10 ways to use social media in your job hunt

By Anne Fisher, Copyright Fortune

Over 80% of employers now look for new hires on LinkedIn. Here's how to make the most of your online "personal brand."

Dear Annie: I've been working for the same company for the past 19 years, but I just found out my department is being eliminated (outsourced) three months from now, so I'm job hunting for the first time in almost two decades. Obviously, lots of things have changed during that time, and I admit I haven't kept pace. A friend sent me your column about social media sites (Facebook your way to a new job?), which is very helpful. But I'm just wondering whether it's really necessary to put so much effort into this online stuff. I really enjoy in-person networking, and I think I'm pretty good at it, so isn't that enough? —Redundant in Raleigh

Dear R.R.: No question about it, face-to-face networking is crucial, and if you're good at it, you have a distinct advantage over many people who find it a chore. Even so, your friend is right: You'd be making a serious mistake to skip social media sites.

"People who have neglected to create and update a social media presence, particularly on LinkedIn, could miss out on being considered for positions," says Ali Chambers, vice president at Boston-based executive coaching and outplacement firm ClearRock. "Extensive, targeted in-person networking is still the best way to find a new job, but it may not compensate for the lack of a complete and updated social media profile."

That's because 83% of employers now use LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to find new hires, according to a survey by recruiting platform Jobvite. Of those, by far the largest number, 89%, rely mainly on LinkedIn, followed by Facebook at 28% and Twitter at 14%.

Without a strong presence on LinkedIn in particular, Chambers says, you make it more difficult for hiring managers who need your skills to find you. "Employers are also using social media sites to find out more information about you after they receive your resume," she adds, "so it also helps to be visible online at that stage."

Chambers offers these 10 tips for getting noticed:

1. Think of your online persona as a brand. Identify the skills that set you apart from the crowd. "Your brand should define the areas where you specialize, and make a persuasive case for the value you can bring," says Chambers.

2. Use your professional headline to showcase your abilities. On LinkedIn, the headline right
below your name is "an especially important part of your branding," Chambers notes. Rather than just stating your current (or most recent) job title, the headline "should consist of keywords that accentuate the range of what you can do."

Talkback: Have you found a job through a social media site? Leave a comment below.

3. Position yourself as an expert in your field. Your LinkedIn profile should "include searchable keywords that cover the depth of your experience and skills," Chambers says. "Employers often use social media sites to search for solutions to specific problems, and your expertise may be what they are looking for."

4. Check carefully for any discrepancies between your resume and your online profiles."Dates of employment, titles, and other details have to match those on your resume precisely," says Chambers. "Employers will pick up any inconsistencies right away." Even a small, innocent error can make you look dishonest or just careless -- not the first impression you want to create.

5. Join LinkedIn and Facebook groups comprised of people in your field. You may well meet prospective employers this way, and "answering questions from other group members and discussing the latest industry trends is a great way to stay current in your field."

6. Include your LinkedIn URL in the signature block of your emails. Doing so encourages people to click on your profile, and the more activity your profile gets, the higher up your name will appear in a search.

7. Make sure you adjust the privacy settings on your profile to "public." You want employers to find your LinkedIn profile when they Google you, so "adjust your privacy settings to accept InMail, a service that is often used by recruiters," says Chambers.

8. Devote a Facebook page to your professional life, in addition to your separate, personal Facebook page. Include the same information that appears on LinkedIn, perhaps with a few more colorful details -- a photo of you giving a speech to a professional group, for example, along with a synopsis of what you said. A Facebook page that is strictly work-related gives you one more opportunity to impress potential employers when they go fishing online, so why not use it to the fullest?

9. Keep your social media profiles updated. "Give meaningful status updates, such as links to your blog if you have one, to show that you're continuing to develop your expertise," Chambers suggests.

10. Include brief reports on your job search in your status updates. This is especially important if your job search goals evolve over time, or if you acquire any new training or qualifications as you go along. Even if that's not the case, it never hurts to remind your
connections every now and then that you're available. One of them may know of the perfect job opening for you.

Good luck!