Using social media to enhance your employability

Used effectively social media can dramatically enhance your employability. However, if used carelessly, social media can significantly damage your chances in the job market.

Portray the right image

Through social media you can maintain your professional identity and make yourself known and visible for the right reasons. It is common practice for potential employers to search applicants on social media, so the image you present could be vital. Many professions such as nursing, teaching and law also have guidelines on the use of social media which emphasise the need to behave professionally online. Have a look online for examples of guidance from the areas you're interested in. You can also find out more about your 'digital footprint'. Note: even if you have a private account your post can still be captured and shared openly and publicly.

Stand out from the crowd

We know from employers that being distinctive and strategic online will help you stand out from other applicants. Employers are particularly keen to employ graduates who have digital capabilities, competencies, and emotional intelligence in the digital context. Therefore, when applying for jobs you should consider how you have used digital tools to supplement your learning/professional experiences and include this in your applications.

Develop a strategy

To stand a better chance of success with finding a job and attracting employers, you need to be pro-active.

This might include:

- Researching employers and practitioners in your area and staying up to date with news from your industry.
- Searching for vacancies – employers are increasingly using social media platforms to promote opportunities especially LinkedIn.
- Making connections and networking by linking with individuals working in your area and being a part of an online community.
- Following employers, making contact, and asking them questions to get a greater insight into an organisation – and to promote yourself.

Decide which social media tools will be most useful

Each social media tool has its own strengths and applications. Be clear about what you want to achieve and how you are going to go about it. Find out which tools are used by those working in your subject area or industry, and research why and how they are used. It also helps to be consistent across your professional profiles and link between them to present a coherent picture to potential employers. The following social medias can be used in a variety of ways to enhance employability:

LinkedIn:

- Research company information and follow key influencers in your chosen sector.
- Identify the skills that employees in your sector need to possess.
- Demonstrate your interest in a sector by joining and participating in discussion groups.
- Make connections and develop your network.
- Find out what previous graduates from your course have gone on to do, using the 'Alumni' tool.

X (Twitter) and Threads:

- Follow employers, practitioners, and commentators in your area of interest.
- Keep up to date with news and events in your sector.
- Raise your profile and demonstrate your interest by joining in with discussions.
- Draw attention to your activity on other platforms, for instance when you have posted on your blog, or added to your e-portfolio.

Facebook:

- 'Like' relevant companies' Facebook pages and receive updates from them.
- Join groups relevant to your job search, post comments and participate in discussions.
- Post content relevant to your career and your job search.

Other social media tools:

The range of tools changes frequently, and you should be able to find out from your friends and tutors which ones are used in your subject area. For example:

- Pinterest – a visual pinboard, good for showcasing your work, and for research and collection of resources.
- Instagram – photo and video social networking organised by hashtags and geographical tagging, good for sharing visual content and connecting with those who have similar interests.
- Blogging and website creation tools such as WordPress/Google Sites – good for establishing your online identity and demonstrating your interests and skills.
- Dribbble, Behance, and Instagram – examples of social networking for the creative sector.

There may be other social media/digital tools networks available that could be relevant to your discipline.