Top 10 Social Media Do's and Don'ts

Social media, including sites like Twitter and Facebook, can help you find a job and connect with people who can assist you with growing your career. However, it works both ways. Social media when used the wrong way can backfire and jeopardize a job offer or even your current job. It's important to be careful and consider what you shouldn't do, as well as what you should do, when using social media to job search.

Do Create an Online Presence

When you're looking for a job or positioning yourself for career growth, it's important to have an online presence where you can showcase your skills and experience. Your online profiles will also help you connect with contacts who can expedite your job search and assist you with moving up the career ladder.

Do Be Consistent

Does the employment history on your resume match what's on your LinkedIn profile? Does the information you have on your Facebook page (if it's public) match up with the information you have elsewhere online? It's fine if you rework your job descriptions, for example, because targeting your resume is a good thing when applying for job. What's not okay is if your job titles, companies, and dates don't jive. That's a red flag for prospective employers.

Don't Get Fired

Employers are checking out candidates on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. If you post it, I guarantee someone will read it and that very well could be the wrong person i.e. a hiring manager. Posting company business (good or bad) and posting inappropriate information on Facebook are just a couple of examples of what can get you in trouble, or even cost you your job, especially when you do it from work.

Do Google Your Name and Check What's Online

There's a ton of information that can tell employers a lot about you online including tweets, instant message, blogs, and the content and photos you post on social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter. It's quite easy for employers to find information you may have preferred to keep private. Much of it can be found by Googling your name.

Do Be Careful What You Tweet

Be really careful what you tweet. You don't know who might read it. Search Twitter for "I hate my job" for an example of what I mean. Hiring managers and bosses are using Twitter, too, and if you say it someone will probably read it. Tweets show up in Google search and you don't want to lose your job because you didn't think before you tweeted, even if you hate it.
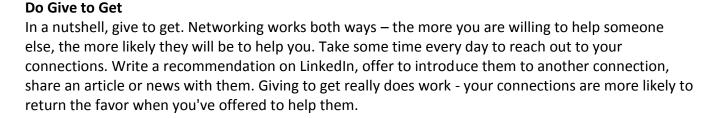
Don't Forget Your Facebook Privacy Settings

Here's an example of what can happen when you aren't careful about your privacy settings on Facebook. I received photos of a third party from one of my Facebook Friends. She was able to send me photos of her friends, because they didn't limit who their photos were shared with. I was able to see photos of someone I didn't know simply because the person wasn't careful about her privacy settings. If I was an employer, I wouldn't have been impressed - she was having a really, really good time.

Do Network Before You Need To

Build your network well in advance of when you need it. Make connections in your industry and career field. Follow career experts. Talk to your contacts on Twitter or the other networking sites. Join Groups on LinkedIn and Facebook, post and join the discussion. Be engaged and proactive in your communications. By building a network in advance, you won't have to scramble if you unexpectedly lose your job or decide it's time to move on.

Do Give to Get

In a nutshell, give to get. Networking works both ways – the more you are willing to help someone else, the more likely they will be to help you. Take some time every day to reach out to your connections. Write a recommendation on LinkedIn, offer to introduce them to another connection, share an article or news with them. Giving to get really does work - your connections are more likely to return the favor when you've offered to help them.

Don't Connect With Everyone

There is a school of thought that says you should connect with everyone when you're using social media. I don't agree. Quality is more important than quantity when it comes to connecting. The first question you should ask yourself when making connections is how can the person help me? The second question is what can I do to help them? Before you ask someone to connect, consider what you have in common. That common denominator, regardless of what it is, is what's going to help with your job search.

Don't Spend Time Online on Your Boss's Dime

The temptation, of course, when you're job searching is to spend time looking at job postings, perhaps uploading your resume to apply, talking to contacts, or posting about the trials and tribulations of your job search on Facebook page. If you were to do that, you certainly wouldn't be the first (or the only) person to do so. Many people job search from work, but given the way companies monitor employees it's not wise to use your work computer or email account for job searching. Or, if you do, be really careful how you do it.