

Ask the Career Coach: The Online You

How can social media sites help you in your job search?

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As appeared in MillburnPatch.com November 23, 2010 (www.MillburnPatch.com)

Dear Career Coach Lisa,

I am currently working but would like to change jobs and enter a new industry. I have been told I need to have an online presence. Please help.

BA
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The online community has never been easier to enter with the numerous tools available. There are a number of social media sites to consider. First, understand how you want to use them and what message you want to communicate.

Since you are seeking to change industries, consider how to leverage your knowledge in this new targeted industry. Begin by doing some research. You can follow some groups in the industry on LinkedIn or follow individuals on Twitter that are connected and knowledgeable in this targeted industry. You may want to see what is spoken about in the blogger sphere. Check the writer's credentials so you understand their biases and perspective.

Next, determine what your online presence is now. Begin by searching your name. You can set up a Google alert for your name so you will receive an email when you are searched. Because my name, picture and career bio are online, I am not anonymous. I have chosen to create public profiles of myself on numerous sites. A friend recently shared a blog where I was quoted. I was aware of this based on my Google alert. I try to be aware of my social online presence as I don't wish to be blindsided by a comment someone makes in the "real" world based on something discovered online. Think about the social media sites you can engage an audience on. Some of the most common ones like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are examples.

Facebook is a popular social media site. How do you wish to use it? Many people have a "personal" account they reserve for family and friends. Facebook connections are more commonly based on long standing relationships. Although you may think your account is reserved for only family and friends, you may not realize what information appears when you are searched. Always think about the security settings on any account. Facebook has a history of changing security settings and informing its members after.

LinkedIn can be used for an online profile or resume, allowing you to leverage your skills and connections. LinkedIn communities are created by people with common interests. You can view a person's profile gaining some insight on them. This allows new connections, former acquaintances, colleagues and friends more readily engage by participating in a discussion and considering an invitation to connect. You can follow groups and join discussions where you can share your message by posting or commenting within the group. Many share email addresses. This can help you generate informational interviews with professionals in your targeted industry.

Twitter is a sharing community of followers. This allows you to share sound bites of information and links to other references on other sites. You can create a presence as a subject matter expert and drive traffic to other websites.

The most important aspect of using social media is to recognize it is a tool. You must know your message and your objective. Understanding the type of audience and community you want to reach is important. Think about how to influence your community, not control it.

For more information on social media, please refer to my friend and social media expert, Steve Goldner, a.k.a. SocialSteve: <http://socialsteve.wordpress.com>.

About this column: "Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com. Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is www.ChenofskySinger.com.