

LinkedIn and social media

Increasing numbers of employers check potential candidates' social media accounts when recruiting and use social media to promote their vacancies. How do you make sure that your online presence presents you in a professional way to potential employers and how can you optimise social media in your job search?

LinkedIn is a free online professional network. It is a great tool for connecting with other professionals, gaining an insight into the conversations that are happening in different industries and for finding jobs.

These three simple steps can help you create a professional LinkedIn presence and increase your visibility to employers.

1. Create a profile

Your LinkedIn profile is more than a CV, it's a dynamic snapshot of your knowledge, experience and skills. Creating a good profile is essential to enable potential employers to find you.

Completing a few key elements of your profile will ensure that you have a better chance of being discovered.

Profile picture

Profiles that include pictures get 14 times more views than those without. First impressions count.

Remember that you are presenting yourself to other professionals and potential employers, so choose a clear, sharp picture with a neutral background and don't forget to smile!

Headline

Use your current role (eg: media and communications student) or your career goal (eg: aspiring communications professional)

Summary

Think of this section as your elevator pitch. Make sure it has impact by keeping it short and succinct. Include your strengths, interests and career goals and include some keywords related to the industry and job role you are interested in to increase your search potential.

Experience

This is what makes you stand out. Include work experience, part time jobs and volunteer work and the skills you have gained from them. Include keywords when describing your responsibilities and examples of your achievements. Add links or documents to showcase your writing, design work or projects you have completed.

Recommendations

These are like mini references. Look for quality here and not quantity.

Ask your tutors, or the managers you have worked for to give you a recommendation.

2. Build your network

Building your network will increase your chances of being found on LinkedIn by employers and also increase the opportunities you might be exposed to.

Start while you are at university. This is potentially the first time you meet people who have the same professional interests and passions as you, people you might work with in the future, so start by connecting with your classmates and tutors.

Build on this foundation by searching for connections in the industries or sectors you are interested in working in. If you find someone doing the job you would like to do, drop them a personalised invitation to connect. Let them know you like their profile and are looking for career insights.

Groups are a good way to connect with likeminded people and gain insight into the industry you are interested in. Start with alumni groups and follow companies and influencers to stay on top of what's happening in the sector. It can also help you explore and find out about jobs and career paths you might not be aware of.

Once you have created a network, keep in touch. Share industry news, stories and events that demonstrate your passion for the industry you want to work in.

3. Find jobs

Most jobs are found through someone you know, so build your connections. You can also search the student internship and jobs portal on LinkedIn where you can find entry level positions. Check regularly for job postings. When you look at a relevant job, LinkedIn will suggest other similar jobs

If you are connected to groups and companies, keeping up to date can help when you prepare applications and for job interviews.

Many recruiters also use LinkedIn, so maintaining an up to date profile, engaging with your connections and following groups can help recruiters discover you.

4. Get careers advice

There's now an option to seek careers advice from professionals in the sector or role you're interested in. You can find this via your dashboard which is in the section where you edit your profile. You then can set your preferences and explain what you'd like to get advice on. LinkedIn will provide you with some 'industry leaders', who have agreed to provide advice, that match your requirements.

Other social media

Although LinkedIn is the primary social media for job seekers and for professional networking there are lots of other ways social media can benefit your career, from developing a positive digital profile to finding vacancies.

Manage your online presence

If a potential employer checks your social media accounts, then it is important that they find a positive presence. What does your social media presence say about you? What kind of content are you posting? Aim to create a consistent profile across all the social media accounts you use. If they show your interests and passions outside of academia, it gives an employer a sense of who you are and what you are interested in. Think about the content you are posting and whether it is something you will be happy for employers to see.

Research

Use Twitter and Facebook to find companies and people relevant to the industry or sector you are interested in and follow them. Read company blogs and spend some time listening to the conversations which are happening on social media to give you an understanding of the issues and priorities within the industry. Use the Twitter Search function to look for people tweeting about your area of interest. For example, if you search for "games design" you'll find some interesting people and companies to follow. Many companies advertise vacancies on Twitter – use hashtags like #jobsearch and #internships alongside your location or sector.

Engage

Share content of interest to your industry. If you produce a blog, share posts on Twitter and LinkedIn. Join Facebook groups and 'like' companies you are interested in. Interact with other people on their platforms by commenting and answering their questions.