



# Using Social Media to Job Search

*Introduction by Lola Lucas*

*Social media is now an important part of a job search. Some people may need to pull back on what they share online because recruiters are checking their web presence for red flags. In contrast, those who are cautious about social media may require some encouragement to jump in and become visible. IDES provides excellent social media tips within two online resources: Career Information System (CIS) for students and ReNEW for experienced workers. Both resources have a section called Job Search, containing valuable tips on networking in person and online. The following article is a reprint from the CIS:*

If networking is the most effective way to get a job, then social networks might be the most effective way of networking. Face-to-face communication is still very important, so don't neglect traditional interaction. But studies show that job searchers who use social networks are hired more quickly than those who don't. Employers use

social networks to look for potential candidates, and there are even social networks meant just for professional use.

It used to be that social networks were considered job searchers' worst enemies. There are countless tales of people losing jobs or not being hired because of inappropriate photos or comments

on their profile or blog. Now, the opposite is true. Most employers seek out a job applicant's online presence to learn more about their professional experience.

There are a few rules that apply to how you present yourself online. It is important to keep your social networking profile pages clean. Think about what your employer would want to see. You don't need to be in a suit and tie in every photo. But if all your photos show you out late partying, you may be passed over for an interview. It may be necessary to delete photos or other content, or even cancel your account and start over.

While there are hundreds of social networking websites, the most popular and effective ones are described below.

## **LinkedIn**

Of all the social media websites, LinkedIn is the most career-oriented. The purpose of the site is to connect professionals with people already in their network, and help them network to advance their careers. It is not a place to share photos or personal details. It is a place to post your education and work history, discuss topics with other professionals, and search for new opportunities. With more than 100 million users, it is very likely that there are many current and past colleagues on LinkedIn, ready to connect with you.

There are numerous ways to use LinkedIn during your job search:

- Connect online with your real-world network in a professional manner.

- Post your resume so that others can find it when searching for workers with your skills.
- Ask questions of other professionals.
- Look up potential employers before you apply.
- Look up interviewers before job interviews to learn about their positions in the company.

Your LinkedIn profile is essentially your resume. You should include all of your education, work history, and significant accomplishments. You can also ask people you have worked with in the past for recommendations, which will display on your profile page. Anyone can view most of the information on your profile, making it a convenient way to make a searchable resume.

Updating your status in LinkedIn is one way to keep your network informed about your job search. You can also ask questions of others in your network. You can link your status updates to Twitter, and you can post links to industry news or blogs.

These are the people in your network. You can make connections using your e-mail address book or most computer address book programs. LinkedIn will also suggest connections based on where you live, where you work, where you went to school, and who you already know.

Your connections' profiles can be a wealth of knowledge about industries you are interested in. View their

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previous jobs and education to learn how you may want to grow in your career. You can also connect with additional people through shared connections. A mutual connection can be a great way to contact someone at a company you are interested in.

Most of the groups and associations on LinkedIn are based on education, experiences, or qualifications. They allow you to connect with professionals with similar interests or experience and build your network. There are groups for military veterans, alumni from various colleges, and professional organizations. LinkedIn groups for professional associations are great places to look for answers about your occupation or a company.

Most large business and organizations have a presence on LinkedIn, as do many smaller ones. This is a great place to find previous colleagues and supervisors. If you follow a company, you can find out about available positions and learn more about the people who work there.

You can enhance your online job search with LinkedIn. [SimplyHired.com](http://SimplyHired.com) has an option to log into LinkedIn while you search for jobs on their site. If you select this option, people in your network will display next to jobs if they work at the company offering the position. This can be a great way to learn more about the company, or even use that person as a reference when you apply. To learn more:

1. Go to [www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com).
2. Search for a job.
3. Look for the LinkedIn option in the top right corner of the results page.

Like any online tool, the best way to learn how to use it is to jump online and begin. To learn more, visit: [learn.linkedin.com/new-users](http://learn.linkedin.com/new-users).

To set up your own account or log in, visit [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com).

## Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social networking website on the Internet with more than a billion users.

Although designed as a personal social networking website, it can be a powerful tool in your job search. You can use it to communicate with family, friends, and previous coworkers to let them know what types of positions you are looking for and how your search is going.

Other ways you can use Facebook for your job search include:

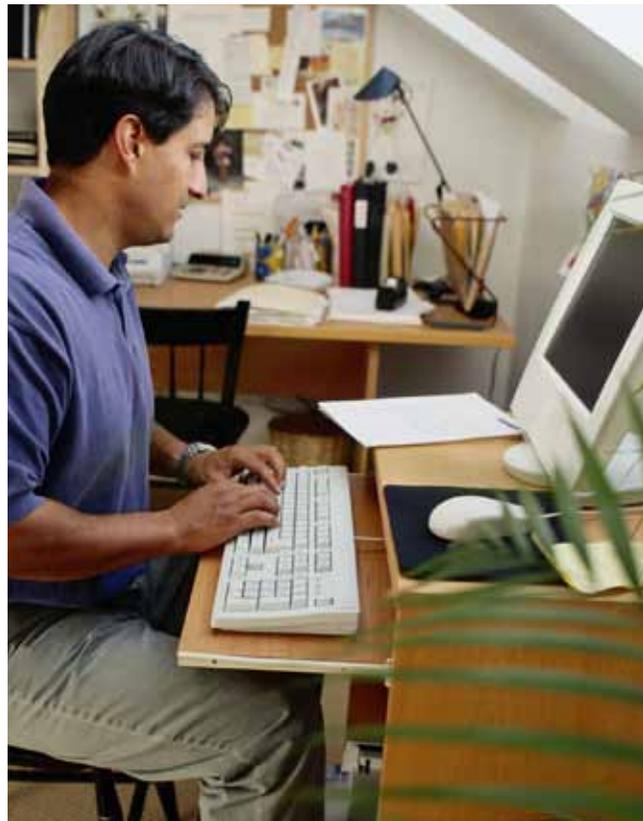
- Learn about companies you are interested in

- Update your network as your job search progresses
- Connect with friends, family, and former coworkers to broaden your network
- If you use Twitter or have a blog, share posts with your network

Your Facebook profile is more personal than a LinkedIn profile, but you should still keep in mind that potential employers may be able to see most of the information you post. You should list your work history and education in your profile.

Use your status to let your friends know what you are up to, or even ask for advice or help during your job search. You can also share links, photos, and videos. Just remember that all of your friends will be able to see them, and possibly even more people. Check your account's privacy settings and set them to what makes you feel comfortable. You can link your status updates to Twitter, and you can post links.

Your Facebook friends are most likely close acquaintances, friends, and family. Some may also be professional colleagues. If your relationship with someone in your network is only professional, use



LinkedIn to connect instead. Because of the personal nature of Facebook, contacts in your network with only a professional relationship are much less likely to connect with you on Facebook. Use LinkedIn for these contacts instead.

Events can be used to organize meetings or other group events. You can invite your friends on Facebook and notify attendees of any changes. Companies and organizations use Facebook to connect with customers and to share current news and information. Use these pages to learn about customer's interests and company news. Check company Facebook pages before job interviews to make sure you are aware of current news.

Like any online tool, the best way to learn how to use it is to jump online and begin. To learn more, visit [facebook.com/help](http://facebook.com/help).

To set up your own account or log in, visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

## Twitter

Twitter posts are very similar to status updates on LinkedIn and Facebook. They are designed to give short, frequent items of information to the public. These posts are called tweets, and are limited to 140 characters. They are a powerful way to share Internet links, events, or updates. Since anyone on the Internet can see any tweet and post the information again on their account (a “retweet”), information travels fast through Twitter.

You don’t have to post frequently to get a lot out of Twitter. Many companies and individuals post content that

will help you stay up-to-date in your occupation. You can search by topic or follow particular individuals or companies. If there is someone who works at a company you are interested in who uses Twitter, you can follow their tweets and respond to ones you find interesting. They will be aware of your interest, and this will help you build your network.

If you choose to post your own tweets during your job search, use them to enhance your online presence. Since anyone on the Internet can see your tweets, you never know who might be interested in what you have to say, and even become interested in hiring you.

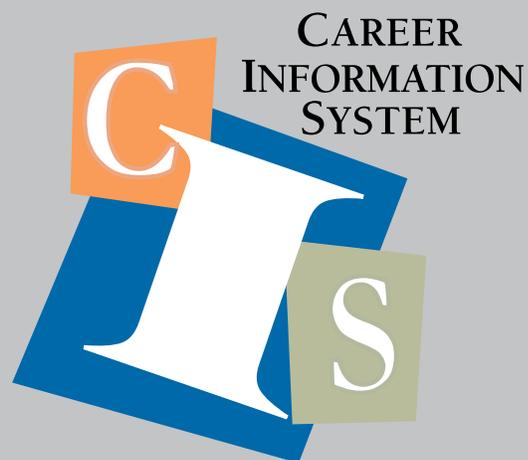
Ways you can use Twitter for your job search include:

- Follow companies you are interested in.
- Add contacts to your network by following people you meet or learn about on Twitter.
- Connect with friends, family, and former coworkers to broaden your network.
- Share relevant industry news.
- Share links to your blog post.

Twitter has its own language that you must learn in order to use it effectively. These include shortcuts that save space within the 140-character limit for a tweet. Here is a quick overview.

## For More Tips on Job Hunting:

1. Go to [www.ides.illinois.gov/careerinfo](http://www.ides.illinois.gov/careerinfo).
2. Click on either **Illinois Career Information System (CIS)** or **ReNEW**.
3. Click on either “**Visit CIS today!**” or “**Visit ReNEW today!**” in the center white area.
4. At the login page use the **Illinois resident log in with your city and zip code. Hint: bookmark the site to quickly return next time.**



- **#:** Creates a keyword or topic that others can follow. For example, if you searched for “#foodservice” on Twitter, you would see all posts with that keyword.
- **@:** Creates a link to another user’s account within your tweet. For example, @microsoft links to [www.twitter.com/microsoft](http://www.twitter.com/microsoft).
- **RT:** Short for retweet. Indicates that you are sharing another user’s tweet on your account.

Like any online tool, the best way to learn how to use it is to jump online and begin. To learn more, visit [support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics](http://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics).

To set up your own account or log in, visit: [www.twitter.com/signup](http://www.twitter.com/signup).

## Forums

Forums (sometimes called “message boards”) are online groups formed around a similar idea or subject. You may already be familiar with forums for hobbies, such as photography. There are also forums for industries that can be very useful during your job search. Forum members are more likely to have inside knowledge of the subject they are discussing. They may also be a source for job leads.

Ask former coworkers and other contacts about online forums related to the occupations you are interested in. You can also search online using the occupation or industry name and “forum.” For instance, if you search for “food service forum,” you will find forums for professional chefs, restaurant owners, and professional caterers.

## Blogs

Blogs (short for “web logs”) are websites that anyone can create and update for free. And many, many people do. There are more than 156 million blogs on the Internet. They range from personal or family blogs to blogs that focus on particular issues.

Many people use blogs to offer their knowledge and experience about a particular occupation or industry to others. These blogs can be a great way to find insight about occupations or companies you are interested in.

The easiest way to find blogs is to search for an occupation at [google.com](http://google.com), and then select “Blogs” from the left menu. This will display blog posts that contain the search term you entered.

Blogging can be a great way to build an online presence, and will also give you motivation to stay informed and current. It is also a way for you to demonstrate your knowledge, experience, and ability to communicate. Although you can start a blog for free, blogging isn’t a simple undertaking. You need to produce high-quality content, and it can take some time to build a following.

To learn more, visit a few of the most popular blog hosting websites:

- [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)
- [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
- [www.typepad.com](http://www.typepad.com)

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