

Networking on Social Media

Social media can be a time-waster, but it can also be a helpful networking tool that can help you make yourself more visible to hiring executives and executive search consultants. Social media should be used as a way to promote your thought leadership expertise that will help you stand out amongst the large pool of executive candidates.

Even though social media networking takes place virtually, it's essential to remember that you're still networking. That means you will still need to engage with contacts regularly and find out how you can help them achieve their goals. Meeting someone online is not usually the endgame; it's both a way to continue the conversation from an in-person meeting and a way to make new connections that you intend to meet in person at some point in the future. Face-to-face meetings with as many key people in your network as possible will result in the strongest relationships, so don't keep all of your networking interactions online.

Best Practices

For many executives, the dos and don'ts of social media networking can be confusing. In this part of the networking guide, we offer best practices on how to choose the right social networks and what to post.

Choose Your Channels

A complete online social networking strategy includes two types of channels:

- 1. The content hub** where your long-form content lives and the place where you will drive the majority of your online traffic to learn more about you and find out how to get in touch. The main examples of this are your personal website/blog and your LinkedIn profile/LinkedIn Pulse.
- 2. The networking sites** that you use to connect and share your thought leadership content with others as a way to virtually network. The main examples of these sites are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and numerous others.

When selecting what social media networks to join, less is more. Focus on no more than three social media channels. These most often will include LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, or a niche functional, industry or location-specific network. The most effective way to decide is to find out what networks thought leaders and professionals in your industry are focused on.

Share Your Goals

As you interact on social media, be sure to put your main focus on activities that will help you reach your goals. Depending on your situation (like if you're confidentially looking), it won't make sense to broadcast your interest in finding a new job. Rather, you should privately discuss your job search goals with targeted individuals and focus your public broadcasting activity on showing that you're a leader in your field. Remember, when discussing your goals with your network, take time to also find out what their needs are and offer to help them out.

Keep Your Profiles Up-To-Date

The primary reason to keep your profiles up-to-date is so that connections, especially new ones, can understand who you are and why they might want to connect with you. If someone connects with you about something specific on your profile, but later finds out you're not working there anymore or are not in that industry anymore, they may develop a bad impression of you.

It may be tempting, but you should not simply list your resume/CV information on your social media profiles – not even on LinkedIn (for more detailed information on how to write your LinkedIn profile, see issue three, Ultimate Executive Career Guide: Resumes/CVs, LinkedIn Profiles, and More). Your profiles should be much more personalized than your resume and focus on what makes you stand out, such as your top achievements and interests. If you're unsure of what to put on your profiles, you may consider hiring an expert resume and social media profile writer to help.

Interact Often

Update your social media networks regularly – at least once a week. Whenever you write a new blog or LinkedIn Pulse post, attend an event, deliver a presentation, etc., you can share it with your network. When you don't have any original content to share, you can share articles, videos, etc. that are relevant to your brand, industry, and/or function.

You should not only consider how you fit in to the company culture, but also consider how this new role fits into your career goals. Sometimes the reason for taking a new job is solely one of necessity, but if you have options, you should seek positions that are strategic rather than convenient. A career transition can be an opportunity to become more self-aware, allowing you to find a job that could be an essential part of a fulfilling career.

In addition to sharing your own updates, interact with the posts shared by those in your network by commenting, liking, and sharing their posts. Doing this will not only increase your visibility and expand your network, but it will help you grow a stronger connection with those in your network. People notice when someone gets in touch to ask for something, but has never engaged with any of their posts before, so make sure you spend time interacting with a new contact's content before getting in touch directly.

Another way to interact is to join relevant discussion groups, such as LinkedIn groups or TweetChats on Twitter. These can help you increase your visibility to your network and only take a few minutes per day. After you decide which groups you will focus your attention on (about three to five), commit 15 minutes per day to posting your own discussions and interacting with discussions started by others in the group. Interacting in groups is one of the best ways to show others in your industry, function, or career level that you're an expert in your field and worth connecting with further.

Become a Thought Leader

A thought leader is someone positions him or herself as an expert in their field by creating and sharing content, being quoted in news publications, guest blogging, presenting on panels, speaking at events, etc. If you aren't already a thought leader, the easiest way to get started is by sharing your expertise through LinkedIn Pulse and continuing to grow your network by sharing this and other third party content related to your field.

If you're already well known in your industry, think about any channels you may be missing out on. Are you quoted often in news programs? Try uploading presentations you have given to your LinkedIn profile and status updates. If you haven't given any, you can create a three-page PowerPoint/SlideShare that has relevant tips to your brand. The possibilities are endless for further expanding your brand reach.

Don't Be a Robot

What about humor and personality? Do your social media and LinkedIn Pulse posts seem like they were written by you or could any executive have written them? Don't be afraid to include a humorous comment or some personality in your posts. Executives and search consultants in your network are real people and expect to interact with real people, so don't filter yourself so much that your character fails to appear. There is such a thing as sharing too much, but a few humorous comments or a glimpse into your personal life can remind people that you are an actual person with genuine interests who they could see working with, connecting with, or hiring.

Meet Targeted Connections Face-to-Face

Interacting online is often not enough to build meaningful relationships. Therefore, it's important to go beyond social media interactions (liking, commenting, and sharing) to private messages where you can coordinate a phone call, Skype session, or in-person meeting. You can set up these meetings when you're traveling to a new city, attending an event, or simply interested in connecting further over a cup of coffee.

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