

CAREER CORNER

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Sharon Givler, Director
Gwen Miller, Assist. Director
Susan Donmoyer, Assistant

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Social Networking

...and its implications for your job search



Chances are, the concept of social networking is as common to you as the idea of having dinner with friends, right? Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogging, and any number of other media platforms are utilized multiple times per day by most students. Did I say students? I meant most people. It seems as though almost everyone engages in some form of social networking. While this is great for keeping in touch with friends, it is not so great for maintaining privacy from everyone else. Who would care about your online profile other than family and friends? Actually, you might be surprised how often hiring managers do an internet search of potential candidates. Depending on your online reputation, this could be detrimental to your job search.



According to a recent New York Times article (*Is Your Online Identity Spoiling your Chances?*):

*"Little hard research has been done on how hiring managers use the Internet to vet applicants. But **you should assume that they are at least looking you up** on search engines... Job seekers should also give their Facebook page a close look. Despite privacy settings, he said, it's not inconceivable that a potential employer could become a friend of one of your friends and thereby gain access to your page."*



It may seem strange to you that an employer would take the time to check out your online persona, but this is a trend that you don't want to ignore. Here are a few steps to help keep your social networking habits from raising any eyebrows.



1. Ensure **any** and **all** privacy settings are in place. Check these settings frequently.
2. Be **very** aware of pictures you upload and those you are tagged in. Un-tag yourself from anything questionable and inform your friends that you would prefer those not be public.
3. Monitor comments/tweets/blog responses/etc that are put on your pages. You don't want to be judged based on another person's comment.
4. Think critically about the groups that you join or people you follow - you may not want a potential employer to be aware of your personal preferences/interests.
5. Consider joining LinkedIn to give you a professional place to network. (see below)



We are not suggesting you stop using social media or that you strip them of your personality - only that you think critically about what your online persona may look like to a potential employer. The best advice? **If you wouldn't want your grandma/mother/faculty/boss to see it, don't put it online.**

LinkedIn® ...a professional alternative

LinkedIn is designed to be purely professional, allowing you to network, become active in groups or organizations in your field, and provide additional sources for conducting employer research. As you think about your job search, creating an account on LinkedIn can benefit you. For starters, the act of creating your profile is similar to gathering information for your resume. You can participate in discussions relating to your field by joining groups and/or following companies. There is also a Jobs tab that may be helpful, depending on what you're looking for.

Keep in mind, as a student you may find LinkedIn to be more beneficial for the research component rather than networking. Check out the following website to access a few information-packed student checklists:

Student Checklists: <http://careerservices.linkedin.com/>

[Build a Professional Profile](#); [Network Professionally](#); [Find Your Career Passion](#);
[Conduct Essential Employer Research](#); [Job Hunting Tips](#); [LinkedIn Etiquette Guide](#)

Make social networking work for you

...in the job search

Have you noticed how many companies have their own Facebook page? Or how frequently you hear the words “follow us on Twitter?” Or how many company’s publish blogs or newsletters? All of these sources of information are invaluable to eager job-seekers. A recent article, [10 Social Media Job Search Tips](#), offers advice on how to maximize the benefits of social media to help give you a new angle on your job search.



1. Choose Your Career Path Wisely.
2. People Search.
3. Produce Content to Attract Industry Attention.
4. Create a Web Video Resume.
5. Join Twitter and Use it Purposefully.
6. Join Groups on LinkedIn.
7. Do you use CareerBuilder & Monster? How about Blogs?
8. Use Search Engine Marketing.
9. Comment on Blogs.
10. Share across multiple networks.

Source: *Social Media Commando-Online Guerrilla Marketing for Entrepreneurs (July 24, 2009)*

Whether you can see yourself applying all of the above tips or only incorporating one, utilizing social media to network and find additional job leads could be that little something extra to help you succeed. However, your efforts can do more damage than good if you aren’t smart about how you go about it. For example, over-using social media for your job hunt might come across as desperate. Or, employers might wonder if you have anything else to spend your time on, thus questioning your future work performance. It is also easy to become comfortable when you believe you are hidden behind your computer screen, making it less likely that you’ll maintain professionalism in your writing, comments, and overall web presence. After all, if you draw attention to yourself through social media, you must be prepared for others to search out all available information about you online.

Bottom line: adding a few social media techniques to your tool box might help you stand out from other candidates; just make sure you are standing out for the right reasons! If you have any questions on how to appropriately incorporate social media into your job search, seek input from others in your intended field (perhaps by reaching out in discussion boards/LinkedIn Groups/ Twitter/etc) to help determine the do’s and don’ts of your industry.



...prior to an interview

As you prepare for an interview, one of the most valuable ways to spend your time is by learning as much as you can about the company with which you are applying. Through employer research, you can learn what the company is looking for, what its mission, values and goals are, and what the overall culture of the organization is like. With this insight, you will be able to confidently respond to questions by providing examples and illustrations that are in line with the company’s needs.

What are some of the best ways to conduct employer research? Speaking with a current employee of the company is certainly beneficial if you have the opportunity. You can also read literature or media articles and browse company websites to grasp the most current initiatives/trends. Each of these methods offer substantial information that will help you prepare. However, we would also encourage you to utilize social networking/media forums that the company or its employees are engaged in. For example:

- See if the company has a LinkedIn group that you can join. Read current and past discussion board topics to get a feel for employee perspectives and company initiatives.
- Check through your LinkedIn contacts to see if you know anyone who works within that company. You can also ask to be introduced if one of your contacts has a connection.
- If available, follow the company on Twitter. You may learn of networking or Open House events to attend. You can also learn about employment opportunities or current trends within the company in real time.
- Check for companies on Facebook. But, before you ‘Like’ them or join their group, be sure and thoroughly check over and cleanse your own profile.
- Read company blogs. Blogs are often more informal and can allow you to gain insight and perspectives that you might not get from the website alone.

With these tools at your disposal, it’s silly NOT to use them to your advantage!

