

How to Use Social Networking in Your Career Search

If you are job-hunting, social media is a useful tool for networking and finding opportunities. You can interact with people working in the sector, join useful groups, follow CEOs and use it to showcase your own writings, design or performance skills. Below is a guide to help you get the most out of the key sites.

Build your online brand

- Have a professional image. A good photo helps people relate to you.
- Make your contributions interesting, informed and literate.
- Decide how you are going to manage your personal and professional social networks. Facebook is better for social purposes, but keeps your privacy settings high.
- Make sure content associated with your real name is something you will be happy for potential employers to see – even a few years down the line.
- Many people choose to have more than one Twitter account or online identity so they can be radical or have fun without compromising their reputation.

Twitter

Twitter makes it acceptable to follow people you don't know. This opens up a whole number of networking opportunities.



Twitter networking tips

Start with a professional, informative bio.

Be active, tweet most days – a once a week tweet won't get you noticed, don't over-tweet though.

Engage – retweet things of interest, comment, ask and answer questions.

Follow the relevant account. Companies often have a number of Twitter accounts – follow the job related ones, if it's a job you are after.

Use www.twitter.com/search to look for people tweeting about your area of work-interest. For example if you search for 'game design' you'll find some interesting people and companies to follow and start interacting with.

Use appropriate hashtags for your tweets and search for conversations using a relevant hashtag. For example #intern has a number of internship roles tweeted.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an online network used mainly for professional purposes. Use it to establish a profile page which summarises your skills and experiences that other users can refer to.

LinkedIn logistics

Introduce your profile page with a short summary of your experience, skills and job interests. Have a look at how other people have described themselves to get an idea of what is effective.

In the experience section, provide a concise CV-style summary and use the skills and expertise section to list technical skills, professional skills and languages.

Start making connections with people you know. These could be colleagues, lecturers or classmates.

Network by joining groups. Join your college alumni group and networks related to your sector. Once you are part a group, it is possible to send an email message to an individual member.

Ask people you have worked with in some capacity to provide a recommendation on your page. It will add an endorsement to your abilities.

Keep your profile up to date and post updates. It's a good way of keeping your 'brand' alive.

Take your time. If you are new to LinkedIn, spend some time reading posts before you enter the conversation so that you become familiar with the accepted style and content.

Blogs

You don't have to write your own blog to use this method of online interaction. You can start by simply reading some good blogs related to your chosen field. There are some great ones that provide advice, information and useful links. One way to assess their credibility is by reading the author's bio, checking the number and quality of comments. The next step is to start interacting using the comments thread. If you like a post, tweet the link so that your followers can read it. Although comments section are informal make sure your comment is crafted and makes sense. It really undermines your point if there are bad spelling and grammar.

Having your own blog can be a good way of showcasing your writing skills and your knowledge of a specific area. Sites such as [Wordpress](#), [Blogger](#) or [Tumblr](#) (for more visual blogs) make setting up your own blog easy. Before you start to have a good idea of your content and perhaps have a few pieces that you can post over the first few weeks. Generate some interest in your posts by tweeting or posting the link on your LinkedIn page.

Discussion Forums

Would you like to chat to someone who really knows about working in particular sector? The Guardian live Q&A session allows you to do this. Every session is archived so if you miss it you will catch up on the discussion. You can find other forums by using our [online careers library](#) and through websites of professional associations or industry publications. Of course you can also ask your online network for recommendations.

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