Using Social Media in Your Career

In the past decade social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) has allowed us to extend our network beyond our location or geographical territory, and as a result, allowed us to communicate with friends, family, and business contacts from all around the world. As more employers and professionals are online than ever before, this is an opportunity for you to interact and network with them also!

Build a Professional Profile

Whichever social media venue you use, make sure your profile is professional and current. This means:

- Using a professional and not a casual picture. Be consistent through all your social media.
- Separating the personal from the professional e.g. restrict access on Facebook so professional contacts only see what is appropriate. Only link relevant tweets to your LinkedIn profile.
- Updating your profile regularly with relevant information
- “Google” yourself. Is there information that you would rather professional contacts not see? Ask your friends to un-tag you and improve your professional presence so that you appear higher in search results.
- Introducing yourself when adding a new friend or requesting a connection. Rather than sending a generic link explain who you are and why you would like to connect with them. Include information such as mutual friends or connections if applicable
  - View the LinkedIn videos that help you get the most out of your account. Go to https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students

Building Your Network

- Import your contacts from your email. Doing this step can help you establish your first set of contacts, and eventually allow you to extend your network beyond just your mutual friends.
- Join groups that relate to your career area, follow people in your industry. This could include professional associations, alumni groups, individuals or organizations who are tweeting or blogging about your career/industry area. LinkedIn also has groups such as “Students and Recent Grads” where students, recent grads, career professionals and industry reps exchange useful information and leads.
- View the contacts of your connections. People you know may be connected to people in your career area. If so, ask your connections for an introduction (remember to personalize requests, explaining why this connection could be helpful and thank them for the intro).

Finding Career and Employment Information

- Monitor and participate in group discussions: you can learn a great deal about your career area/industry by listening to these professionals and asking relevant questions.
- Ask for advice. Do not ask for a job. Advice and information can help you understand what a career is really like as well as what you need to do to be competitive when you graduate. As you establish connections, you can ask about potential opportunities and hiring/recruitment practices, however do not ask for job leads from the get-go. Get to know your contacts first.
- Do not be ashamed to say you’re looking for work. People have successfully used social media for their job search by letting their social media contacts and friends know that they are looking for work. Keep in mind that status updates should be used in moderation. So, if you don’t get any results this way, change your approach.
- Company search. LinkedIn can be especially helpful if you know of an organization that interests you already. Simply search for the organization in LinkedIn and you can find stats on the company, current employees, former employees, as well as their past or current position within the company. Use this specific search option to find a contact, or to set up an information interview with someone at an organization that interests you.

Access to this kind of information can be extremely helpful and can give you an advantage as a networker. Many organizations are using Facebook and Twitter to share information about their operations. Use these venues to find company information too!
Tips for Using Social Media

LinkedIn Tips  http://www.linkedin.com/
- This is a professional networking site. Post relevant career/work information only.
- Present your experience with descriptive, relevant language, including your title, summary and experience sections.
- Show your portfolio including any relevant work samples under the ‘upload your work’ option when editing your profile.
- Personalize your URL.
- Ask for recommendations from those who can positively describe your work. The best way to get a recommendation is to ask them. Be professional in your requests and return the favour by providing a positive recommendation for them.
- Be mindful of how you are using or misusing your network. For example, do not bombard or “spam” your online contacts with constant profile updates or requests as you might see your list of contacts eventually decrease.

Facebook Tips  http://www.facebook.com/
- Use status updates moderately and effectively. Think about who your audience is and what they need to know.
- Don’t spam friends with invites, games or applications. Avoid sending out “mass” invitations or recommendations.
- Read Facebook’s privacy settings carefully and make sure your profile presents only what you want others to see. Also, avoid writing private messages on public profiles – anything private should be said in person, or at least written in an Inbox message. These settings change frequently and it is best to check periodically to see if they are what you want them to be for your profile.
- Use Facebook to gain new contacts. Use key words within the search box to find groups relevant to your career interests. When joining a group, look for hints to see if the group is active and appropriate to what you are looking for. The more you communicate within the group, the more you will strengthen your networking bond with these individuals, and increase your chance of gaining potential contacts that may aid with your career endeavours.
- Organize your contacts: create separate friends lists. Go to Facebook’s Friends tab on your profile page. Here you can establish your friends into specific “lists.” For example, you can separate your friends into personal and professional lists, allowing you to filter which friends you want to share important updates with.

Twitter Tips  http://twitter.com/
- Market yourself in your bio
- Customize your background to showcase your skills and creativity
- Have a link to your online resume (tools like VisualCV can help)
- Follow industry experts on Twitter. Use their directory of users: Twellow.com
- Use “Twitjobseek” to find positions through Twitter

Blogging Tips
- Decide if your blog is personal or professional and link accordingly
- Once you are working, make sure you don’t blog inappropriately about your employer

Career Centre Resources (available in our Career Library in the Networking section):
- Seven Days to Online Networking. Ellen Sautter and Diane Crompton, JIST Works, 2008

Please note that this information is subject to change. It is best to refer to the original sources for the most up to date information. (Updated June 2018)