Discover your options
Careers, Internships & Employment

Top Tips for Sensible Social Networking

Social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are used by many employers for recruitment purposes as they provide a fast, flexible, efficient and cost effective way for both employers and job seekers to connect. Therefore, it is important that personal social networking profiles are created and maintained to a certain standard as up to 91% of employers are looking to these profiles for information about job candidates[1].

There are no hard and fast rules around the use of social networking, but these are some tips that may help maintain a good profile and ways to appropriately interact with employers:

Maintain a professional online presence.

Consider the different audiences that maybe viewing your social media profiles. 'Like' appropriate pages, and maintain appropriate connections and friendships that you have in your real life network.

Find Employment Opportunities

Ensure you provide accurate and up-to-date information.

Profiles must be regularly maintained and updated in order to create a credible and valid reputation. Be honest at all times. Due to the personal connections with people who see your profile, lying is often caught and does not pay off.

Think carefully about the content of what you put online.

Ensure that photos, information, posts and connections are appropriate. Be aware that you may not have total control of the removal of anything you put on a social network. Something inappropriately posted may have implications years later.

Keep posts and comments interesting and of value.

Say and share things that people will want to know about or read about. Keep track of how much and how often you are sharing. Meaningless and irrelevant posts are ignored and lead to gaining a bad reputation or loss of connections. Also be careful of posting things that are meant in jest. These could be viewed upon as quite serious when someone, such as a recruiter, is unaware of the context.

Share information that people will understand.

This applies in terms of both content and spelling and grammar. Share information within a context so that all who see it can understand it. It is also important that information is comprehensible to maintain a sense of professionalism.

Be an active social networker.

Networking through social media is similar to face-to-face connections in the way that it requires exchange and connection. It is not only about what people can do for you, but what you can also do with them. This allows you to position yourself as someone who has skills and interests in particular areas. Be active and seek out opportunities and further connections. Be proactive in updating your status, participating in online groups and in writing blogs.

Be aware of your audience.

It is important to be aware of the viral nature of social networking. It is often not just your immediate friends that have access to your information. Be careful about who you 'friend'/'follow'. It may be inappropriate and cross professional boundaries to become 'friends' with your colleagues, boss, manager or a lecturer. The exemption to this rule would be where there is not only a professional connection, but also a personal one, or you have discussed this with them. You are not obligated to friend/follow anyone and 'unfriending'/'unfollowing' is acceptable, although if you still personally know them, it may be easier to 'hide' their posts.

Make strong connection requests.

When a request is necessary to make a connection with someone, add some context to your requests where the connection may be unclear. Remind the person of where you met or how you know them. Keep in touch once you have made a connection.

Check your privacy settings are appropriate.

Correct privacy settings ensure that the right people are accessing the right information. Friends and family, for example, may have access to all of your information and content, whereas professional colleagues may have a limited access, and even more so for unknown people.

Use separate social networks for personal and professional networks.

Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are often used for personal, rather than professional reasons. This is not to say that these tips are not relevant as many employers check profiles on these sites. LinkedIn is a good example of a more professional network. To find out more about LinkedIn check out the LinkedIn information sheet in the Discover Your Options flyers.

'Google' yourself.

Keep an eye on what is being said about you online!

Follow potential employers online.

A number of employers through the Student & Graduate Recruitment Programme have an online presence using social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, and online mediums such as YouTube. Reading their status you can see what their current focus is, including reference to important events, meetings and links to relevant articles. You can also read about their organisation, ask questions and participate in any online forums or activities.

Join online versions of groups you are connected to in real life also.

Follow business and industry blogs that are relevant to your sector. Where appropriate write comments on blogs that demonstrate your knowledge, skills and understanding of that industry area.

Conclusion

To find out more about effective social networking, you can read *Find a Job Through Social Networking* by Crompton and Sautter. This book is available for loan at the Careers, Internships and Employment building, or watch the 'E-networking for Jobs' DVD that is also available for loan. You can find out more specific information about the social networking sites you use, or would like to use, by researching the sites. Here are some examples to get you started:

- Facebook www.facebook.com/help
- Twitter https://support.twitter.com
- LinkedIn http://learn.linkedin.com/
- MySpace http://www.myspace.com/help
- Google Plus+ http://support.google.com/plus

[1] Top Tips for Sensible Social Networking