

Social media isn't just about connecting with friends anymore. Nowadays, your online presence can be one of the most valuable assets in your international job search. Employers routinely scan social networking sites when considering potential candidates and HR managers almost always conduct additional online searches before bringing candidates in for interviews. If your social network profiles reflect a cohesive personal and professional brand with a solid cross-cultural skill component, you greatly increase your chances of being considered for an international position. Your online profiles are also accessible from around the world, and are one of the best ways you can make an initial introduction to a potential employer or mentor who isn't located near you. So, how can you start making the most of your online self? Here are a few top pointers:

Your Personal Brand

Your personal brand as an individual and potential employee is what makes you recognizable. It's the unique combination of hard and soft skills, traits, experience, successes and industry focuses that makes you stand out from the crowd. Start thinking of creative ways to describe your experiences, skills and passions in short bursts of text. What key traits and industries do you want employers to associate with you? Make these visible online.

Facebook

Because a link to your Facebook profile is likely to appear on the first page of Google results for your name, it's best never to publish anything you wouldn't want your current or future employer to read. Increased privacy settings are excellent for those who use Facebook for casual, personal connections – but you can also make the decision to use your Facebook profile to improve your international job prospects. Start thinking of your page as a comprehensive and visually-engaging CV. Fill out your work history, highlight your language skills and publish your travel history with the "Places" feature. Join Facebook groups related to your industry or international activities and be active in them!

Check out Facebook's ever-updating App Center to access the latest job search apps and use well-timed status updates to tap into your friend network for leads on internationally-oriented opportunities in your field.

Twitter

Twitter is a valuable networking, profile-building and job-searching resource. The platform provides you with easy access to information from organizations and individuals you admire and want to work with, and gives you a way to contact them directly. Because potential employers can easily access your tweet history, it's also a great opportunity to prove you have a genuine interest in your field.

There are a few basic things to remember: Choose a good Twitter handle; make it something professional and memorable that incorporates your name. Use the 160-character description line for your profile to let the Twitterverse know who you are; refine it so that it's clear, memorable and strongly reflects your personal brand.

Make an effort to build followers, provide thought-provoking industry-related content, comment on the latest industry news, get involved in conversations and retweet valuable content. Like Facebook, Twitter is generally a fairly casual platform. Although you'll be using it to highlight your professional interests and skills, don't forget to tap into your sense of fun. A positive outlook and sense of humor are a highly-sought-after traits – and especially crucial in the international workplace. Twitter provides an especially easy way to reveal your multi-dimensional personality.

LinkedIn

Having an online resume has become increasingly important over the past decade, and LinkedIn is the leading online professional networking database. Every student and job seeker should have a profile. The LinkedIn template is simple to use, allowing you to load a photo, a one-line professional description, a detailed professional description, education and work history, relevant external Web links and more.

When you first create an account, take time to research and review the profiles of professionals in your industry before completing your own. One of the most useful elements of the LinkedIn world is the ability to search for those currently succeeding in your field and see how they present themselves. What does their professional headline look like? What keywords do they use to describe themselves? What skills does their work history highlight? Make note of these elements and think of how you might incorporate a similar approach into your own profile.

By the time you actually create your profile, you should have a sense of your general career aspirations and your intended approach to personal branding. Keep in mind that most people reviewing your profile will be scanning rather than reading every word, so it's in your best interest to keep explanatory descriptions short and keyword-rich.

Once you have your profile, it's time to start building your network! Start by importing your email contact list, and by connecting with former bosses, colleagues, teachers and classmates. Then it's time to start researching second- and third-degree connections and expanding your network. Your ideal network will have 200+ worldwide connections, the majority of which will be professionals working in your industry.

Use the "advanced" search options to find second- and third-degree connections based on worldwide location, industry, current employer and more. You may find professionals that you want to connect with here. Participating in industry or go-abroad-related groups and discussion boards on LinkedIn, is also an excellent way to open the doors to new and useful connections.

By presenting a comprehensive and internationally-oriented LinkedIn profile, and by starting to become actively engaged on the network, you will already be greatly increasing your chances of hearing about or being head-hunted for jobs in your field.

Creating a stand-out LinkedIn profile and assembling a network of industry professionals located around the world should be a top priority for any student or young professional aiming for success on the international playing field.

Other Ways to Be Visible Online

Social networks aren't the only way to build your online presence. The more positive, high-quality and career-related content you have online, the more successful your online job search will be, so dive in! You can stand out from the crowd by:

- start an industry-focused blog where you report and comment on the latest news in your field
- create a video-blog documenting your professional and volunteer-related undertakings
- keep a travel or international experience blog that highlights your cross-cultural learning experiences
- if you're fluent in a second language, keep an industry-related blog in your second language

Remember the Real World!

Being active online is a crucial part of the job search, but don't forget to develop and maintain your real-world networks. Participate in events, meet with mentors, attend conferences and stay engaged.

Last Word

Your online presence matters! The landscape of online job hunting has completely changed over the last decade, and if you're not already using social media to boost your career, we highly recommend that you start doing so right away. We wish you the best as you begin building your professional brand online!

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