

Using Social Media to Develop your Career

Since the advent of social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, graduates and employers are connecting to each other online, and many of the larger employers in particular see the use of social media as an important aspect of their recruitment activity. Involvement with social media sites should therefore be considered as part of your career planning and job search strategy, valuable for networking as well as finding opportunities. A useful first step is to become familiar with the various sites and the differences between them and this hopefully will allow you to identify those most likely to be beneficial bearing in mind the type of employer/sector you wish to target.

The main platforms that students and graduates use are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, although there are a number of others which may be less familiar including Myspace, Scribd, Pinterest and Google+. You Tube can also be used to showcase your work or to find out more about particular employers.

The Guardian provides a useful resource to help you both select suitable platforms and create a strategy appropriate to your aims: "[Social media for job seekers: tips from our experts](#)"

In addition, you will find tips on managing your digital profile, along with video clips featuring the views and experiences of Londonmet students on the webpages "[Digital Skills for the 21st Century Student](#)".

General guidelines when using social media

- If you are hoping to link to potential employers you must consider the impression you want to create. If you use Facebook in a personal/social context for example it is important that you understand and use the privacy settings appropriately. It may be worth considering completely separate accounts for personal and professional use. Google yourself to see what comes up – would you be happy for a potential employer to see the results?
- When contributing to blogs or commenting on posts, make sure that you avoid spelling and grammatical errors, and that the views expressed are well thought through and add something new to the conversation.
- Do not post criticism or negative comment on an employer or colleague
- Stay active on your chosen sites so that you keep up to date and appear to be engaged and enthusiastic. Remember that as with any relationships building an online network takes time and effort.
- If you are aiming to build your own personal brand across a number of platforms you can make links between them so that an employer interested in finding out more can see a broad picture of your interests and activities. Use the "[Ideas By Blog](#)" resource for tips on using social media generally, with a particular focus on building your brand and managing your online presence.

Facebook

Although Facebook is known mainly as a site on which you connect with friends, it is also possible to use Facebook to find out more about companies of interest. Some companies will advertise their vacancies on Facebook, others offer networking opportunities with recent graduates or recruiters. By liking a company page (remember also the [Careers and Employability facebook](#) page) you can receive news feeds which will keep you up to date with relevant postings. Make sure you understand how to use the privacy settings so that you protect content not intended for the public domain.

Twitter

Twitter allows you to “follow” individuals, companies or topics of interest and is slightly different from some other sites in that you can follow people whether you know them or not. In this way you can engage with people from your chosen sector, build relationships and get noticed. Unlike other platforms there is a limit to the length of a tweet (140 characters) so it is important to be concise.

Twitter is thought to be especially useful for those interested in sectors such as the media, technology, advertising or PR. As well as posting your own tweets you can opt to re-tweet items of interest, or join in conversations by asking questions or making comments. It is essentially by joining in conversation, engaging with others and building relationships that you maximise the opportunity to extend your network. If you find an individual of particular interest, check to see who they follow as this may give you further avenues to explore. You can also follow [Careers and Employability on Twitter](#).

There are directories which allow you to search for relevant topics or people on Twitter, one example being [Twellow](#). Similarly you can use hashtags (#) to search for conversations of interest, or as a means of making your own tweets more visible to the people you are trying to engage with. See the Guardian site for the article on [“Twitter Tips”](#) to give you some ideas on how to get started.

It is also possible to follow job search sites, allowing you to set up job tweets and so access vacancy information quickly. In addition, you can use search engines such as [Twit Job Search](#) to locate jobs advertised on Twitter.

LinkedIn

Whilst Facebook is seen primarily as a platform for connecting to friends, LinkedIn is regarded as a site for professional networking and with over 400 million members worldwide it represents a significant resource for potential career contacts. LinkedIn allows you to create a profile which includes an outline of your skills/experience and career interests, similar to the range of information that you would include on your CV. It is important to keep your profile up to date and use it as an opportunity to highlight your strengths.

You can start by connecting to people you already know – it is not usual to send an invitation to “connect” to people you have never met, but if you do want to try this you

can send a message to the individual outlining why you feel such a link might be beneficial. An alternative is to see if you have any mutual contacts and if so ask one of these to introduce you. You can also ask contacts to recommend you, effectively endorsing your skills in a particular area.

In addition, you can search for companies or groups that relate to your career area and this will allow you take part in online discussions with those working in the sector.

The London Met Alumni supports a [linkedin group](#) which is worth joining, as by its nature you will have something in common with all members and you may find useful discussions about careers and job opportunities.

Other options

You Tube: Users can upload or share video material, providing a platform to showcase your work, or find out more about companies of interest.

Google+: This is similar in nature to Facebook and allows you to share news and photographs, ask questions and create a series of communities (or circles). One of the main advantages of Google+ is that these circles allow a greater degree of control over the sharing of information in that you can create completely separate circles for your personal and professional contacts.

Blogs: In the first instance you can begin by finding some blogs relating to your interests (use google blog search) and join in by posting comments. You can subscribe to specific blogs (including the [Student Services blog](#)) to receive regular updates.

For some career areas such as journalism it would be expected that you might create your own blog and this can be done fairly easily through sites such as www.wordpress.com, or www.blogger.com. Those in the more creative arts may prefer a site such as www.tumblr.com, as this provides an opportunity to share photographs, video or audio content.

If you do decide to create your own blog it is important to update it regularly. Use interesting headlines or keywords to attract attention.

Additional Resources:

The Careers and Employability team run regular workshops on using LinkedIn. See our [Eventbrite](#) page for details.

Login to [Your Careers Portal](#) to access the “Job Hunting” module

The Career Player site, specifically the video “[Social Media and Job Hunting](#)”

Target Jobs “[Networking Tips for Graduate Job Hunters](#)”