


GOOGLE

Matters

 oogle is an integral part of life today and only the foolish ignore it and hope for the best. Fortune 500 CEO's make it a point to regularly research themselves. Most people assume whatever they read is the truth unless they have reason to believe otherwise.

Even the most successful and popular superintendents cannot grant every request and keep everyone happy. Pushing for change makes some people very uncomfortable. Balancing a budget often limits employee raises. The likelihood that a reporter or blogger overheard

some exasperated soul grumble about something increases every year. Unfortunately, the internet is unforgiving and forever, so any bad news won't just go away.

When you decide to apply for a new position, conducting an internet search on yourself is an absolute must. Internet searches by one or more board members and a number of community members are virtually guaranteed. Advanced preparation will give you time to carefully decide how deal with any unflattering results and avoid unpleasant surprises.

Search using your full name and current position. Conduct multiple searches using variations on your name, nickname, titles, district names, etc. and even try different search engines. Take the time to be thorough. Don't ignore even the smallest detail or innuendo that might raise a concern and don't minimize what you might not fully understand.

If you are fortunate enough to find nothing negative or only a few minor criticisms, count yourself lucky. Anything ugly or reason for concern is reason for cautious and careful analysis. It may be tempting to hope readers will assume it's out of context or exaggerated or that it will be offset by all the good news about you, but that is nearly always a bad idea.

One of the most effective ways to deal with unflattering reports during a job search is to reach out personally to the consultant or personnel administrator in charge and explain the situation. Summarize the situation and give your perspective; for example, while others disagreed, your duty was to what was in the best interest of your organization. Make an effort to be confident,

realistic and savvy, not defensive, nervous or insecure. Express appreciation for the opportunity to explain. This approach is likely to gain recognition for honesty and integrity and move you forward in the process. They are certain to be grateful to you for preventing the possibility of embarrassment if they were unprepared to answer questions.

In the event the personal contact is not possible, an option is to address the concern in the application letter. It should be a short paragraph recognizing potential concern, noting that it is easily misinterpreted, and assuring them that you look forward to the opportunity to explain. This will serve to inform those who paper-screen and prevent them from rejecting you without more information.

Particularly damaging accusations or comments may require a more comprehensive approach. There are sophisticated services available at a cost to monitor their clients' news suppress negative news and comments by making good news the top search engine results or taking legal steps to deal with the source of disparaging content. Both should be carefully researched.

Membership in the National Association of School Superintendents enjoy Online Reputation Management as an affinity benefit; it includes a consultation, report and strategy to strengthen your online professional presence for \$250. Visit <http://beepageone.com/acsa-online-reputation-assessment>.

In any case, it is vital to be prepared. You won't be sorry if you do and you might very well be sorry if you don't.