

How social media can affect your career

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Be careful with regard to how you use social media, which can either positively or negatively affect your employment prospects depending on what you share. Social media has become an integral part of modern society. Millions of people around the world use social media to connect with one another. But this valuable tool also can be a detriment, particularly to men and women seeking employment.

What a person says or does on social media can come back to haunt them with regard to the impression they create with prospective employers. Questionable antics and comments may reflect negatively on a person without him or her even realizing it. According to a study by Reppler, a social media monitoring service, 91 percent of employers use social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to screen prospective employees.

Many people are completely unaware how others view them through their social media profiles and usage, but social media profiles give away more information about a person's character and personality than many people would ever imag-

ine. However, such comments may not sit well with prospective employers.

Some may think the solution is not to have profiles on the popular social media sites. But avoiding social media entirely can send the wrong message to prospective employers. It may suggest that you are not a person who is current with the latest trends in technology and may give employers the impression that you are not adept at keeping up with the changing times.

The key is finding the right balance with social media. The following are a few tips to ensure your social media usage does not do more harm than good.

- **Do not post or tweet information that should be kept private.** If you would not tell intimate secrets to another person, especially an employer, do not convey these details to your group of "friends."

- **Recognize that it's not always your comments that can affect perceptions of you.** The friends you choose to accept and socialize with via social media can impact how others view you. If friends are prone to vulgarity and off-color com-

mentary, employers may surmise that this type of behavior is acceptable to you. Screen friends and block those who do not meet your standards.

- **Know that security features on social media applications change frequently.** It's important to know just how private your information may be. For example, if you are tagged in another person's photo, people outside of your friends' list may be able to see that image. You have to police your sites and lock down the information as you see fit, only posting what is appropriate for the general public.

- **Do not complain about a job or boss publicly.** Even if your boss is not on your list of friends, he or she may still learn about your comments through gossip. While verbal complaints with others may not be accurately tracked back to you, text is hard evidence to discredit.

- **Use social media as a networking tool to find other like-minded individuals in the same fields.** Join industry-based groups and organizations so that you can share your ideas. Further expanding your reach through blogs and websites can also help your job hunt.

Helpful hints to land your first job

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Though the job market for newly minted college graduates has proven less than ideal in recent years, the job market is on the rebound.

You should still expect a competitive job market in which companies can afford to be patient as they attempt to find the best possible candidate for each opening. Here are some additional steps new graduates can take to improve their chances of landing their first jobs out of college.

- **Gain some relevant experience.** While college is the best time to gain some experience that's relevant to your field, that does not mean you can't still earn an internship now that you have donned your cap and gown and received your diploma. Many businesses look to recent graduates to fill their internships, as recent grads have years of study under their belts and, because they are no longer enrolled in classes, more flexibility than current students. If the job market in your chosen field is tepid, start looking for internships. These can be a great way to start making some professional contacts, and many people find themselves ultimately working full-time for the company where they first landed an internship.

- **Establish an online presence.** Another way for recent graduates to get noticed is to establish a positive online presence. Something as simple as creating a profile on the professional networking site LinkedIn can help recent graduates get noticed by prospective employers. Even if you have little or no relevant professional experience, create a profile that includes your education history, interests, accolades or awards you earned while in school and even a brief summary of your career goals.

Another way to establish an online presence is to begin a blog. The blog should not be used as a tool to discuss your personal life, but rather to express your thoughts on topics relevant to the career you hope to pursue. Demonstrating an understanding or even just a passion for the industry can be a great way to show prospective employers that you are looking for a career and not just a job.

- **Join a professional organization.** Other options to network and improve your chances of landing your first job can be attained by joining a professional organization. Many such organiza-

tions welcome new members, even those with relatively little or even no professional experience. Your university may even sponsor such an organization and host regularly scheduled forums relevant to your industry. Such forums often feature lectures or talk sessions with already established professionals who can provide advice on landing a first job or internship or furnish grads with industry contacts who might offer similar help. Memberships in such organizations is often free or inexpensive, so take advantage of this opportunity if it presents itself.

- **Use the resources at your disposal.** Many college graduates are unaware that they have valuable resources at their disposal that can greatly increase their chances of securing a job out of college. The career services office at the university is an invaluable resource that is plugged into the business community in its town or city. Such an office can connect you with fellow alumni, many of whom want to help their fellow graduates establish their careers. A career services office also can help new graduates fine tune their resumes and cover letters so they have a greater chance of landing a job.

Lucrative careers that don't require a degree

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Students in high school have long been encouraged to enroll in secondary education to further their future career prospects. While a college degree is a prerequisite for many careers, it is not mandatory for every job. In fact, there are many potentially lucrative lines of work that do not require a degree, and these careers often appeal to those young people who are discouraged by the high cost of college or those who have grown tired of the classroom atmosphere.

Many lines of work that do not require a college degree do require trade school certification. The good news is that trade school typically takes less time to complete than a more traditional four-year degree and such courses of study tend to be less expensive than college degrees.

These factors may be why the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics says eight of the 10 fastest-growing occupations in 2014 do not require a bachelor's degree. The following jobs are potentially lucrative but do not require a college degree.

• Ship captain

A captain will navigate a vessel and manage

the crew. Additionally, he or she will comply with international and local laws. Captains can expect an average salary of \$87,000.

• Web developer

Many web developers are self-taught, and many more supplement their natural skills by taking a few classes here and there. Web developers earn very good salaries, with a median salary of \$75,000.

• Tradesman

Plumbers, bricklayers, marble setters, and masons have been in high demand for centuries. Depending on the business and if a tradesman is self-employed, he or she can earn a considerable salary and enjoy a good living without having to earn a college degree.

• Home health aide supervisor

Home health aide supervisors monitor the quality of care performed by aides for home patients and help develop a care plan. Much of the training for this profession occurs on the job, and workers receive satisfaction from helping those in need.

• Locomotive engineer

Many engineers begin as rail transportation workers and conductors before they move up to an engineer position. Driving the train requires knowledge of the mechanical operations of the locomotive and awareness of safety regulations. A locomotive engineer can earn as much as \$70,000 annually if not more.

• Air traffic controller

A lucrative position, an air traffic controller has a very demanding job and one that subjects workers to significant stress. Air traffic controllers are responsible for maintaining a safe and orderly flow of air traffic to prevent collisions or traffic buildup at airports. Many air traffic controllers complete training through aviation-related programs or military service. Salaries can reach six figures.

Although college is the next step for many high school students, it is not necessarily the only path individuals need to take. Many high-paying and rewarding careers are available to people without college degrees.