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The dos and don’ts of networking online

How to leverage social media to find a great career.

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How important is social media when looking for a job? According to CareerBuilder.com, up to 70 percent of employers are looking at your social media profiles when considering you for a job. Sixty-one percent of employers are seeking information that supports your qualifications for the job, 50 percent are looking to see if you have a professional online persona at all, 37 percent are looking for what other people are posting about you and 20 percent are looking for any reason at all not to hire you. How are they finding you? More than half (69 percent) are using online search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing to do their research. Knowing all of this, it’s important to take a serious look at your online presence.

Here are some basic “don’ts” for networking online:

* Don’t complain about your job or your coworkers.
* Don’t post when you’re supposed to be working.
* Don’t make fun of your boss or team.
* Don’t make fun of clients or donors.
* Don’t make fun of a job or job offer.
* If you manage your company’s social media, be VERY careful not to post on their page thinking it’s yours.
* Be wary of posting your political leanings on your social media page.
* Don’t assume that your social pages are clean and professional.
* Never lie on social media (especially on LinkedIn).
* Don’t erase everything because you’ve panicked.

It’s important to understand that with all of the warnings about what not to do, there are many ways you can impress potential employers using social media.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is one of the most important social media sites for career building. One of the best ways to make your profile easy-to-find is by [customizing your LinkedIn URL](https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/87/customizing-your-public-profile-url?lang=en). You can include this URL in a variety of places (e.g., resume, business cards). Once someone is on your profile page, it’s also important to create a bold headline that tells people exactly who you are. When recruiters are searching for candidates, it’s the headline that shows up in the search results. Make sure your headline stands out. In addition to a strong headline, make sure your summary is up-to-date and highlights your accomplishments, interests and what you’re looking for. Another great bonus to LinkedIn is your ability to [add or link to samples of your work](https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/34325/adding-editing-and-removing-media-work-samples-on-your-profile?lang=en). Take it one step further by asking for recommendations, updating your profile regularly and following relevant influencers. If you’re seeking advice on the job search, check out profiles of professionals who have careers that you find interesting. You can contact them for informational interviews to seek advice. Lastly, LinkedIn is not like other social media sites: its purpose is to connect professionally. Therefore, it’s important to not accept every single person who tries to connect with you, be judicious.

Facebook

While not as often utilized for career opportunities, Facebook is an important social media tool. In order to make sure your profile is professional looking to outsiders, you should use [Facebook’s “view as” feature](https://www.facebook.com/help/288066747875915?helpref=faq_content). If you want to see everything on your profile in detail, [download a copy of your entire Facebook data](https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/23/how-to-download-a-copy-of-facebook-data-about-you.html), so you can review everything at once. Once you get a bigger picture, try and remove or block posts or photos that may be considered distasteful. Look at your groups (these are generally visible to the public). In addition, review the “about me” section as this is also public. Consider reviewing your political or religious views as it could potentially influence an employer’s decision (although it’s really not supposed to). When it comes to who to “friend,” make sure to be thoughtful about what kind of Facebook presence you’d like to have. If you plan to share personal information but you wouldn’t feel comfortable sharing that same information with your employees or co-workers, perhaps it’s best not to allow them into your Facebook.

Twitter

[Twitter is a great, simple medium to network and socialize](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/career-networking-tips-get-started-on-twitter-hot-jobs). When it comes to career networking, there are a few simple rules to consider. Be professional and avoid getting too personal or profane. Think about how often you tweet. If you tweet too frequently, employers may think you have too much time on your hands. Twitter can be a good way to find job opportunities and many larger companies have specific handles just for job openings. Twitter also allows you to follow companies that you’re interested in and you should make sure to join the conversation using @mentions or #hashtags. Lastly, try and be relevant in real time and establish yourself as an expert in your field.

Instagram

Instagram doesn’t have a strong focus on career so it’s really just a chance for employers to see more about your life. If you feel uncomfortable sharing any of your posts, set your Instagram to private; Privacy settings on Instagram are very black and white. If you do decide to create a private account, be thoughtful about who you accept to follow you. If you are going to keep your account public, be careful about posting during work or about work.

Google

Because we know that over half of employers use a search engine to find more information about candidates, it’s [important that you know what shows up when your name is queried](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-p-joyce/job-search-tips_b_4834361.html). If you put your name in quotes, you’ll get better results. Once you’ve seen your search results, it’s also crucial to look at your images. Google Images can pull from a variety of places, so you can get a full understanding of what others are seeing when they’re searching for you. If you want to see search results as others would, make sure to search yourself under an “incognito” mode in Chrome or other web browsers. If you’re using an email address or phone number in your resume, search by those fields to see if any additional information appears. If you notice a search result that contains sensitive, personal information you can contact Google and ask them to remove it.

Overall, social media should be your friend during the hiring process. It’s a useful tool that can allow you to connect to other professionals and career opportunities you may not have in everyday life. Use it wisely and enjoy the opportunities it brings.