



LinkedIn, Social Media, and Networking

Social Media and Job Seeking – Clean Up Your Accounts

McAdams, L. (2018). How to “clean up” your social media presence before a job search. Retrieved From Ladders Web Site: <https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/how-to-clean-up-your-social-media-presence-before-a-job-search>.

Still think hiring managers aren't checking your Facebook or LinkedIn and searching your name in Google? Now might be a good time to reconsider that stance: **70% of employers in 2017 used social media to screen candidates**, according to a CareerBuilder survey. This percentage isn't likely to decrease, but don't let it intimidate you – you won't need to delete all your Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. Let's take a look at what you can do to prep your social media profiles for a job search, which might entail a background check or a critical look at your online reputation.

Google yourself

Millennials are the age group most likely to do a Google self-search, but it's a good idea for anyone to do one before a job interview to see what comes up in search results. Check each page and do some advanced searching – you'd be surprised what Google can pick up. When doing a self-search, does your personal website show up on the first page of results? Is the content displayed about you positive, accurate, and relevant? These are two important questions you should be asking.

Below are some other things to consider when you do a self-search on the Internet.

Check for personal information: A simple Google search can reveal a lot about you, including your phone number, address, email, location, and any photos of yourself.

Always do an Incognito Search: Using a private browsing window when you search yourself is particularly important because this allows you to see unbiased results that aren't affected by your previous searches, logged in services, or other personalization factors that Google implements. Personalized searching is useful when it comes to searching for relevant products or services, but when preparing for a job interview, you want to see through the eyes of a hiring manager and have unbiased search results.

Set a Google alert for your name: If you set one, every time your name comes up in a Google search result, you will be notified right away by email. This is particularly helpful for those who blog or are in journalism and want to keep track of their published posts. You can also find out which sites have been linking to your work.

If you'd like a thorough analysis of your online reputation, background checking sites like BrandYourself.com provide feedback about search results for your name and will help you fix any issues you have.

Separate personal from professional

Many of us have two sides to our social media accounts: personal and professional. Yet sometimes, the line between the two is blurred. Content that belongs on a private Facebook account might end up on a professional Twitter page and vice versa. So how can you draw the line when it comes to your personal and professional sides?

Avoid posting controversial topics, religious and political views, or personal information on professional accounts. Instead, use these platforms for engaging in conversations with your connections and sharing your career wins. Keep reading below for examples of what is safe and unsafe to post on your social media accounts.

Appropriate things to post on social media

- Business updates
- Sharing news about your industry
- Photos and videos of interesting place or things to do in your city
- Current events articles
- Upcoming conferences, webinars, or other events

Inappropriate things to post on social media

- Complaints about your boss or work
- Photos of you partying
- Political and religious rants
- Vulgar and violent language
- Relationship or personal issues

Remember, you want to show off best qualities to a hiring manager in a job interview, so keep the same practice in your social media accounts. The great thing about having an active professional account is that you can pick and choose what you want to display.

Make personal accounts more secure

Before posting onto your personal social media accounts, be mindful of what you're sharing and who is going to see it. Internet content lasts forever, and while privacy settings may protect your accounts from some threats, nothing will ever be truly private.

Keeping this in mind, there are some steps you can take to strengthen the security of your personal Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Facebook

- **Who can see my stuff:** This is the primary privacy setting you'll find in Facebook's Privacy Settings. You can switch the default public setting on your post under "**Who can see my stuff?**" and make your content only visible to friends. You can also choose who will see your post using the **audience selector** when you make a new Facebook status. The audience selector control remembers what you select, so unless you change your audience, all future posts will be shared with the same people.
- **Limit past posts:** If you have always made your Facebook posts public and now want to improve your security, limiting old posts will prevent anyone outside of your friends from seeing it.
- **Timeline and tagging:** You can adjust these settings for who can see tagged photos of you on your timeline, and also review any photos, statuses and comments that others have tagged you in.

- **Photo settings:** Even if you've made your Facebook statuses only visible to friends, profile pictures and cover photos are open to the public by default. Check to see if your albums and mobile uploads are set to public as well.

Twitter

- **Protect my Tweets:** By default, your Tweets are all public. Selecting the "Protect my Tweets" option will make all your Tweets private and only visible to followers you've accepted.
- **Turn off location:** Twitter gives you the option to add your current location to your Tweet, but it isn't a default setting.
- **Discoverability:** Disabling this option will prevent anyone that has your email address or phone number from searching and finding your Twitter account.
- **No tagging in photos:** Like Facebook, turning off this setting stops other users from tagging you in a photo they post.

Compared to Facebook, Twitter's privacy settings are quite simple. Make sure you understand all the privacy settings of your personal social media accounts, and take the time to review your posts when in the job search process.

Keep professional accounts public

Having no online presence isn't a good sign to hiring managers, as this indicates to them that you aren't well-rounded. Showing that you are fluent in social media platforms is also promising to employers – after all, being savvy in social media is a desirable skill to have on a resume.

For professional social media accounts, it's great if you can keep your name public so that it is easily searchable. Keep your Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook content focused on what you can offer in your field and what accomplishments you want to highlight. Be careful of sharing too many details about your career, but also avoid not sharing enough about your job qualifications, as this may keep you from getting more opportunities to network.

Finally, remember to update your professional social media accounts frequently. Employers are looking to see that you're engaging in your industry, whether it's current events topics or professional development. They also want to see how you are influencing others or what you offer to your field.

Polish and clean up your accounts

The last step you need to take to ensure your accounts are job-search appropriate is to do some social media housekeeping. This doesn't just mean removing unsavory photos or inappropriate statuses on Facebook. Check over your LinkedIn and professional profiles so that everything is up-to-date and all the information is accurate.

One of the first things a hiring manager will see on your social media profiles is your photo. Having a good profile photo will not only increase your response and referral rates, but also a way to build your personal brand. Research shows that an effective profile photo is crucial for making yourself look competent, likeable, and influential.

If you find that going through all your old Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram posts is time-consuming, **Scrubber** is a handy tool that show you any posts that may be a red flag to employers.

Conclusion

Employers can learn a lot about you from your resume and interview, but sometimes it takes a little bit more to sell yourself. Take advantage of the benefits of social media – it's an often-

needed extra step to show what you bring to the table, a way to add flair to your application, and make a lasting impression on your potential employers.

Network on LinkedIn

LinkedIn. (2013). How to Network on LinkedIn. Retrieved from LinkedIn Web Site:

<https://content.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/linkedinforgood/en-us/resources/youth/HANDOUT---How-to-Network-for-Students.pdf>.

1. 100% complete = 40x more opportunities. Building connections starts with people seeing all you have to offer. Members with complete profiles are 40x more likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn.
 2. You're more experienced than you think. Think broadly about all your experience, including summer jobs, unpaid internships, volunteer work, and student organizations. You never know what might catch someone's eye.
 3. Use your inbox. Networking doesn't mean reaching out cold to strangers. Start building your LinkedIn network by uploading your online address book (from your email account) and connecting to people you know and trust.
 4. Get personal. As you build your connections, customize your requests with a friendly note and, if necessary, a reminder of where you met, who you met through, or what organization you have in common.
 5. Join the "In" crowd. LinkedIn Groups can help you form new connections. Start with your school groups and reach out to alumni (they love to connect with students). Find volunteer organizations and associations you belong to.
 6. Lend a (virtual) hand. As you build connections, think about how you can support others. Comment on a classmate's status update or forward a job listing to a friend – your generosity will be returned!
 7. Update your status early and often. Networking isn't just about who you know; it's about who knows you. Stay on your network's radar by updating your LinkedIn status regularly – what you're reading, working on, and more.'
 8. Request informational interviews. As a student, don't ask professional contacts for a job. Instead, ask for a brief phone conversation to seek their job search advice. Alumni, family friends, and industry leaders are often willing to do so.
 9. Do your homework. Before an informational interview, a formal interview, or a networking event, use LinkedIn's Advanced Search and Company Pages to learn about the background and interests of the people you're meeting.
 10. Step away from the computer! Support your online networking with a real human touch. Set up calls, attend live events, and send snail mail notes to people you interact with on LinkedIn.
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Getting an Informational Interview

Bell, E. (2018). How to Ask for an Informational Interview (and Get a "Yes"). Retrieved from The Muse Web Site: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-ask-for-an-informational-interview-and-get-a-yes>.

The informational interview is the secret tool everyone should have in their back pocket. A hybrid of an amazing networking opportunity, an info-session, and a job interview, it can give anyone looking for a job or pondering a career change insider scoop (not to mention a much-needed morale boost).

The problem is that **these opportunities aren't advertised anywhere**, typically **require a lot of work** on your end to make happen, and, in most cases, mean you have to convince strangers why they should take time out of their day to help you.

But with the right approach, you can land these interviews (and maybe even a job). Here's my advice for finding and approaching potential contacts and getting them to say yes—every time.

Find the Right People

This may seem obvious, but choosing who you approach can make all the difference in hearing back.

Start by making a **list of companies you'd love to work at and of job titles or positions** you'd be interested in. While people who fit on either list are good, someone who works for your dream company *and* has your dream role is where you'll get the most bang for your buck.

That said, it's important to consider what the person does at the company and the size of the company—you want to target people who are in an aspirational role, but who aren't so high up that they won't have time to meet with you. I may want to talk to the CMO of a major company, but I can probably learn more talking to the marketing director of a smaller company. Also, **look for people you have some sort of connection with**—if someone went to your college or has a shared connection, he or she will be more likely to want to meet with you.

I prefer using LinkedIn to find people, but then reaching out over email—it's easier for people to respond to, and you won't look like LinkedIn spam.

Perfect the Art of the Ask

Any good cold email has two things: a **clear message** (why you're reaching out), and **an easy-to-understand ask** (the action you want the recipient to take). Here's a simple formula that checks both boxes and that will work most of the time:

1. Start by Asking for Help

This sounds obvious (and, OK, a little weird), but it's a proven fact that **people love to feel like they are helping others**. So, if you literally start by saying, "I'd love your help," or "I hope you'll be able to help me out..." your chances of getting a positive response go up significantly.

2. Be Clear

Ask for something **very specific**, and make it as easy as possible for the person to say yes. Saying, "I'd love to know more about what you do and how you got your start" is okay, but doesn't tell

someone how much of his or her time you're after or what you're really suggesting. Instead, try **something like, "I'd love to take you to a quick coffee so I can hear your perspective** on this industry and what it's like to work at your company. I'll actually be in your area next week and would be happy to meet you wherever is convenient for you."

3. Have a Hook

A great way to increase your chance of landing the interview is to demonstrate why you really want to meet with this person. Do you admire her career path? Do you think the work he's currently doing at company X stands out as the best? Maybe you have a shared connection and think she would be a great voice of wisdom. Don't be afraid to **share why you are specifically reaching out to this person**. The more personalized your ask feels, the greater chance of success you'll have.

4. Be Very Considerate

Remember that, in asking for an informational interview, you're **literally asking someone to put his or her work on hold to help you**. Show your contact you understand this by saying, "I can only imagine how busy you must get, so even 15-20 minutes would be so appreciated."

5. Make Sure You Don't Seem Like You're Looking for a Job (Even if You Are)

If you sound like you're really just looking for a job, there's a good chance this person will push you to HR or the company's career page. So be sure to make it **clear that you really want to talk to this person to learn about his or her career history and perspective** on the job or industry. After you meet and make a great impression is when you can mention the job hunt.

Follow Up, and Be Pleasantly Persistent

If you don't hear back right away, don't worry. People are busy, and sometimes these things slip to the bottom of a person's to-do list. The key is to not just give up. If you haven't heard back in a week, reply to your first email and politely ask if your contact has had a chance to read your previous email. Also, use this opportunity to reiterate how much it would mean to you to have 15 minutes to learn from him or her.

I personally believe that it's your responsibility to continue to follow up (as nicely as possible) every couple of weeks until you've heard an answer one way or the other. Some would say that after one or two tries, you may run the risk of upsetting the person—but I say that sometimes, persistence pays off. At the end of the day, it's really up to you and your personal comfort level.

That said, once you shoot off a few emails, you'll see that most people are happy to help (hey, people

love talking about themselves). The next step? Getting ready for the meeting. Read on for our best advice on acing the informational interview.

The Informational Interview – Questions to Ask

Zhang, L. (2018). 3 Steps to a Perfect Informational Interview. Retrieved from The Muse Web Site: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/3-steps-to-a-perfect-informational-interview>.

Let's say you managed the tricky process of asking for an informational interview and have succeeded in arranging a meeting with an amazing contact. What now? How do you make the most of this conversation—while still keeping things casual and comfortable?

As always, it's just a matter of being prepared. Here's a three-part process for your next meeting that'll make sure you get the advice you need and make a great impression.

1. Warm Up

People love to talk about themselves, so when you first sit down, let them! Get the conversation going by asking your contact something about his or her experiences thus far—something he or she knows all about. Some good places to begin:

- How did you get your start in this field?
- What's it like working at your company?
- What projects are you working on right now?
- What's your opinion on [exciting development in the industry]?

You should also be prepared to chat about yourself, your past experiences, and your career goals. Remember, this meeting isn't just a time to ask for advice and learn from your contact's experiences—it's also a chance to make an impression. For example, don't be afraid to preface your questions with what you already know. Something like, "It looks like recent developments in the field of nuclear fission are going to be pretty disruptive to the energy industry. How do you think this will affect your company?"

2. Get What You Want

After you've made some general conversation, it's time to move on to what you came for: the advice you can't get anywhere else.

Before the meeting, **think through the insider information you want to learn from this person.** What information are you seeking? Is there something you can learn from this person that would be difficult for you to learn on your own? Depending on where you are in the job search process, adjust your questions accordingly.

For example, if you're still in **exploration mode**, trying to find out if, say, working for an educational technology startup is for you, then ask questions like:

- How did you choose this company or position over others in your field?
- What is the most rewarding thing about working in this industry? The most challenging?
- My background is in urban planning—how do you think I can best leverage my previous experience for this field?

If you're further along in your job search and could use some job hunting and interviewing tips for specific companies, don't be afraid to ask questions like:

- I'm waiting to hear back about interviews for positions—what advice would you give me about how to best prepare?
- What experiences, skills, or personality traits does your company look for in new hires?
- What do you wish you had done differently when you first started at your company?
- What job search advice would you give to someone in my situation?

Of course, you'll want to go with the flow of the conversation—**you're trying to build a relationship, not fire off as many questions as you can.** Also remember that what these questions have in common is that they are all seeking advice. Keep it that way. **It's no mystery that you are clearly looking for a new position or career change, and the fastest way to alienate your contact is to ask for a job (or anything along those lines).** If your contact offers to forward your resume based on your conversation, then by all means, take advantage of it. But that process is for him or her to initiate, not you.

3. Tap Into Their Network

That said, as you're wrapping up the meeting, **you should ask for recommendations for two or three more people who would be good to talk to as you continue networking.** The likelihood someone will take time to chat with you goes up significantly if your initial request comes through a mutual contact, so it's a fast, easy way to talk to even more people.

The key here is to **make your request as specific as possible**. This might be counterintuitive, but it actually makes it easier for your contact to think of someone when you say, “Could you recommend a couple more people for me to speak with to learn more about exit opportunities after a career in consulting?” than to come up with an answer to, “Is there anyone else you would recommend that I speak with?”

To recap: Get the conversation going, know what you want to get out of the meeting, and don’t leave without knowing who you’re contacting next. And don’t forget to follow up with a thank-you note! Better yet, **follow up again with an update** on your meetings with the people he or she recommended and the results of your job search. After all, your informational interviewees aren’t just useful for their one-time advice—they can become a long-term part of your network.

How Not to Annoy Contacts....

Murray, M. (2018). How Not to Annoy Your Contacts When You're Asking for Help. Retrieved from The Muse Web Site: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-not-to-annoy-your-contacts-when-youre-asking-for-help>.

When you’re looking for new job, it’s not the time to get shy. It’s time to pull out all the stops—call in favors, reach out to everyone you can think of, and do what you have to do to get your name out there. It’s a hustle! But asking for help isn’t always easy—especially from one that friend or contact who seems to be connected to the hiring manager at just about every dream company you look up on LinkedIn. You know, the one you find yourself wanting to reach out to over and over again. How should you take advantage this person (which you should, of course), but avoid being annoying?

Follow these rules to get the help you need—without being obnoxious.

Get Your Stuff Together

Before you reach out to anyone, **get to know the companies and position types you’d like to apply to on your own. Do your research, complete your resume and basic cover letter, make sure your LinkedIn profile is 100% up to date**, and be ready to jump on an opportunity should it arise.

Why? If you reach out to someone asking to connect you to a hiring manager and he or she agrees, you don’t want to have to this person wait a couple of days for you to put your materials together. And **always be ready to jump on a call and discuss your background**. The easier you make it for people to help you, the more they’ll want to.

Make Sure You're Serious

I'm a firm believer in the **“apply to everything that looks interesting” approach to a job search—it's one way to learn what you want and don't want from a position**—but when you're asking someone to introduce you to a hiring manager or recommend you for a position, you better be serious. If it's a company you're really not that into or a position you know is way out of your skill set, it's not worth anyone's time asking for a connection just because it exists. **Save your favors for the select few jobs you're really, really gunning for.**

Be Reasonable and Gracious

It's great to be a go-getter, but when asking for help it's good to remember the golden rule—don't ask someone to do something that you'd have a hard time doing yourself. Requesting that someone you've just met to introduce you to a CEO or top-level executive, for example, is a bit tacky. It's better to start things off by asking for advice or insight into the company instead.

And always be respectful of people's time and the help they're giving you. Remember to say thank you, make requests instead of demands, and follow up to let them know how it went.

There's nothing worse than someone who asks for a favor, then drops off the face of the Earth.

Annoy if You Must

Sometimes, with some people, it simply can't be avoided—you have to be a little annoying to get what you want. And that's OK. If you really want something, you should be willing to go out and, well, annoy people for it. **Whether it's applying several times to the same company, reaching out to the same contact to see if she's sent on that resume you gave her last week, or following up after a phone interview to see how the hiring process is going—a lot of getting a job is about sticking your neck out.** As long as you're following up the right way (**graciously, via email, and no more than three times**) and following the rules above, you shouldn't be afraid to bug someone a *tiny* bit.

It's good to remember that, for the most part, people like helping out—part of growing in your own career is being in a position to help others grow. So be respectful of others' time, but don't be afraid either. **Another part of growing in your career is about making opportunities for yourself, not waiting for them to come to you.**

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