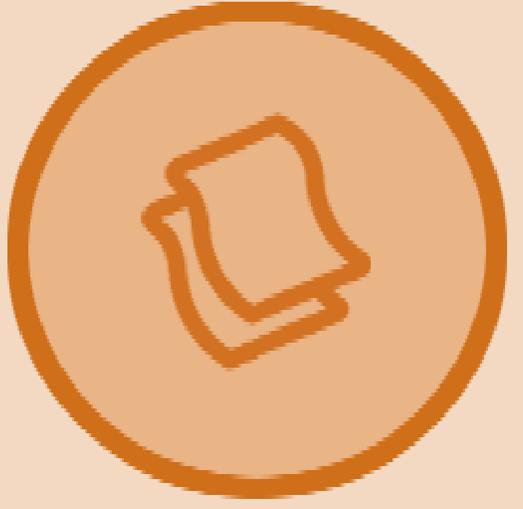


Prepare

Job Search



Insider Advice for Online Job Networking

Given the current economic situation and the innovations of Internet technology, the traditional approach to finding a new job may no longer be viable by itself.

There are fewer jobs available. There is more competition for what jobs there are, and there are more ways for recruiters to interact with job candidates. The traditional approach of composing a resume and cover letter, finding jobs opportunities through job banks and corporate sites, and submitting your application with the hope that someone will notice your qualifications and care enough to contact you, is no longer the only approach to finding a job.

The job market is embracing the latest technologies to connect job recruiters with job seekers. Job recruiters are steadily turning to social networking services and social media to search for job seekers. These online social networking services, primarily LinkedIn and Facebook, give recruiters access not only to your public profile, including your resume, but also to your personal network of casual and professional associations. But more importantly, these same social networking services can be a powerful tool for job seekers both to find jobs through personal contacts and to get recommendations for jobs by friends and colleagues.

It is this personal recommendation aspect of job networking that characterizes the new approach to job searching. You should continue to submit your resume and tailored cover letters to job banks, corporate sites, and job agents, and you should continue to attend job fairs. However, these strategies should not constitute your total job search effort. A significant amount of your time should be devoted to utilizing social networking and media services to get in touch with job recruiters.

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How you present yourself to a job recruiter is just as important as what you are presenting. Here you will learn 5 online job networking strategies for finding and presenting yourself to job recruiters and other who may assist you in landing the perfect job.

1. Search for People

The majority of open positions at companies are not listed online. For the jobs that are listed online, either through a job bank or on the corporate site, recruitment managers always go through their list of employee referrals before turning to applications received online. An overwhelming majority of positions are filled by job candidates who were referred to the recruitment manager by someone familiar with the candidate.

Strong social networks, both online and off, are the key to successful job searches.

The key is to build relations with the people who work at the companies that you want to work for.

Here's how to go about your people search:

First, identify the top companies that really get you excited. Adopt a focused and direct approach to representing yourself as someone who is not simply qualified to work for a company, but someone who is genuinely enthusiastic about the prospect of helping the company achieve success, someone who appreciates their products and services and has tremendous respect for them.

Second, you should visit the company's website to obtain a list of current employees and then use search engines to find out more about these employees. A Google search will usually return any blogs, Facebook pages, LinkedIn profiles, Twitter pages, and dedicated personal websites that someone has published. But don't limit your search to Google queries. Try Bing, Ask.com, and Technorati, a search engine dedicated to the blogosphere.

Once you have found one or two employees at the company you're interested in, contact them directly. The traditional barriers of social interactions have been transformed by social networking and media to the extent that you may contact someone online without having been formally introduced. The Internet creates a new kind of public space, where total strangers can meet, interact, and possibly become friends, simply because they share the same or similar interests. Your goal is not to make a friend, but to establish contact and position yourself as someone the employee would recommend for a job opportunity. Your first message should not ask the person for a job or a recommendation, since most social networking and media sites are casual. Simply introduce yourself, who you are and your interests, and ask them for some information about the company. After a few correspondences, in which you demonstrate your interest in the company, you will be in a position to ask if there are any opportunities available.

2. Attract Job Offers

The traditional approach to job searching involves actively finding and pursuing job opportunities. Social networking and media allows you to build and market a personal brand that could attract opportunities and have recruiters contacting you about opportunities. With the tools of social media, you are now able to recreate yourself as a producer, as a leader in a particular topic. The most obvious way to build and market yourself as a producer, as someone that people, including recruiters, would actively seek, is to start a blog that focuses on your field of expertise and your interests.

A blog is a big commitment. It requires a lot of time to devote to writing, since only creative and insightful blog entries will actually benefit you. If you devote the time and attention to producing a compelling blog, people will find you and listen to what you have to say. As more and more recruiters are turning to social media to search for job candidates, some of these people may present you with job opportunities that conform to your own expertise and interests.

"The traditional barriers of social interactions have been transformed by social networking..."

Starting a blog is very simple. Both Blogger.com and Wordpress offer free blog accounts with step-by-step wizards that will have you posting blog entries in minutes.

3. Tweet on Twitter

Twitter, the micro-blogging social media site, has become a valuable tool for discovering recruiters and employees at companies. Many companies are producing Twitter content, and even departments within these companies have started to tweet departmental activities. Recruiters set up Twitter pages as well that you can follow, where they announce job openings. Once you find the Twitter pages that are produced by a company and start following them, you will learn a great deal about the company.

Before you start following the Twitter activity of a company, you should create a comprehensive Twitter profile. Fill in all of the information fields that are available, including a short biography, where you're located, a link to your website, blog, or LinkedIn profile, and a profile picture or avatar. Your goal here is to increase the likelihood that someone will contact you after they read your profile.

As you grow your Twitter account, becoming a follower of people and companies and attracting followers, you'll expand the possibilities of your professional opportunities by building solid relationships with your followers.

4. Connect with LinkedIn

LinkedIn is perhaps the best social networking and media site for job searching. Recruiters have turned to LinkedIn as the primary source for job candidates for a number of reasons: free basic service, access to top-tier professionals, and the system of connections that distinguishes LinkedIn from traditional job banks. As a job seeker, the two most important aspects of a LinkedIn account is your profile and your network of connections.

Your profile is a version of your resume. You should fill out all of the available fields, including the profile picture (which should be the same as the profile picture used at other social networking and media sites). You can also post updates which document the progression of the projects that you're working on. Another feature of the profile, one that will prove invaluable, is recommendations. It's a good idea to solicit recommendations from your colleagues, current or past supervisors, and friends who have accounts at LinkedIn.

The second aspect is the network of connections. You can build your network of connections rather quickly by importing your contacts from Outlook, Gmail, Hotmail, or whichever PIM communication client you use. The more connections you have the better, since you're only able to contact people within LinkedIn who are no more than three degrees removed from you. In other words, you may only directly contact other LinkedIn members if they know you, know someone you know, or know someone who knows some-

one you know. The key is the trust and credibility that accompanies familiarity. If someone can vouch for you, or better yet, recommend you as a great asset to any organization, recruiters are more likely to respond favorably to this trust and approach you with opportunities.

LinkedIn also offers a premium account charged monthly or annually. The premium account will extend your access to people outside of your personal network of connections and allow you to contact recruiters directly.

5. Integrate Your Approach

Strong social networks, both online and off, are the key to successful job searches. The more people you know, the more possibilities you have for discovering opportunities. The best strategy for searching for a job in today's market is one that integrates the traditional, proactive approach of searching job banks and sending your resume and cover letters to recruiters with the new online job networking approach of promoting yourself as an expert and producer within a given field. This integration should convey a consistent and accurate representation of who you are and what you can do. Each profile you create on a social networking and media site links to every other profile, since you want all of the information you've developed about yourself to be accessible, no matter where a recruiter may initially discover you.

One of the best tools to help integrate your approach to job searching is ResumeMaker. ResumeMaker gives you instant access to online job networking sites and helps you build quality resumes and profiles. Anyone can create a profile at LinkedIn, but with ResumeMaker, you will elevate your profile above all the others with high-quality, professional descriptions of your experience and abilities. With ResumeMaker's My Online Resumes, you can provide a link on your LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook accounts to the complete, professionally designed version of your resume. ■

ResumeMaker is the only software that integrates the traditional approach to job searching with the new online job networking approaches. With ResumeMaker, you will make the most of the online networking technologies by incorporating the tried and true strategies of resume development.

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