

Using Social Media in Your Job Search

Social Media is rapidly becoming one of the most important tools of the job search process. Over the last few years the ways that employers find and recruit talent have evolved which has changed the job search market for both the job seeker as well as the employer. This means that strategies that may have worked for your last job search may not still be effective for today's job search.

Although adapting to these changes may at times be challenging, you can use this information to your advantage. Incorporating social media in your job search strategy can not only provide great information and opportunities to connect with employers, but may also allow you to shape your personal/professional branding for the industry you are interested in.

Why use social media?

Three of the most common social media sites used during the job search process are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. While there are many other sites, including blogs, that are used to connect employers to prospective applicants these are the three most widely used. Each serve their own purpose, but the core reasons for utilizing them in your search apply to most, if not all, social media platforms including:

- Make networking connections- Using social media platforms you can introduce you to key players in your industry, as well as help you identify potential mentors and colleagues.
- Identify connections who work at companies where you have applied or are interested in working- Mutual connections including fellow alumni, or previous co-workers can provide valuable insight to the company. Having someone on the inside can be the difference between getting the job or not even having your resume reviewed.
- Research companies – employers use social media as a way of providing potential candidates with information. By reviewing their page, you can learn about their products and services, access listings of job descriptions for positions within the company, and get contact information.
- Communicate with your network that you are job searching – they may not know of anything at that moment, but will be able to keep you in mind if they hear about openings in the future.

Tips for using social media

First, decide which accounts you will use as your professional site(s). Although there are many options, for professional or job seeking purposes most people choose to utilize LinkedIn, and Twitter is another popular choice. The majority, although certainly not all, of professionals keep their Facebook profile privacy settings strictly for personal use.

Here are some tips to maximize your social media job search experience:

- Be consistent across all of your sites. How you chose to represent your skills, experience and value are part of your professional branding. Ensure that the image of yourself that you want to be reflected across all your social networking platforms is one that reinforces your professionalism, passion and talent.
- Announce that you are actively job searching and post a link to your resume if possible. (Think twice on this one if you are currently employed and you don't want your employer to know you are searching.)
- Don't be afraid to use Facebook in your search even if you use it strictly in your personal life. The people you are "friends" with likely care about you and want to see you succeed. Let them know that you are looking!
- Monitor your profile privacy settings (see below)
- Research hiring managers on LinkedIn and Twitter. Learning about key players in the industries or companies can give you great tips and insights into who they are what they value.
- Include your professional account URL's on your resume (e.g. LinkedIn)

Tips for LinkedIn

- Have a complete and robust profile, including a professional profile picture
- Pay attention to key words that would drive potential employers to your profile and include them in your headline, summary, skills and work experience sections
- Personalize your LinkedIn URL and include it in your e-mail auto signature.
- Join groups that align with your professional interests, such as alumni groups, networking groups and trade associations.
- Follow organizations and companies you might be interested in working for
- Comment on postings and share interesting articles to spark conversation and draw users to your profile

Online presence

Whether or not you are using Social Media for your job search, it is important to have a . According to a survey done by CareerBuilder.com, 37% of employers use social networks to screen potential job candidates and some even base their hiring decision on what they find.

Your first task is to be aware of the current state of your online presence. Begin with a Google search on your name. What are the first results that appear? Do these results represent you in a way that makes you desirable to potential employers?

If you choose to publicly share content about yourself on social media sites, take the time to make sure that it will work to your advantage and not against you. Here are some tips for cleaning up and maintaining your professional online presence:

- Focus on the positive – ensure that the most relevant and helpful professional information shows up first in your online search. The more complete and effective your LinkedIn profile is, the better use it will be to set the standard for your brand in an online search. You can also consider buying the url domain of your first and last name to create an online portfolio or professional site.
- Request to have photos untagged or removed if they are unflattering or unprofessional.
- Never post or comment negatively about network connections, your job search, or anything career or job related. If you have done so in the past, remove the post or comment.

Privacy controls

Whatever your reason is for using social media, it is important to make good use of privacy controls, and this applies double when used in the job search process. Read the privacy policy and check your privacy settings for every single social media account you use – you want to make sure your personal accounts are extremely restrictive (most commonly Facebook) but your professional accounts are more open and easily accessible (e.g. LinkedIn) to out of network viewers.