



Social Media Do's and Don'ts for Job Seekers

Social media, including sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, can help you find a job and connect with people who can assist you with growing your career. However, it works both ways. Social media, when used the wrong way, can backfire and jeopardize a job offer or even your current job. It's important to be careful and consider what you should do on social media to aid your job search... as well as some bad habits that are best avoided.

Do Create an Online Presence

When you're looking for a job or positioning yourself for career growth, it's important to have an online presence to showcase your skills and experience. Your online social media pages will also help you connect with contacts who can expedite your job search and assist you with moving up the career ladder. Take the time to ensure that all your work-related social pages are updated and ready to be reviewed prior to starting a job hunt.

Do Be Consistent

Does the employment history on your resume match what's on your LinkedIn profile? Does the information you have on your Facebook page (if it's public) match up with the information you have elsewhere online? It's fine if you rework your job descriptions, for example, because targeting your resume is a good thing when applying for a job. What's not okay is if your job titles, companies, and dates don't jive. That's a red flag for prospective employers.

Don't Get Fired

Employers check out candidates on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media sites. And, it's pretty routine to connect with colleagues on social media sites, too. That means that anything you post may be read by your employer or co-workers. If you share company business (good or bad) or post inappropriate content, you could get in trouble with your current manager, and it could even cost you your job, especially if you post on social media while at work. It's not just your current employer — hiring managers often screen candidates' social media and will avoid interviewing or hiring candidates who post inappropriately.

Do Google Your Name and Check What's Online

What shows up when you search your name? Most likely, there's a ton of information, from tweets to photos. It's quite easy for employers to find information you may have preferred to keep private. Much of it can be found by Googling your name. Be aware of what shows up, and if any photos or posts could handicap your job search, change your profile settings or delete the individual posts.

Do Be Careful What You Tweet

Be really careful what you tweet. You don't know who might read it. Just search Twitter for "I hate my job" for an example of what I mean. Hiring managers and bosses are using Twitter, too, and if you say it someone will probably read it. Tweets show up in Google search and you don't want to lose your job because you didn't think before you tweeted, even if you hate it.

Don't Forget Your Facebook Privacy Settings

You may think you're only sharing those photos from last night's very late party with your Facebook connections, but often, people you don't know can see your photos that you're tagged in or read your posts. Take some time to review what strangers, as well as friends of friends, can see.

Do Network Before You Need To

Build your network well in advance of when you need it. Make connections in your industry and career field. Follow career experts. Talk to your contacts on Twitter or the other networking sites. Join Groups on LinkedIn and Facebook, then post and join the discussion. Be engaged and proactive in your communications. By building a network in advance, you won't have to scramble if you unexpectedly lose your job or decide it's time to move on.

Do Give to Get

In a nutshell, give to get. Networking works both ways — the more you are willing to help someone else, the more likely they will be to help you. Take some time every day to reach out to your connections. Write a recommendation on LinkedIn, offer to introduce them to another connection, share an article or news with them. Giving to get really does work — your connections are more likely to return the favor when you've offered to help them.

Don't Connect with Everyone

There is a school of thought that says you should connect with everyone when you're using social media. However, quality is more important than quantity when it comes to connecting. The first question you should ask yourself when making connections is how can the person help me? The second question is what can I do to help them? Before you ask someone to connect, consider what you have in common. That common denominator, regardless of what it is, is what's going to help with your job search.

Don't Spend Time Online on Your Boss's Dime

The temptation, of course, when you're job searching is to spend time looking at job postings, perhaps uploading your resume to apply, talking to contacts, or posting about the trials and tribulations of your job search on a Facebook page. If you were to do that, you certainly wouldn't be the first (or the only) person to do so. Many people job search from work but given the way companies monitor employees, it's not wise to use your work computer or email account for job searching.

DO post as if everything can be seen by everyone.

Even if your Twitter account is set to private and you're sure your Facebook security settings prevent unwanted viewers from viewing your posts, it's better to be safe than sorry. In today's world, your online self is an extension of your offline self. Your personal profile is an extension of your public profile. If you don't want a boss, a friend, or a future employer to see a post, don't take the risk. Keep your online identity positive rather than provocative.

DON'T create a bad first impression online.

Words and photos can easily be misconstrued out of context, so make sure to analyze before posting. If you have to think to yourself "If someone who hasn't met me yet saw this photo, would they have a negative first impression of me?" then ask yourself if the picture is really worth posting. Additionally, vigorously posting about politics, social issues, or personal issues may cause profile viewers to form initial judgments, misguided or not. While your opinions are important to your identity, is your outspoken "Twitter rant" about your former boss worth jeopardizing your future career?

DO use LinkedIn to the fullest.

LinkedIn is arguably the most important site for networking and recruiting in the modern business world. The site is used by people of varying employment levels, including everything from recent grads to big business founders, so make sure your profile stays up to date. Make sure to mention all past work experience, emphasize your skills, and keep your page looking professional. Connect to as many Groups as you deem appropriate. Post positively and reflectively, making sure your presence on the site is demonstrative of who you are. Most importantly, use the networking ability of the site to make real, interpersonal relationships with those you connect with.

DON'T let your LinkedIn detract from who you are.

While sites like LinkedIn are meant to showcase your best qualities, it is easy to turn people off by simply using the site poorly. People quickly will judge you based on your online profile, so try to follow online etiquette guidelines. Don't lie or embellish on your profile. Make sure not to over-post or spam your connections. Never criticize or negatively post in Groups. Don't estrange connections by being generic and impersonal.

DO let your social media profiles become marketing tools for your personal brand.

Consistency is key: keeping information and photos up to date and accurate across all of your social media sites can help market yourself to employers. By emphasizing who you are, what you do, and what you want, it is easy for recruiters to see if you're a

promising potential hire. It also helps you as the searcher understand who you are trying to target with your own personal promotion..

DON'T become a self-marketing machine.

Bragging online is just as bad as bragging in person. If your pages become overwhelmingly self-promotional, they become a deterrent. The beauty of social media is that it allows you to connect with others, so involve your audience; if they feel included in what you say, they'll actually want to see what you post. Additionally, if your posting is mechanical, scripted, or unnatural, it may seem like you exhibit those undesirable traits in real life. Do not let your positive personality traits be covered by impersonal and unrealistic social media behavior.

DO use social media as the beginning point, not the end goal.

Nothing, not even a direct message, can replace a face-to-face, personal conversation. By properly putting yourself out there online, you expose yourself to an internet full of people. Let these online connections propel you to make offline connections. Social media should be used as a helpful tool in sparking real-world relationships.