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Why social networking is an important tool for effective job hunting



Photo: [Vivek Chugh](#)

[Facebook](#). [MySpace](#). [Twitter](#). [YouTube](#). Thanks to social [media](#) and [social networking](#), it is easier than ever to meet new people and stay in touch with [friends](#) and [family](#). But social networking is not just personal anymore. Nowadays, it has become an essential tool for effective [job hunting](#)—and can give you the edge you need to get the position that you want.

The benefits of incorporating social networking into your job search can be exponential, says Kevin Nichols, President and CEO of [KLN Publishing](#).

"Your reach is a lot greater using social networking because back in the day, you used to pick up a [newspaper](#) or go to a career center to find out about jobs and opportunities," he said. "But here in a virtual world, you can search [Web sites](#) to pull up a number of different opportunities that you probably wouldn't have even heard of or expected to know about. Then being able to use social networking to actually get a resume in front of a hiring [manager](#)—as opposed to a cold, unsolicited cover letter and resume—increases your chances of landing a job."

In fact, during the hiring process, companies often prefer candidates with a social media presence—and not having one can put them at a disadvantage. Employers are looking for candidates that are comfortable with the Internet and other technologies, but if they don't see you participating in online media, they may assume that you are behind the times and not well-trained on these [communication](#) tools—especially if you are between the ages of 20 and 40.

Unfortunately, a byproduct of this expectation is the dwindling line between our public and private lives. Now that a potential employer can [Google](#) job hunters and find out the details of their non-professional lives, it should give everyone pause about what they are broadcasting to the world. So, if you went to [Mardi Gras](#) on vacation, you may not want to post certain photos of your trip on your Facebook page because the wrong choice may come back to [haunt](#) you later.

"If you go to Mardi Gras and you have a great [time](#), what happens in Mardi Gras should stay in Mardi Gras," said Nichols. "If you're taking pictures of yourself bent over a garbage can and putting them on your Facebook page, that's not a very wise decision and won't create the most favorable [impression](#) of you."

How Facebook can help job seekers find employment

Although Facebook is seen primarily as a fun way to keep in touch with friends and family, it can also be helpful when you're looking for employment. Here are some ways that job seekers can get the most out of Facebook.

- The most efficient way to use Facebook in your job search is to update your status with relevant information. For example, if you lost your job and you let your friends know, they will want to help you—perhaps by passing along a contact that they know is hiring.
- If you become Facebook friends with people from companies that you want to work for, be careful. Although you want to share what you've been doing with your friends, you may not want a potential employer to see all of that information. One way to segregate your personal and professional lives is to create a fan page for yourself, where you can keep your professional contacts separate—which can be beneficial for you and all of your contacts.

"I may know business contacts, but I don't necessarily want them seeing my [kids](#) and what we did on a Friday night," said [David Peck](#), Social Media Strategist at [LSF Interactive](#). "Also, your

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personal friends don't want to hear about your business. People don't think of that, but it works both ways."

- Adding information about the causes you are interested in shows potential employers that you are a well-rounded person. Although there is a chance that someone may object to your views, it's important to have the confidence to be yourself and trust that someone with a job opening will consider your qualifications more than your preferences.
- Don't allow people to leave virtual graffiti on your Facebook wall.
"Sometimes people leave comments on your wall, or send you gifts or games, that are suspect—which theoretically everyone can have access to," said Nichols. "As a result, you really need to be cognizant of what things you allow people to post on your profile and consider how others may interpret what is being posted."
- Never say anything bad about a person or company on your page. Remember that even if you delete the comments, they live on forever and may come back to haunt you.

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How to use LinkedIn during your job search

LinkedIn is now considered one of the best online tools to assist your job search, thanks to its user-friendliness and the amount of information job hunters have access to. LinkedIn is the best of both worlds, as it gives you access to both job listings and people that can help you find a position. Some do's and don'ts that will make your use of LinkedIn more productive include:

- Do be careful with friend requests. Although you have a 50-50 chance of being successful with a request to someone you don't know at a company you are interested in, it is better to get an introduction from someone they know.
"If I'm trying to meet someone new, if I don't have my own connection with them, I don't send them a friend request, but I'll ask for an introduction through someone that I know," said Nichols. "That way I am basing my potential connection with someone on a connection that I already have."
- Don't use the status update function to talk about your personal life.
- Do complete your profile. This makes it easier for employers to find you and will eventually allow you to nix your regular resume entirely.
"I treat LinkedIn as my resume," said Peck. "I don't have a paper resume anymore, I send a link to my LinkedIn profile."
- Do use the Q&A section. LinkedIn's Q&A section is a good place to get the information that you need, as well as establish yourself as an expert by answering other people's questions. This can go a long way toward your [branding](#) efforts and the word will get out that you are the go-to person for information that people need in your area of expertise.
- Don't forget to have real-world interactions with your connections.
"When you meet someone through an introduction online, the onus is on both of you to build a relationship through [face-to-face](#) or phone meetings," said Nichols. "Ultimately, you may need to refer someone to that person, or vice-versa, and you want to be able to say with confidence that you've had a positive interaction with this contact."

Tweet, tweet: How to incorporate Twitter into your job search

Twitter is a good hybrid of the personal and the professional, so if you use it wisely, it can become an important part of your job search. Some do's and don'ts that job seekers should remember when using Twitter include:

- Do include a picture of yourself in your profile, not a logo, which will allow your followers to bond with you.
"If I'm looking at a logo, I don't feel as attached," said Peck. "Face recognition is really important—if you're going to meet somebody for coffee, you're not going to have coffee with a logo. That's why we call it face time."
- Don't forget that Twitter is a [written](#) medium, so the rules of written communication apply—even in the allotted 140 characters that you are given. Although this space constraint has made [textspeak](#) and misspellings the norm on Twitter, a potential employer is not going to accept that as an [excuse](#) for coming off as careless or illiterate.
- Do remember that everything you tweet is being published. As much as you may want to badmouth your last boss, this will not serve you well—particularly during your employment search. A better approach is to be strategic about everything you write, keeping in mind that your next potential employer may end up reading it.
"Being able to craft a handy sentence and introduce what you want to present to your [audience](#) is what's crucial and key to Twitter," said Nichols. "And you have to be aware and cautious about

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what you're putting out there. When people aren't careful, they say things that they'll regret."

- Don't forget to engage in a conversation with other tweeters.

"People go out there and just talk about themselves," Peck said. "It's called social networking—some people don't get that."

- Do create a simple Web page where your resume and other pertinent information lives and add that link to your Twitter profile. You should make it as easy as possible for people to find your information, so linking to your MySpace or Facebook pages will add an unnecessary step to getting access to you.

This article originally appeared on my [Workplace Communication Examiner](#) page on July 14th, 2009.

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Posted by Kenya McCullum at [December 25, 2010](#)

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