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Social media for your job search

Contents

- The end of the CV?
- Social media platforms
- Choosing a platform
- Social media aggregators
- Are employers really looking?
- What to do next
- Useful websites

You probably use social media every day, several times a day, to connect with friends, see what people you know are up to and share your own updates and photographs with others. This is the purely social side of social media, and it might seem like this is all it can do. Look a bit deeper. There are so many ways you can use it to make your job search more effective.

If you have any social media profiles, such as a Facebook or Twitter account, you already have an online presence. That presence can work in your favour as you embark upon your search. It can also work against you. In a new hiring landscape where employers are looking up candidates online, it's in your best interest to take control of what they find. Hiring decisions can come down to a very small number of deciding factors, and social media provides a space where you can actively manage the impression you make on employers.

The end of the CV?

Social media is becoming so widely used as part of the recruitment process that the days of the CV can seem numbered. This may eventually be the case, but for now, there is a place for both. You can use your social media profiles to boost your

job search in so many ways: you can apply for some jobs directly on LinkedIn through your profile, or you might send a speculative email to a prospective employer, including a link to your blog or LinkedIn page to help showcase what you have to offer. This, in turn, could lead to an interview. You could network your way into a job using your social media profiles as your calling card. Your online activity can complement traditional application documents by providing additional ways of showcasing your skills, interests and experience.

Don't be tempted to throw away your CV just yet, or to hand in a sloppy application because you feel your LinkedIn profile is impressive and should do the job. A poor CV will get thrown into the "reject" pile or screened out by an applicant tracking system, so a prospective employer may never have the chance to wonder what's available about you online. Social media is playing an ever greater role in recruitment, but companies are still using the traditional approach of assessing CVs, cover letters and application forms.

Social media platforms

There are a lot of social media platforms out there, with new ones emerging all the time. Before getting into all the ways you can make social media work for you, you need to know what the main platforms are and what each one does well. The following pages take you through the main reasons you should consider different social media sites to help you to secure an internship or graduate job.

LinkedIn

In a nutshell LinkedIn is probably the first online network that springs to mind when you think of social media and finding work. It was launched in 2003 and now hosts hundreds of millions of profiles. Individuals set up profiles outlining their professional and educational experience, and use the site to connect with other professionals and to keep track of their network. University students are one of the fastest growing demographics on the platform, so don't feel like you can't join until you're in a "proper job".

What you can post You can create a LinkedIn profile, which is like an online CV with a lot more features. It's where people can learn about your background and the work that you do or would like

to do. You can also add rich media, such as photographs or PDFs of your work, to make your profile more interesting. You can post updates related to your sector on your timeline, although most public interaction on LinkedIn happens in LinkedIn groups with specific subject focuses. There are groups for all kinds of professional interests, where you can ask questions, share articles and discuss news items.

How it can help you get a job As the most prominent social network with a professional focus, LinkedIn should play a central role in your job search. The fact that you can use it to create a professional online presence is just the start. It allows you to read other people's career paths on their profiles, which is incredibly useful when you are making decisions about your next steps. You can also use the Alumni tool to find out where graduates from your course and your university have gone over the years. And it's a useful way to keep track of your network as you go through your career. There is a whole section of the site dedicated to advertising jobs, and a growing number of companies are making it possible for you to apply for roles directly through LinkedIn by submitting your profile through the site, making applications a little bit easier.

The downside The biggest stumbling block that students face with LinkedIn is that it can be very hard to know what to say about yourself so early in your career. The majority of students will have some casual work experience, perhaps an internship or two and maybe some voluntary work, in addition to their studies. This might seem like information that's not worth sharing when you compare it to the extensive profiles of other people on LinkedIn with established careers. Firstly, you're at the very start of your working life, so you're not expected to have the same breadth of experience as others on the platform. Secondly, and more importantly, there are so many ways that you can draw on your time in university and your extracurricular activities to show that you are a great candidate. It's just a matter of knowing what employers want and how to show them what you've got.

There can also be a perception that people are likely to lie on LinkedIn, to inflate their experience. However, research by Cornell University found that people were less likely to lie about their work history on LinkedIn than on their CV.³ This makes sense, as it's riskier to lie on an online profile that is there for all to see.

Employer's view: Paul Vance, Head of Resourcing, KPMG Ireland

So many students use social media tools to their advantage nowadays by spotting internships and graduate opportunities. It can be seen as an effortless way to research a company and their activity.

KPMG places a big emphasis on use of social media during the annual graduate recruitment campaigns. We ran a recruitment campaign called Think KPMG, which was linked to our official graduate careers Facebook page. All pictures taken throughout this campaign were uploaded onto Facebook for students to like and share. We relied heavily on social media to promote this campaign. Social Media is also how we inform the students on each of our on-campus events.

Make sure you are “connected”. All students should be following/friends with/connected with all the relevant companies they could potentially secure a job with – not only on Facebook, but on Twitter, LinkedIn and, most recently, Instagram.

Twitter

In a nutshell Twitter is called a micro-blogging site, which essentially means you can use it to post short updates. You can follow accounts belonging to your friends and to people you have never met who are posting interesting tweets. In turn, anyone on Twitter can follow you to keep up to date with what you're posting, unless you set your account to private.

What you can post The site limits you to writing posts, called tweets, which are a maximum of 140 characters long. You can also tweet photographs or videos, repost tweets from other accounts and share links to articles on other websites. Twitter also allows you to interact with other users by replying to tweets or indicating that you like them through the “favourite” function.

How it can help you get a job Twitter has a mix of company accounts and individual accounts. Following companies you want to work for, and people who do the kind of work you might like to do, is a quick way of finding out what people in the sector are talking about. It's also a good way to see what companies are saying

about themselves online, so you'll understand what matters to them, meaning you can position yourself as a candidate who fits with their vision. Lots of jobs are advertised on Twitter which might not be advertised elsewhere. More and more graduate recruiters are using Twitter to engage students, and some of them run Twitter campaigns, which are a great way for you to get involved with the company and get on their radar. It's also a useful networking tool where you can get to know other people working in companies and sectors you would like to target.

The downside There is so much information available at your fingertips through Twitter that you can feel bombarded. There are ways to manage this and refine the information you see, which will be covered later. It can also be a challenge to fit a clear point into 140 characters, but this doesn't take too long to master. The fact that anyone can retweet anything you post means that you can very quickly lose control over how far your tweets travel, which means you need to be particularly mindful about not sharing anything that might hurt your online brand. You can delete your own tweets, but they can still be there for all eternity in the public accounts of anybody who has shared what you have written.

Blogging

In a nutshell A blog is a website which you manage and where you can write about anything you want. You can post as little or as often as you want, be that daily or once a month. What matters is sharing interesting content and being consistent. Blogs are generally open to anyone to read, and you can enable a function which lets other readers comment on what you have written. Your blog posts can be as long or as short as you want, although shorter posts tend to be more effective.

What you can post Blogs are usually text-based, so you can write about your chosen subject, whether that's your thoughts on events on the international political stage, your interpretation of interesting historical primary sources you've come across in class, or a blog about your travels. You can also post photographs or graphics to illustrate your written work. Some bloggers choose to share only photographs with brief commentary, to highlight visual work they have created or the work of others that they admire.

How it can help you get a job Blogging might not lead directly to a job, but it can definitely be an asset in your job search. A regularly updated blog shows commitment and confidence in your opinions. If you're writing about the sector you want to go into, that can be a great way of providing evidence of your career motivation. However, a blog on a subject that is completely unrelated to the jobs you are considering can also be an asset. It shows that you have the determination to work on a project you have set yourself, and it can also be a place where you showcase your strong writing ability. Many employers specify that they require someone with strong written communication skills, and a well-written blog provides great evidence of these skills, which you can highlight in job applications.

The downside Blogging takes commitment. A blog with three posts in a week and then nothing for months does not create a particularly positive impression. In the same way that an updated blog can display commitment, an untended blog gives out the impression that you are someone who doesn't stick with what you've started. Writing a good blog post takes a lot longer than drafting a tweet or a Facebook update or pinning an image on Pinterest. So if you're going to blog, you need to set aside the time to do it right.

Facebook

In a nutshell Facebook is one of the longest-running social media platforms, launched in 2004. It's one of the most "social" of social media platforms, as it's most commonly used for staying connected with friends and family.

What you can post You can write status updates, upload photographs and videos and share links. You can also comment on the items posted by your friends and share their posts to your timeline.

How it can help you get a job Many companies, including a large number of the major graduate recruiters, have Facebook pages where they share updates about their company and news about vacancies. Some run Facebook games or competitions to get prospective employees to engage with them online. Your own Facebook profile can have an impact on your chances of finding a job, particularly if your status updates, comments and photographs are publicly available. That impact can be positive or negative depending on how

well you manage what you post, and your privacy settings. It also has a little-known feature that helps you to find people you might know who are working in different companies who could be able to share insights and advice.

The downside Facebook has traditionally been used more for social purposes than for anything to do with finding work, so it's something of a shift to start thinking of it as a platform that could play a part in your job search. If you use Facebook already, there could be lots of publicly accessible photographs and comments with your name tagged on them, so Facebook could be your biggest liability in your job search if you don't review what's already out there and put it under lock and key.

My social media story: Zara McGrath, Social Media Journalist, Storyful

As soon as I finished my undergrad, I had a week's break and then immediately began a traineeship with my current employer. However, before I had received this placement, I had interviewed for another internship, and I used social media platforms to obtain the interview.

I discovered the job via Twitter. I sent a PDF of my CV that contained a hyperlink to each of my social media platforms, which I had cultivated into résumés. These included LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+®, and About.me®. During the interview the interviewer asked me questions based on information he could only have garnered from my social media profiles. I also used Twitter to search for possible jobs during that time, following accounts such as JobFairy and Journalism.co.uk.

My advice for people searching for jobs is this: don't rely solely on social media to act as your CV. Yes, LinkedIn is instrumental in making connections with people in your field but having an actual CV to hand is not something to be underrated.

Be wary of your privacy settings on Facebook. You do not want a potential employer viewing pictures of your wild Saturday night out. Your social media profiles are your public persona, so ensure that everything that can be found about you online consists of things that you want to be found. This includes every account, especially Twitter.

Pinterest

In a nutshell Pinterest is an image-sharing platform where you can create virtual pinboards and save images, or pins, according to your interests.

What you can post Posts on Pinterest are called “pins”. They are images pinned from websites, so you can pin a combination of things you find on other sites and pins that Pinterest users have shared on the platform. Pinterest describes pins as virtual bookmarks, and it provides an easy and visually appealing way to keep track of interesting articles in one place. For example, if you were doing a lot of research to help you prepare for an interview, you could create a pinboard called “Interview preparation”, and if you read an interesting article with interview tips, you could pin it to your boards and refer back to it at any stage.

How it can help you get a job Pinterest won’t play a central role in your job search unless you are targeting a career in a creative sector like interior design, photography or fashion-related roles, but it can play a strong supporting role regardless of your career aspirations. You could create pinboards linked to your career interests, where you pin articles and infographics that you find helpful. This is another way of positioning yourself online and confirming that you are genuinely interested in a particular sector. It also means you can use it as a repository for all the useful information you come across to do with a particular job or sector, making it easy for you to keep all your research in one place and review it before an interview.

The downside Pinterest can be highly addictive. It’s very easy to use, and every time you log on you are presented with images linked to things you’ve pinned before, so there is a constantly updated stream of interesting images to explore. As Pinterest alone will not get you a job, the fact that it can very quickly take up a lot of your time means it’s dangerously easy to spend a disproportionate amount of time on the site. If you do decide to use Pinterest, will power may be required to step away and focus on the other core elements of job seeking.

Instagram

In a nutshell Instagram is a photo-sharing site where you can share photos through your own profile, as well as follow other people's accounts to see what images they are sharing.

What you can post Instagram is all about sharing images, primarily photographs. You can also share images you have found online on websites, blogs or anywhere else. It's become (in)famous for people sharing images of their dinner, but you can post images of all kinds of things that you come across and find interesting – the only limit is your own creativity. Instagram offers a range of filters, so you can edit your photographs to make them more visually appealing. You can also interact with other people on the site by liking or commenting on the images they upload.

How it can help you get a job Similarly to Pinterest, Instagram is unlikely to lead to a job by itself. What it can do is provide a great outlet for you to showcase your creative side. It is particularly useful if you are angling for a job in a creative industry, as it can serve as your online portfolio and a showcase of your particular aesthetic. Instagram can provide a less formal insight into your personality. This is important because employers like to know what kind of person you are in order to assess how well you would fit in with their company culture. A growing number of employers are using Instagram in their branding and recruitment campaigns, so this is another platform you can use to get an insight into what they value and to gather clues about how you can show that you would be a good fit.

The downside A certain amount of creativity and a moderately good eye are central to developing an engaging Instagram feed, so if you're not particularly interested in photography or don't often come across interesting things to share, this might not be the platform to use.

Choosing a platform

It's better to have one carefully managed social media profile than several competing and underused profiles. The range of options can seem overwhelming. Pick one or two social media sites to begin with, rather than overextending yourself. If you only set up one account,

make it a LinkedIn account, as this is the social platform that has a professional focus. Beyond that, the choice is really yours, based on which option you find the most interesting and the one that gives you the best platform for what you want to do.

Social media is currently dominated by the big names like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and so on. It's an ever-changing space, and new platforms emerge all the time, so whenever you come across a new one and find yourself wondering if you should join, ask yourself the questions in the following tip box to help you decide whether you want to invest your time and effort there.

Assessing a social media site

When you encounter a new social media site, ask the following questions to determine if it could meet your needs:

- What does this site do well? What does it accomplish?
- Does it include features – video or photo sharing, or the option to post articles, share links of interest and connect with people – that will help me demonstrate my skills or career interests?
- Is it an active site? Will the people who matter find me here?
- Do I have the time to dedicate to using it properly?
- Are there other sites that do the same thing, only better?

There's nobody from my sector on social media...

This is a common misconception. With so many celebrities using Twitter, it can seem like it's only the preserve of famous people and fluff. In reality, there are professionals from all sectors busily tweeting about their jobs, thoughts and activities every day, from international development professionals to people running tech start-ups, and everyone in between.

LinkedIn tends to be seen as a place for CEOs and professionals from more "traditional" businesses, but the profile of members is much more diverse than that – people at all career stages, and in countless professions, who have profiles bursting with information about what

they do and how they got to where they are today. You'll find everyone from computer programmers to geophysicists to priests on LinkedIn.

As for blogs, there are millions of them. Many of the most successful ones are run by people who are highly regarded in their area, from engineers to interior designers to investment bankers. You get the idea. There are definitely people from your sector of interest on social media. You just need to take a look around to find them.

Which platforms for which sectors?

LinkedIn is the leading professional networking site and the most obvious place to start when looking to leverage social media in your job search. However, all the other channels provide interesting ways to show your interests and skills, no matter what sector you want to join. The more image-based platforms like Pinterest and Instagram are particularly suitable for those with an interest in careers that involve working with interesting subjects for photography, whether that's architecture or zoology, but there are ways of using each channel for any career interest. Here are some ideas on how you can use the various channels for different types of work.

Journalism and writing Set up a blog and post your writing on it regularly. Aspiring writers need to have a portfolio of written work to show potential employers, so a blog is a simple way of centralising all your work. Use Twitter to share your blog posts, share links to the work of writers you admire and post interesting quotes you come across in your course. Set up Pinterest boards according to your different areas of interest – politics, creative writing, author inspiration – and pin interesting articles to each.

Finance Follow finance firms on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Use LinkedIn to identify a graduate from your course who is working in one of your target firms, and ask this person to connect with you and share her insight into what the firm looks for in their graduate hires. Create a blog commenting on market trends or giving advice on investing for people from a non-finance background.

Health and nutrition Use Instagram to post photographs of healthy meals you've prepared or to share images of good form for exercises. Write a blog about the interesting things you are learning throughout your course. Engage with others in this area who are active on Twitter.

Arts and culture Visit museums and historical locations, and share photographs on Instagram. Link this to your Facebook account so they are posted there too. Write a blog about all the places you visit and their meaning to you. Follow the pages of artists you like on Facebook, and the company pages of cultural institutions on LinkedIn.

Not for profit Use Facebook and Twitter to promote a fundraising event you are running to raise money for a charity you support. Join groups on LinkedIn for people working in the sector, and find out what the hot topics in the sector are currently.

Science Blog about interesting new discoveries and research reports in your area of interest. Share photographs of your lab work on Instagram. Use LinkedIn to explore the career paths of other research scientists, and find out what steps you need to take to reach a similar position.

These are just a few ideas to show how versatile social media is and how it can be useful no matter what type of career you are considering.

Social media aggregators

If you do decide to set up and manage multiple profiles, social media aggregators make it easier to keep on top of everything that is happening across your accounts. Social media aggregators are sites that bring all your social media platforms together onto one page. Instead of having to open multiple tabs and needing to remember to check all your different profiles, you can simply log into whichever aggregator you choose and see all the updates in your network in one place.

There are numerous aggregators to choose from, but Hootsuite is probably the biggest name in social media management tools. You can create an account, input the details of your different social media profiles and choose which ones you want to see on your Hootsuite home screen. You can also post to one or all of your accounts directly from the landing page, and what makes this site particularly useful is the ability to schedule updates. For example, you might be up late one night reading articles online, but it might look a bit sad to be tweeting a link to a blog post about a new development in renewable energy at 2 a.m. on a Saturday night. You could log into Hootsuite, draft the post you want to share and schedule it to be posted at a more suitable time.

Scheduling posts is also useful because you might spend a few hours one day reading lots of interesting posts, blogs and articles which you'd like to share online. However, you don't want to flood people's feeds with five updates in an hour and then share nothing for weeks. By scheduling posts, you can create a steady stream of regular updates which will keep you on your network's radar on a more regular basis.

If you're keen to get your profiles and updates seen by as many people as possible, you should schedule your posts at times when they are most likely to be noticed. Research carried out to figure out the optimum time to share content on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn is outlined in the following table.

Best and worst times to post on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn			
	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
Best time to post	1–4 p.m.	Mon–Thurs, 1 p.m.–3 p.m.	Tues–Thurs
Peak time	Wed 3 p.m.	Mon–Thurs 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	Midday and 5 p.m.–6 p.m.
Worst time	Weekends before 8 a.m. after 8 p.m.	Every day after 8 p.m. Fri after 3 p.m.	Mon and Fri 10 p.m.–6 a.m.

Source: www.blog.surepayroll.com

Are employers really looking?

Recruiters are busy, and not every employer has the time to research candidates online. However, an increasing number of companies are looking up candidates on the Internet. This can happen at various stages in the recruitment process. It's time-consuming, so interviewers are more likely to run an online search for you in the later stages, when they have a short-list for interviews – or even after the interviews have been conducted. Larger organisations with healthy hiring budgets can buy software that pools all of the information available about you on social networks into one place. This saves time and makes it easier for them to accurately assess your online presence. If one of those companies happens to be a company you'd like to work for, assume they're looking you up online.

Employer's view: Elizabeth Murphy, HR and Recruitment, Mobile Travel Technologies

Your social media “persona” really matters. Graduate recruiters do look at it, so start building your brand early. Have something intelligent to add to the conversation – comment on areas relevant to the career you want, join specific interest groups, follow industry leaders, etc.

I recall checking out a potential graduate's online profile, just to get a sense of where his passion/interests lay in terms of the role. His Facebook showed numerous images of him in various states of drunkenness and undress, and his posts constantly used lots of bad language and contained sexist comments. This was a person looking to work in Marketing, and his “personal brand” was way off.

Even if an employer doesn't look you up on social media, there's a good chance your new colleagues might. You'll want to make a good impression when you start at a new workplace, but if one of your new colleagues finds some of your digital dirt, it could significantly undermine your position there from the very beginning. The table on the next page outlines the main social media factors that influence employers' decisions to reject or hire candidates.

It's worth expanding on the point in the table stating that poor communication skills online can create a negative impression. Your posts should always use correct grammar, and make sure not to post anything containing spelling mistakes. Avoid text speak and overusing emoticons, as these can make you appear immature, which is the opposite of what employers want to see. It's also best to keep your language clean, so avoid swearing.

Many platforms don't have a built-in spelling and grammar checker. Where spell-check does exist, don't rely exclusively only on this. You may have included words that are correct, but not in the context in which you've used them. Be particularly careful when posting from your smartphone: autocorrect can do terrible things to innocent messages. If you're not confident in your spelling or use of grammar, you could ask a friend to review updates before you

Top social media factors impacting on your employment prospects

Top social media blunders that negatively impact on your employment prospects

- Provocative/inappropriate photos or information
- Information about you drinking or using drugs
- Bad-mouthing a previous employer
- Displaying poor communication skills
- Discriminatory comments related to race, gender, religion, etc.
- Lying about qualifications

Top social media factors that can positively influence hiring decisions

- Conveying a professional image
- Giving employers a good feel for your personality
- Showing that you are well-rounded, with a wide range of interests
- Providing background information that supports your claims about your professional qualifications
- Displaying creativity
- Demonstrating evidence of great communication skills
- Including other people's postings of great references

Source: www.careerbuilder.com.

post. In any case, it's a good idea to always reread anything before clicking "post".

What to do next

Now that you know why social media should be a part of your job search strategy, head to Chapter 2 to do some ground work before you launch into setting up and managing your social networks.

Useful websites

www.tweetdeck.twitter.com and **www.netvibes.com**

These are two other free social media aggregators worth looking into.

www.theundercoverrecruiter.com This is a very popular blog which frequently shares posts with advice on using social media in your job search.

www.theguardian.com The Guardian's Careers pages are a great resource for anyone searching for work, and they have plenty of social media resources too.

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