Using social media to look for a job

You’ve got a CV and an idea of what sector you want to work in but are considering the use of a more creative approach to research, network and get your foot in the door with employers. Is there more to it than a few tweets and setting up a LinkedIn profile?

34% of graduate recruiters use LinkedIn to screen candidates for further information, yet just 5% of graduates use LinkedIn to engage with employers (TargetJobs 2011). You may ask yourself ‘Why should I put up a profile on a professional network site when I don’t identify myself as a professional?”. You don’t have to be a bank manager to get effective use out of LinkedIn; in fact there are multiple ways in which you can interact:

- **Groups.** By joining a group you can get involved in discussion topics, and find out about the latest jobs in the sector or organisation. Groups exist for various companies, professional bodies, job sectors and more! If you join a group you can often contact professionals directly.

- **Jobsearch.** You can use LinkedIn to search for jobs or alternatively log in with your LinkedIn profile on [www.SimplyHired.com](http://www.SimplyHired.com) and do a search for a job role i.e. “Recruitment” or “Marketing”. The search results show which employees within the given organisation are linked to any of your LinkedIn contacts. This enables you to get in touch with them and find out more about the relevant organisation or role advertised.

- **Introductions and Private Messages.** If you are within 3 connections of a contact you may be able to send them an InMail or you can request an introduction via one of your existing connections.

- **Your connections and wider network** on LinkedIn need to be fostered like real life connections. Simply connecting to hundreds of people online won't be enough. Make sure you keep an active presence and engage with people regularly.

- **Your CV.** More and more people are including a link to their LinkedIn profile on their CV for supplementary information on their skills and experience and many employers welcome this. Additionally, once you have completed all sections on your profile you can download and print off a PDF version of your 'Online CV'. LinkedIn is probably a more effective way of getting your foot in the door than Twitter and Facebook due to the professional focus.

For more information take a look at this handy guide or use our LinkedIn course online.
Twitter is great for collecting bite sized information on organisations and interesting topics. If you have a profile, you can also tweet about articles and items of interest yourself. Not only will your personality shine through but others can see you have a keen interest in a specific sector based on who you follow, retweet and which content you share. Stating that you are a graduate searching for work in your bio can be useful too in building connections with recruiters who may be looking. If you build a good relationship with a recruiter they may inform you directly of relevant opportunities.

For further details on techniques using twitter check out the Guardian Tweet for Jobs experiments in the resources section below.

**Tips for using Twitter**

- Follow companies and people who work in the sector you are interested in. They will often tweet about opportunities. Retweet interesting posts they make, this will get you noticed.
- Use hashtags when you go to events, you will be able to form relationships with people who might help you in your job search.
- Have a personal and professional twitter feed. For your professional twitter feed make sure your user name is close to your real name. Use hashtags to highlight keywords recruiters might use to search for prospective candidates
- Before interviews use Twitter to see what recent news has been important to the company you have applied to.

Most people view Facebook as a purely social medium due to its privacy restrictions and personal interaction with friends and family. However it is specifically for that reason that it can be helpful in finding out about opportunities by maximising use of your contacts. Here are some quick tips:

- Update your status with what kind of sector / job opportunity you are searching for. You never know which of your friends know of any vacancies – even unadvertised ones!
- Use SimplyHired with your Facebook Login
- Use professional networks like BeKnown that are integrated apps on Facebook and enable you to upload/write a CV, connect with people, search for jobs and manage your skills.
Ensure your privacy settings are restricted on sensitive pictures, posts or information that could damage your credibility as a potential candidate or employee. Make sure your profile picture is one that you would want a potential employer would want to see.

**On that note...**

Managing your online reputation may sound challenging but here are a few tips on how you can minimise harm to your image!

- If you are using Twitter professionally be aware that unless you have a private account your tweets are visible to everybody, not just your followers.
- A good way to ensure only relevant information crops up when recruiters search the web for you is to Google yourself. Remember some companies have a strict policy that forbids Social Media screening but many recruiters still do. They may just be interested in your LinkedIn profile but there are no guarantees that they won’t stumble across anything else!
- Another top tip is try to fill Google search results with what you want recruiters to see by uploading sample work and presentations to Google Documents.
- Use KGB People to search for your own name and discover what the extent of your social media presence is. Do you still have active MySpace and Bebo accounts that you have forgotten about? This is a useful way to find old irrelevant information and close it down.

**In summary**

Social media has the potential to spread information quickly. This can either cause a lot of damage or work to your advantage. With the tips provided you should be able to build a positive online presence to support how you appear to recruiters. Remember you also need to be proactive by regularly networking, keeping your LinkedIn profile and Twitter feed up to date for maximum exposure.

**Further information**

These links include some of the resources discussed as well as where you can find more information on using social media to support with your job search.

- Guide from Facebook to LinkedIn
- Job hunting on Twitter: social media tips, The Guardian
- Twitter tips: how I used social media to find jobs, The Guardian
- Job Searching with Social Media for Dummies - Joshua Waldman