

# Social media Tips for the job hunt

By [David Grant](#), Correspondent / February 11, 2010

Sure, you can waste hours of otherwise productive time on Facebook, Twitter, and (to a lesser extent) LinkedIn. But can you turn those time sinks into job leads?

## Why It Matters

In a tough economy, a social media edge might be all the difference.

Absolutely, the experts say. Here are the Top 10 job-hunting tricks on social media job.

### 10. Do it.

While it's not a gilded path to employment, more companies are advertising and searching for new employees on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

"The first thing that people should think about is they need to do it. A large portion of the population doesn't understand it, hasn't tried it, is somewhat reluctant to try it," says Josh Warborg, district president at Robert Half, a staffing and consulting firm. "It's going to be an increasing resource because more and more people are using it as a resource."

If it doesn't lead to immediate job benefits now, it will give you better search skills and more contacts down the road.

"Over the next 10 years, the fact is that people are going to find more and more of the jobs over social media," Mr. Warborg adds.

### 9. Understand the networks.

Spend some time looking around the networks, seeing how influential people act, how their profiles look, and the sites that they reference.

Taking a little time to get a feel for the unwritten rules of each domain will save a lot of embarrassment or awkwardness later on. For example, writing personalized direct messages to Twitter followers is a good way to build rapport without cluttering up others' streams with brief kudos.

And there's one thing that certainly won't change from traditional networking and job seeking.

"Even with the casualness of social media, you want your spelling to be correct and your grammar to be halfway decent. Bad spelling is still bad spelling even in 140 characters," says Tim Esse, a Minneapolis-based corporate recruiter who uses social media heavily

## **8. Follow through and follow up**

Go after social media full-force. Because of its rapid nature, opportunities can appear and disappear in a flash.

"Whatever you've done and whatever efforts you've made, make sure that you're following up on those sites regularly," Warborg says. "If someone contacts you and you don't respond quickly, you can lose that prospect."

This also means having your own goals largely understood at the outset.

"Be specific about what you're looking for," Mr. Esse says. "Not 'I'm looking for a job because I lost mine.' "

## **7. Don't be a secret agent.**

If you're job hunting in social media, you're going to have to get used to connecting with people you don't know. That means being proactive in seeking out recruiters and being clear about your intentions as a job seeker.

"You've got to make sure that if you're looking for a job, you tell people. You can't be a silent agent or a secret agent kind of person," Esse says. "It's kind of like dating. If you sit in the corner, you're probably not going to find many dates."

## **6. Be careful.**

You probably don't need Job-Hunt.org editor Susan Joyce to tell you that job seekers and current employees have undermined themselves using social media. Still, before you go charging off into the great unknown, here's a further word to the wise.

Ms. Joyce relates a tale where an employee of a large government contractor received a top secret security clearance and promptly tweeted about it.

"Clearances are sensitive things and he tweeted out to the world, and that just struck me as marginally suicidal," Joyce says. "It was the last tweet I ever saw from the guy."

If you already have a presence in social media, give it a good scrub.

"I would advise that you sanitize everything that [any employer] could come into contact with from a social media standpoint," Warborg says. "If your grandmother wouldn't think it's a good idea to post that, don't do it."

Remember: Google never forgets.

"Once you put it out there, it's there. And that's why you need to be careful," Joyce says.

## **5. Get organized.**

After a while, you're going to be dealing with a ton of information.

"I see Twitter as ... bigger than all the encyclopedias ever thrown together. The Library of Congress on the floor disorganized," Joyce says. "But if you find people you trust and you follow them, you can learn some amazing things."

Make a routine of checking your various social media platforms. Better still, keep them organized by utilizing list functions.

"I have a list I keep adding to of recruiters who are recruiting directly on LinkedIn," Joyce says. "Last summer there were 50, now there's 205."

On Twitter, list functions can also help separate different groups of people. But what makes all the difference is using a program like TweetDeck to be able to sort the information as it comes in. By allowing you to view more than one column of information at a time – either an ongoing search for a particular topic, a field devoted to a particular list, or keeping tabs on individual Twitter feeds – the fire hose of Twitter information is kept manageable.

## **4. Team up**

While job seekers in the same industry have strong incentives not to pass along the hottest job tips, there's still much to learn from fellow searchers and employment professionals alike.

First, Esse suggests, use searches for Twitter hash tags and Facebook fan or interest pages to find people who are both active and interested in your field. Take a look through large blog sites like WordPress or Blogger for impassioned and insightful individuals. After establishing contact with them through following, friending, or leaving comments on their page, engage them with your own questions.

Ask the people "who are taking time to tweet and to blog and to maybe update on other pages like Facebook, what their [job search] strategies are that may or may not be working."

In addition, find people with similar interests who might not have an obvious employment angle.

"I would go out and follow people that are in my industry or even people that are tweeting about specific topics," Esse says.

### **3. Be interesting**

On LinkedIn, your straightforward purpose is networking in a fairly traditional model. But if your LinkedIn contacts look you up on Facebook or Twitter (or those fields bring opportunity in-and-of themselves), you'll want to show a potential employer that you're both engaged in your industry and have an interesting perspective to share.

Companies "are looking to see how involved a candidate is beyond a basic resume and cover letter, whether that be an application or something appropriate and really out there using social media to add some benefit to a discussion, to research, to the ongoing growth of knowledge within that industry," Fitch says.

This doesn't mean spewing tons of industry-related news onto your Facebook or Twitter feed on an hourly basis, Joyce points out. Instead, dive into Twitter with the mantra of finding interesting people to follow both inside and outside your intended job field. That way, you're both expanding your knowledge of the world and pursuing employment.

They are connections that may not bear immediate fruit, but you never know. "It's expanded my universe enormously," Joyce says. "I know a whole lot more people."

### **2. Strategize**

While a YouTube résumé may be hip in some fields, in others it may give recruiters a reason to take a pass on you.

"Sometimes those tools, even from a skill-set standpoint, give them one more reason to turn you down even before they talk to you," Esse says. "If I talked to them first and I heard they had the skills I wanted, I might look at it later."

The point? Keep the ethos of the company you're targeting at the front of your mind. Watch how they interact with inquiries on Twitter. Use the experiences of your contacts for clues about how to proceed.

There's a point somewhere amidst dull, zealous, immature, and overeager that a good profile on Twitter or Facebook must strike. Whereas some fields, like marketing, might like strong personality in their prospective employees, trending

toward a conservative approach insulates you from making the faux pas you might not even realize.

Someone who posts that "he hates XYZ sports team, maybe that's my favorite team, I'll go find someone else. It's just not giving someone a reason to turn you down before you're even in the game," Esse says.

### **1. Manage your expectations.**

"It's still new," Esse says. "And I think there's a lot more buzz than maybe there was true life results so far."

Still, Warborg estimates that "low double-digits" of job seekers are finding new employment through social media, although no definite data is available on the subject.

It's not a magic bullet by any means. But if done right, it can pay big dividends.

"It's generally fairly low effort, high yield in that what you present online and the efforts you make to connect to people can be good for a small amount of time invested," Warborg says.