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Law school applicants face online scrutiny in admissions process

Administrators say the public sites are fair game but LSAT scores, grades are ultimate decider.

By Kevin Lee

Law school candidates now have more to worry about than their LSAT scores, grades and written statements when preparing their applications.

Admission officers are turning to Google, Facebook and other websites to screen applicants online, and the new practice is likely to become part of the admissions process as officers and institutions continue to gain familiarity with the sites.

Survey data of 128 American Bar Association-accredited law schools released Monday by Kaplan Test Preparation found that 41 percent of law school admission administrators used Google to learn more about candidates while 37 percent used Facebook.

'If you're going to invite us online to take a look at what you've done, then the reality is all of what's online about you is right there at our fingertips.'

- Kristin Theis-Alvarez

UC Irvine School of Law Assistant Dean of Admissions Janice Austin said that while such sites are not "systematically used" in her school's admissions process, when searches are performed, the results can cut both ways. For instance, while numerous pub crawl pictures may take away from an applicant, blog posts documenting unique experiences could buttress a candidate's stock.

"The application, in so many ways, is both a private component of an applicant but also a very public image of who they are," she said. "I don't see why whatever public image you have electronically would be treated with any less value than what you have on paper."

Kristin Theis-Alvarez, associate director of admissions at UC Berkeley School of Law, has noticed a greater number of candidates including online content, such as YouTube videos and mentions in news articles, as part of their applications.

"If you're going to invite us online to take a look at what you've done, then the reality is all of what's online about you is right there at our fingertips," she said.

Jeff Thomas, director of pre-law programs at Kaplan Test Preparation, said LSAT scores and grades are still the top indicators for admissibility.

"[Online screening] is often a quick check when a law school wants to learn more about a prospective student," Thomas said. "A quick check can mean looking at the digital trail of an applicant to see what else [he or she] may bring to the table, bad or good, that can make the decision process easier for on-the-fence candidates."

SPECIAL REPORT

Top Neutrals

Top Neutrals



Wednesday, October 26, 2011

U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit Genocide and war crimes claims against Rio Tinto can proceed

The Alien Tort Statute covers corporations accused of genocide and war crimes abroad, a splintered 9th Circuit en banc panel held Tuesday in a major opinion regarding American courts' overseas reach.

Intellectual Property

Apple's Jobs vowed to destroy Google's Android, biography reveals

Apple Inc.'s legal crusade against Google Inc.'s Android operating system came from the top, according to a biography of Steve Jobs published Monday, just 19 days after his death.

Law Practice

Law school applicants face online scrutiny in admissions process

Admission officers are turning to Google, Facebook and other websites to screen applicants online and the new practice is likely to become part of the admissions process as officers and institutions continue to gain familiarity with the sites.

In-house counsel facing less fiscal strain, survey says

In-house legal departments have been feeling less fiscal strain on their operations as a sluggish economy begins to recover, according to a survey released by the Association of Corporate Counsel.

Health Care & Hospital Law

Pay-for-delay agreement decline in 2011

Patent litigation settlement agreements between pharmaceutical companies and generic drugmakers dropped from 31 in fiscal year 2010 to 28 in 2011.

Litigation

SEC drops charges against former Deloitte Tax partner

The Securities and Exchange Commission dismissed its insider trading claims against a

Raizza Ty, a first year law student at the University of San Francisco, said she and her peers expected admission officers might look at their online profiles once they had applied for law school.

"I do think that because they are interested with how this person may appear in a professional setting, that it makes sense that they screen applicants," she said. "Because eventually as lawyers, we are going to be representing law firms and clients or government agencies, and in that sense we have to remain conservative online."

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former Deloitte Tax LLP partner Tuesday.

Real Estate

Firms fear new accounting rule

Real estate lawyers say they're highly concerned about possible impacts of proposed changes by national and international accounting boards requiring corporate lessees to report lease expenses on their balance sheets.

Discipline

State Bar discipline backlog may be systemic

The State Bar will eliminate much of its discipline backlog by the end of the year, but data in a new report raises questions about whether the bar can keep the backlog at zero.

Real Estate

Faced with threat of vacancy, landlords look to pop-up tenants

Short "pop-up" leases are becoming the deal of choice for many shopping center landlords who are struggling to lure tenants in the down economy, but the deals can present challenges for the lawyers drafting them.

Litigation

City sues Hollywood hotel over big signs

The city of Los Angeles has sued the Roosevelt Hotel LLC in Hollywood for allegedly erecting oversized advertisements without a permit.

California Courts of Appeal

Panel denies attorney fees in former clerk's suit against firm

A San Francisco lawyer who lost a wage-and-hour case against his former firm won't have to pay the firm's \$120,000 legal bill.

Litigation

Dole sees objection to pesticide settlement

Occidental Chemical Corp. has objected to a global settlement between Dole Food Co. Inc. and plaintiffs who claim they were injured by a pesticide Dole used on its Central America banana farms in the 1970s.

Letter to the Editor

Advice could hurt employers in litigation

A reader responds to "*Protecting against class actions: a blueprint for business leaders and their counsel.*"

U.S. Supreme Court

High court declines to hear tax evasion case

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to intervene on behalf of a former UBS AG client under investigation for overseas tax evasion Tuesday, forcing him to turn over foreign bank records despite his privileges against self-incrimination.