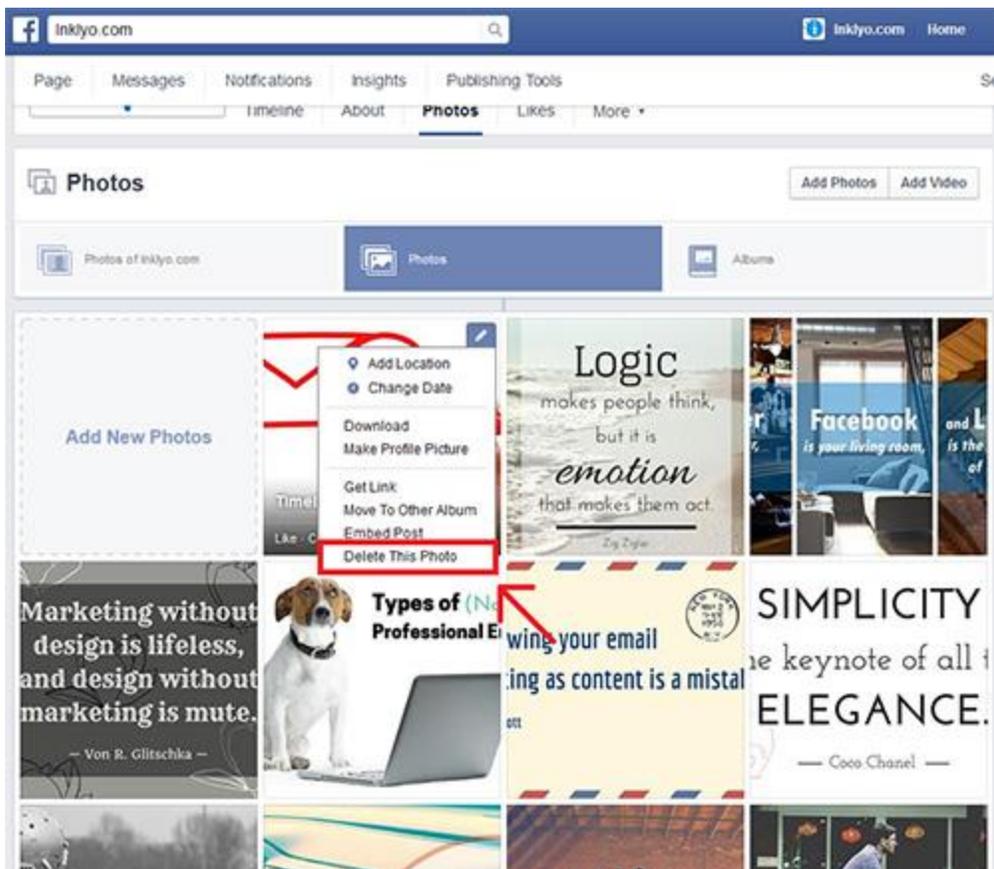
5. To hide the picture, choose the option Hide from Timeline.You can remove yourself from pictures in which others have tagged you by hovering over the photo and choosing the Remove Tag option from the Edit feature found in the top right-hand corner.

Status Updates and Posts

1. Log in to your Facebook account, and go to your profile.
2. Scroll down your timeline, and find the post or status update you wish to remove.
3. Select the downward arrow in the top right-hand corner of your post, and select Delete.
4. Confirm that you want to delete the post.
5. To hide a status or post, select the Hide from Timeline option from the same menu.
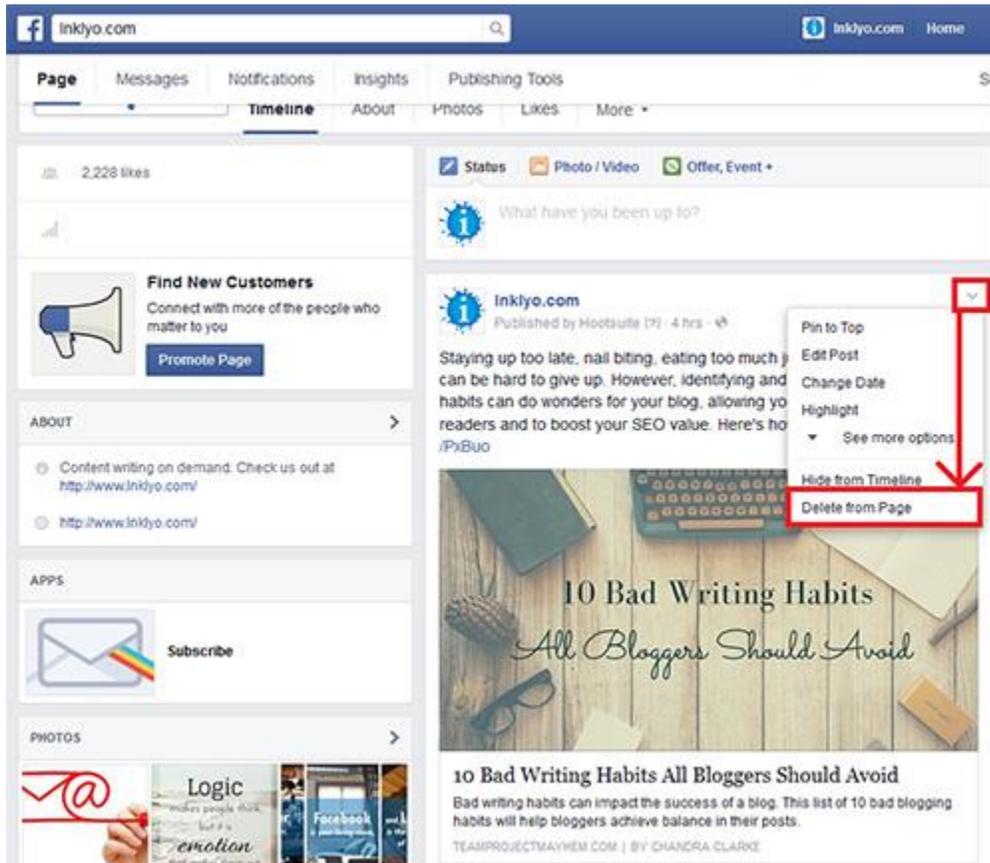
Personal branding

Personal branding on Facebook is not something many people think about in relation to their personal accounts. But Facebook can work for you both personally and professionally. Make sure you present a professional profile picture and cover image. This doesn't mean they have to be stuffy or formal, but high-quality, appropriate photos will significantly contribute to others' impressions of you.

Fill in all of your professional information—potential employers might check this against your application. Follow groups and pages that relate to who you are and your interests; presenting the most authentic version of yourself online is a key part of personal branding. Be aware of what you

post on Facebook, and perhaps substitute that extra cute cat mash-up video for a think piece on something about which you are passionate.

Instagram
What to remove

Like Facebook, you might want to consider a social media cleanup of your Instagram feed, considering that the two platforms are so closely intertwined (and that Instagram is now owned by Facebook). Remove any questionable photos that may not show you in the best light if an employer were to stumble across them, or you can set your account to private. Removing any off-color quotes or images is also an important aspect of social media etiquette.

How to remove

1. Log in to Instagram on your phone or tablet—pictures cannot be deleted from the computer dashboard.
2. Go to your profile.
3. Select the photo you wish to delete.
4. View more options by selecting the ellipsis (". . .").
5. Select Delete from the Options menu.
6. Confirm that you wish to delete the photo.

Personal branding

Instagram has become a significant platform for personal branding. To utilize the app to its best potential, upload a professional profile picture, and really consider what you post. You are more likely to gain followers if your images are edited in a similar manner so that the photos flow together nicely or have the same aesthetic. Try to showcase photos that you have taken yourself that reveal who you are and what your lifestyle is like in an authentic way.

Conclusion

The key to knowing what to post on social media, especially when embarking on a job search, is to consider each post from the perspective of someone who doesn't know you. Ask yourself, "If this one post were the only thing somebody knew about me, how would I come across?"

Even though your friends and family may know that a certain status update is meant to be sarcastic or that you only use the word *totes* ironically (s-u-u-ure), remember that potential employers don't know you well and are still in the process of forming their opinions about you. Make sure your social media accounts help them form accurate and positive opinions that reassure them of your professionalism and reliability.

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