

TOP 3 RULES FOR USING SOCIAL NETWORKS IN YOUR JOB SEARCH



Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace. The fundamental missions of these services are to help people network, whether socially or professionally, so it's natural that their use has crept into the job seeking realm.

In their most basic form, they allow you to make "friends" and connect to your "friends" friends. So for example, if you've always wanted to work for Clark Corp, and your LinkedIn friend has a friend that works there, you have the means to request an introduction to the person at Clark Corp.

Many job seekers have already built extensive social networks, which allows them to see how they might be connected to a potential employer. They often learn a friend of a friend is an important link to a company. It's one thing to submit your resume blindly, and another to have a friend of a friend "walk" your resume into the HR office and say they've heard you are a star. Lastly, one cool feature some of the sites offer is an "endorsement" capability where you can have people in your network vouch for you. I find these endorsements helpful when they are posted by the prior manager of a candidate.

Social networking sounds simple right? Aside from the time it takes to set up a network (by searching for your friends and inviting them to join your personal network), it's pretty straight forward. **With that said, here are three important "don'ts" when using these social networks:**

1. **Remember that your social network pages will be seen by a wide group of people.** Increasingly, employers are using these services to "research" candidates. The pictures of you chugging a beer, or your affiliation with the Legalize Pot subgroup won't help your job search.
2. **One of the fun features of these sites is that they send you an alert when your "friend" has updated their page.** The problem? More than once I've received a message that says "Joe has posted his vacation pictures to his page" ...at 2:00pm. Hmmm, that promising, supposedly employed candidate, is fooling around on Facebook at 2pm. Maybe he's less promising after all.
3. **Be smart about your friend requests.** Many people routinely "friend" everyone they meet, including the recruiters and HR people they meet in their job search. Remember, if they accept your friend request they'll now have access to your page that features pictures of you in your punk rocker costume, as well as access to your entire network. If you've got network connections to your previous boss, they now also have an easy way of securing a reference that might be problematic for you.