Using social media for job hunting

Recruitment via social media is on the increase. Applications you use every day – Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn – could help in your job search at university and throughout your career. Using them to find a job may not be something you have tried before.

You may not get a direct offer for your dream job, but using social media highlights creativity in your research and job hunting. Not only do networks like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook let you keep abreast of the latest vacancies at top companies, they:

- Give you an opportunity to engage with people you might not be able to meet face to face.
- Are excellent places for finding information about how the company works, and who works for them. You could interact with an employer on Twitter or LinkedIn prior to an interview, and then refer to the exchange when you meet the recruiter face to face.
- Show future employers that you’re dedicated to your work, committed to self-improvement, document your understanding of the industry, show off your skills - this could take the form of a blog, tweets, podcast, video or photo album.

Just remember that it works both ways: employers will almost certainly be checking your online presence before inviting you for an interview. Learn how to manage your online reputation later in this leaflet.

LinkedIn is a professional networking site that connects students and graduates with professionals. It is built around relationships between business people, companies and employees; not holiday photos and YouTube links. LinkedIn is used worldwide; some countries also have their own version (e.g. India uses Brijj.com and SiliconIndia.com).

Use LinkedIn to follow companies who you are interested in working for; you will learn when new opportunities are available and can prepare/apply early. Prior to interviews, you can find (and research) potential employers and interviewers.

Treat your LinkedIn profile as your electronic CV – demonstrate the skills and experience that you hold and raise your visibility to both your existing network and those you could potentially link with. Build your professional profile as fully as possible so potential employers can easily see who you are and what you have to offer.

LinkedIn produce a series of short video guides to help you get the most out of it, set up your profile and how to get started and begin using it for your career. Use our LinkedIn Profile Checklist to review your profile.

Making connections allows you to create, maintain and expand your professional network. To get started, connect to existing contacts, for example family, academics, colleagues and employers from part-time jobs and internships, volunteering etc.

- Follow a company’s own page – use company search to find these. Company profiles often include details of their products/services and also where people have worked before.
- Join and ask questions in relevant groups. The University of Liverpool Alumni (Official) group could contain a Liverpool graduate working in the sector that interests you who could become a valuable contact. If you’re a member of the same group as someone, you can send them a direct message.
- Try not to be intimidated. Connect with people whose careers you admire, by using advanced people search. Use a keyword search relevant to your career interests, e.g. ‘TV production’, to show related profiles.
- Personalise any request to connect. Tailor your message in the ‘personal note’ box when you click to connect with someone. Tell them why you want to connect - your reason should not be a request for a job or work experience. Be conscious of what you ask - do your research (at the very least a Google search) before you ask a question and don’t ask a question where the answer is obvious.
Request introductions. These help you to expand your network. You can ask an existing connection to introduce you to someone who is a 2nd or 3rd level connection, but not yet known to you.

You can use LinkedIn proactively to research organisations, roles, staff and jobs.

- Investigate career paths - by looking at individual profiles, for example, to identify the key skills, knowledge and experience that current employees at a particular company have. Use the LinkedIn Alumni Tool - search by degree subject, particular skills you want to use in a job and get inspiration from what alumni are doing.
- Find staff who work for the company you are researching – searching by ‘relationship’ allows you to see your first, second and third degree contacts. Ask any contacts for information that could help you in the application process.
- LinkedIn Jobs lets you search and apply for jobs advertised on the platform.
- Before an interview check out your interviewer’s profile to find out more about them.

Using twitter will allow you to demonstrate your confidence using social media and ability to communicate and network innovatively. We follow lots of the major job sites, recruiters and industry experts so you’ll be the first to hear about job opportunities, industry news and recruiter visits. Follow us @livunicareers, @livuniplacement and @liverpool_fairs. If you’re interested in working for particular organisations, sign up to their twitter pages to find out the latest company information and recruitment activities.

Twitter lacks the networking capabilities of Facebook and LinkedIn. What Twitter is good for is quick and easy searches: using the hashtag ‘#job’, along with your location and desired role/sector is a simple way of ensuring that you can keep up with the latest vacancies from potential employers.

Follow us on Facebook via livunicareers. It gives you direct access to opportunities, events and recruiter visits at the Careers & Employability Service.

Most large graduate recruiters have Facebook pages where you can find out about their recruitment activities or chat to new recruits.

You can also use Facebook in more creative ways. For example, keeping in touch with a contact from a work experience or volunteering placement could be useful if any permanent opportunities become available. You could also keep in contact with graduates from your course in order to discuss job-hunting strategies.

A number of graduate recruiters use Google+. You can ‘follow’ industry professionals and eventually businesses as with Twitter but will have a deeper interaction with such people, more like Facebook and LinkedIn. Google+ is also weighted more towards the follower, meaning, unlike other social media sites, you do not need to be ‘accepted’ by the recipient to interact.

Discussion forums

Forums allow users with common interests to share opinions and experiences. The Guardian’s careers live-chats are useful for insider knowledge from industry experts. There are also sector-specific discussion forums that allow candidates to discuss application processes, interview strategies and issues that may affect them in the recruitment process and employment. Another useful forum is The Student Room. Be conscious of what you ask - do your research (at the very least a Google search) before you ask a question and don’t ask a question where the answer is obvious.
Online blogs

Creating and maintaining an online blog linked to your chosen career will demonstrate your originality and interest in your chosen area. You can use this space to describe your achievements more fully that an application form will allow and really sell your skills. Websites such as Wordpress and Blogger provide you with the basic tools to develop a portfolio of high quality articles and receive feedback from other users, which could lead to networking opportunities. Career-based blogs such as TARGETJobs Bloggers will keep you up-to-date with what is happening in the world of graduate recruitment. You could also follow blogs relating to your chosen career; posting opinions and comments on articles allows you to share views and experiences and become ‘known’ to other users.

Managing your digital footprint/online reputation

Even if you are not using social networks to look for jobs, it is essential to review your digital presence before applying for any vacancy. Search engines make it increasingly easy for employers to quickly discover who you are.

Employers may check your online presence prior to interview. Think about what content you are happy for anyone to see and what you feel is best saved for people you already know.

Put your name into a search engine and see what results come up. Most social networks have a public listing that contains potted information from your profile and a link. Use your privacy settings for the social media outlet you decide to use to adjust what is visible, or to stop it from appearing in web search results completely. This doesn’t mean that you need remove every trace of your existence online; just ensure that your online persona portrays you at your best to employers.

Think about your email address too. Set up a professional sounding email account just for your job applications.

The web is a valuable resource and one you can have fun with. Just be wary and remember that it’s a public arena. That way, with luck, it’ll be a help rather than a hindrance when it comes to finding a job.