

JOB SEARCH

Can You Facebook Your Way to a New Job?

Done right, online networking will support your offline network, not replace it.

By Kevin Fogarty



IN THE OLD DAYS, “networking” meant hours calling every contact in your Rolodex; paging through the directories of every professional organization you could join; going to breakfast seminars, lunch-time speaking events, happy hours and board meetings to press the flesh anything to make real-time, one-on-one contact with someone who might know someone who might be hiring.

The tools of the networking trade are changing and moving online, where e-mail, IM and social-networking Web sites such as **LinkedIn**, **Facebook**, and some specific to industry and career are the means to make new contacts and interact with current ones.

A social-networking Web site is essentially a fancy, online address book that allows you to see what your contacts are doing and connect to their contacts. The medium allows users quickly to expand their reach, putting them in touch with industry allies and hiring managers miles from home and in different companies and verticals. It’s also an easy place to track relationships and promote yourself to a willing audience.

But how much use are online social networks to an executive seeking a job, and which ones are worth the effort?

“LinkedIn should be part of your strategy, but not in the way you might expect a good social-networking site to be,”

Social Networking: Painless and Powerful

By Matthew Rothenberg, Editor-in-Chief, TheLadders

IF YOU PEEKED INTO MY OVERSTUFFED BRIEFCASE, you’d see professional tools that span at least three centuries. My laptop and cellular modem jostle with my spiral-bound reporter’s notebook and assorted pens. I’ve been in a funk all day because my BlackBerry’s on the fritz, but I’m happy to report that the batteries never run out on my leather-bound FranklinCovey organizer.

In short, I use all the resources I need to keep on track and in touch, whether the technology behind it was invented by Gutenberg or Gates. I never give up on a tool that still works for me just to prove I’m trendy, but I like new

tricks that don’t crimp my style.



Used right, social-networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter can do just that. Don’t have time to play silly games with your social network? Neither do I – but there’s no need to! Whether you’ve never logged on to a social network or you’re ready to hone your professional edge online, the articles in this package will tell you exactly what you need from social-networking – and what you don’t.

And if you’ve got feedback, shoot me an e-mail, a Facebook message or a letter; I’m ready for anything!

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What did you think of this package?

Got a story of your own to tell? Have ideas for future coverage? Please write Editor-in-Chief Matthew Rothenberg at matthewr@theladders.com.

A Little Help from Your Friend (Requests)

By Kirsten Dixson

Once you decide to take the plunge and create a great profile that reflects your personal brand, the real value is in the connections that you make. So how do you determine with whom to connect, and what's the etiquette for doing so? If you are more comfortable with a conservative approach to getting started, then heed these tips for connecting with others on LinkedIn and Facebook:

1. Avoid importing your address book.

Avoid the options that easily allow you to import your entire email address book and invite every one of your contacts.

On LinkedIn: Send invitations to colleagues that you know, trust and would be comfortable referring to other members of your network (especially given referrals are the main value of LinkedIn).

On Facebook: Begin by connecting with your real friends and family. Since Facebook is more personal and your friends have an impact on your Facebook profile (they can write on your "wall," tag you in photos and send you virtual commodities, etc.), try it out before connecting with professional colleagues.

2. Customize your requests.

When you send an invitation to connect, customize the form email unless the recipient will immediately know why you want to connect with her.

3. Be selective.

Decide from whom you'll accept invitations and create standard responses for declining an invitation. If you get a request from someone you don't know at all and they do not even bother to customize the message, then it's perfectly acceptable to use the Ignore button. Here are a few examples of templates to consider:

Example A: Someone you've met once (or never) sends you a request on LinkedIn.

"Thanks for sending me an invitation to connect on LinkedIn. I'm sure that you can

said **Robert Neelbauer**, owner of StaffMagnet.com, a Washington, D.C.-based recruitment consultancy. Rather than sitting at your PC clicking your way to a new job, Neelbauer and career experts TheLadders interviewed recommend a job seeker use Web sites as the launch pad for traditional social networking. Pressing the flesh and phone calls remain the most intimate way to bond with the contacts in your network.

"If you're only looking at LinkedIn for lead generation or hunting down candidates for jobs, it's a valuable tool," he said. "But if you send a message to someone through LinkedIn, they may not respond to it for days or even weeks."

Neelbauer is particularly critical of LinkedIn. Although a frequent user almost from its launch in May 2003, he complains that the site has become watered down by millions of users and thousands of recruiters who have flooded the system with resumes and job posts and fill their networks with contacts they barely know. Neelbauer said he prefers other sites, especially Facebook, which gives users much greater control over who is in their network and sees their information. Facebook therefore tends to make in-network contacts more immediate for members, he said.

Don't ignore the Web

While online networking won't replace the handshake, career experts caution anyone who discounts it entirely. Their role in job hunting specifically has become so central for recruiters and hiring managers that job seekers are severely handicapping themselves by not participating, Neelbauer said.

“... if you send a message to someone through LinkedIn, they may not respond to it for days or even weeks.”

—Robert Neelbauer

Of the 42 million U.S. members of Facebook, the most active social network, 18 million, almost half, are over 26 years old, according to **The Social Times**, a Web site that reports on social-networking companies.

"If you're a recruiter and you're not using LinkedIn and Facebook or Twitter, I don't know what you're using," said **Lindsay Olson**, partner and recruiter at **Paradigm Staffing**. Olson said social networking plays at least some role in the hiring process for more than 60 percent of the positions she fills. "LinkedIn particularly is the first place people go to look for candidates. When I get a name, that's where I look first to get a little more background on someone before I talk to them."

Online social networking is to networking what e-mail is to handwritten letters; It's just easier, faster and a lot more convenient, said **Isabel Walcott Hilborn**, owner of **Strategic Internet Consulting**, an online marketing consultancy, and founder of SmartGirl.com, a 200,000-member social network for teenage girls. Rather than meeting people one at

a time at a conference to trade cards or calls once a year, social networks let you *do* something with those contacts, Hilborn said. Put those people in a social-networking list, and you have the opportunity to learn more about them and let them get to know you in a low-stress way.

“Social networking and marketing and job searching is all about getting yourself out there,” said Paul Gillin, a social-networking consultant at Paul Gillin Communications and author of **“The New Influencers”** and **“Secrets of Social Media Marketing.”** “Friends’ networks can show you who’s changing jobs, which means a job just opened up at their old company that you can go for that hasn’t been posted yet. And (it) can help you get introduced to people closer to that job than you might have gotten otherwise.”



Walcott Hilborn

Three degrees of separation

Job seeker Jim Nash used LinkedIn not only to get a new job but to do it in a foreign field where he had relatively few direct contacts.

Nash has been a writer and editor at news, business and technology publications. He was the editorial director of NBC Universal’s Sci-Fi Channel Web site and a former metro editor at the Chicago Tribune. But he wanted to follow his core interests into medical or science publishing, preferably with a nonprofit.

“I did know a few people at science publications, and that was helpful,” Nash said. “The good thing about social networking was that if I knew nobody in an industry, I could still look at all the people who were related to me and the people they knew to find people in the area I wanted so I could call them. I was casual about it but was clear that I was looking, and almost everybody I approached was happy either to talk to me or introduce me to someone else.”

Nash landed his current job —Web managing editor at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York — through three degrees of separation. One of his contacts had introduced him to another contact, who introduced him to his boss. The employer educated Nash on how and where medical organizations might be able to use Web-publishing savvy and eventually hired Nash himself.

“Once we made that contact, it seemed like things moved really quickly,” said Nash, who started the new job in October. “I contacted my current boss as the friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend, and it just worked out.”

But not everyone is comfortable introducing themselves to strangers, even when the strangers are online and the job seeker has a lot of experience at marketing and selling. Susan, an UpLadder member who asked TheLadders not to publish her full name, has a profile on LinkedIn but is reluctant to use it aggressively.

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appreciate that my policy is to connect with people that I’ve met face-to-face and have known for a while. I’m looking forward to working with you and getting to know you better, and I’m confident that we’ll connect in the future.”

Example B: You’ve decided Facebook is for personal use only and a colleague sends you a request.

“I got your invitation on Facebook and wanted to let you know how I’m handling my Facebook account and why I won’t be accepting your request, even though I do consider you a ‘friend’ and valued colleague. So that I may communicate without concern and share photos of my family, I’ve decided to keep my Facebook network private, small and purely social for the time being. I’d be delighted to connect with you on LinkedIn.”

4. Remove a connection if you have lingering doubts.

If you accept an invitation and later regret it, you can always remove the connection without the other party being alerted. (Take care when using the LinkedIn “I don’t know” or “Flag as spam” buttons, because this could lead to the sender losing his or her account.)

5. Should you friend your kids?

If you have high school or college-aged children (this is more likely on Facebook), realize that many parents elect not to “friend” their children. Some take an “ignorance is bliss” view, some are concerned about the impact that their kids have on their profile, and others are respecting the wishes of their kids.

After spending some time experimenting, your comfort level may increase and then you can reevaluate your connection criteria against your goals for each social networking tool that you use. Dive in! When you adjust your privacy settings, you really have nothing to lose and you might just find yourself surprised at what you gain. ■

Kirsten Dixson is a leading authority on building personal brands online for career and business success. She coauthored “Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand” (Wiley) with William Arruda. Learn more about Kirsten at <http://www.kirstendixson.com>.

Social Network Etiquette: Mind Your Manners

Social-networking Web sites are becoming a tool of the job-search trade. Like any social interaction, mind your manners and the new rules of social-network etiquette.

By Kevin Fogarty

SOcial-networking web sites are becoming an indispensable part of the job search.

As your relationships move online, it's easy to track and manage your contacts and connections. Unfortunately, it's also easy to forget your social skills. Ignoring a contact's "hello" feels less harsh when it's done from 3,000 miles away. Sharing a racy joke with the group seems harmless when it's done on your mobile phone between interviews. But snubs still sting, and tawdry remains tactless.

According to social-networking experts, everything you need to succeed in the medium, you learned in kindergarten.

"They're the same social rules as anywhere else," said Lindsay Olson, a partner and recruiter at Paradigm Staffing, who uses social networking to identify potential recruits and vet candidates once their names have come up. "There's a very thin line between keeping in touch and blatant self-promotion. Stepping over that line will really turn people off."

Make friends and earn favors

The key is to keep the other person in mind and go out of your way to be both polite and helpful before you need help yourself, said Paul Gillin, a social-networking consultant at Paul Gillin Communications and author of "The New Influencers" and "Secrets of Social Media Marketing."

"The etiquette is that you help people out and then when you need it, they help you out in return," Gillin said.

The social-networking site LinkedIn provides built-in ways for people to contribute. Members can submit questions to the group, plead for jobs, post openings at their company and recommend a friend or colleague. Providing answers, resources or tips; passing along a resume; or making an introduction can build social equity, Gillin said.

Be useful, not pleading

Twitter is a microblogging site that allows users to post brief (140-character) messages that can be read by members in their network, called "followers." Some use Twitter messages, called "Tweets," to broadcast their location or status on a project, or just to say "hello" to a friend. Resourceful job seekers have made Twitter part of their self-promotion

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Around the Web: Job-Hunting Tools

The Web offers free tools and reference material for your job search – and new ways to promote your resume.

By John Hazard

IF THE WEB HAS TRANSFORMED the way you do your job, you can bet your bottom dollar it has changed the way you find a job. At its most basic, the Web is an encyclopedia of reference material to help you educate yourself about your intended market, region or company. If you're ready to take a more-active role online, you can employ some of the social-networking tools to manage your contacts and relationships as you hunt for work. And for the creative and brave, the Web offers a route to promote yourself in a way a paper resume can't.

Here are a few of the resources we found around the Web:

- Jason Alba started **JibberJobber** (free login required) as a spreadsheet to track and organize his first job search in January 2006, but it eventually evolved into what he calls a "career-relationship manager," a pay service that lets you import or enter contacts and track, map and graph relationships (your network); job search steps; even your expenses. Alba's near-daily **blog posts** are also a good read, written by someone who personally knows what it means to search for a job using the tools of the Digital Age.
- If you don't know about **SlideShare**, it is like YouTube for PowerPoint presentations. Users make slideshows and upload them to SlideShare for all to see. Some uninventive job seekers have posted simple one- and two-page slides of their actual paper resume. But a few **slick and creative examples** back up bullet points on the resume with figures and graphs.
- Then there is **YouTube** itself. A few adventurous souls are already posting video resumes that are essentially a sales pitch. Most job seekers simply read their resume aloud into camera, but the format might be the right fit for the right candidate or the right industry.
- One useful page on About.com is the **salary page**, which has no fewer than eight calculators to help you determine median pay, benefits and regional pay scales for any position. Use it to assess your salary and compensation offer.

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“The majority of people I know are not on it,” she said. “So the people that would be contacting me on it are not likely to be close colleagues. None of my friends are really using LinkedIn to find jobs, and people who want me to use it seem to want to use my contacts. It seems more a way for business building than for networking.”

Don't ignore the real world

Doing it properly means marrying your offline network to your online network, said Hilborn.

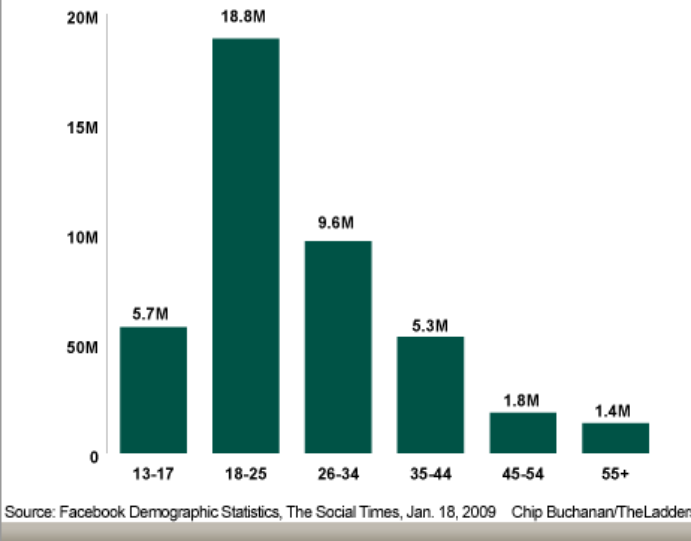
Hilborn recommends a job seeker use the contacts he makes offline to build out his social network but then return to the offline sources when it comes time to make a job connection. For instance, when you find a job, online or off, don't just e-mail your resume or apply online, she said. “If you've taken the time to develop your network and keep those connections live, you can type in a keyword and find you have three friends who work there or know someone who does,” she said. “Then you can write to your contact, ask if they'd forward this to their friend and ask her to submit your resume. It's almost impossible for HR to

ignore a resume that's submitted from someone inside, and they usually get paid if they refer someone who gets hired, so it works out really well.”

Even an interview that doesn't work out can extend your network and lead to opportunities you might not have had otherwise, Nash said.

U.S. Facebook Users by Age

Of the 42 million U.S. members of Facebook, the most active social network, 18 million, almost half, are over 26 years old, according to The Social Times, a Web site that reports on social networking companies. About one-third of users are over 30 years old, Facebook's fastest growing segment, according to the company.



“I'd always try to talk on the phone or meet people I made contact with,” he said. “If they didn't have a job available, or it wasn't a match for some reason, I'd ask if I could link to them on LinkedIn and look through their contacts so I could write back in a week or two and say, ‘Thanks for meeting with me; it was really great, and would you mind recommending me or introducing me to this other person?’ And they were almost always fine with that.”

It requires the same attention and interest in relationship building as traditional networking, Hillborn concluded.

“When someone changes their picture, you can comment

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A word of caution on About.com: As a site supported by page views, About.com makes money by encouraging visitors to open multiple pages before they find the information they seek. The site can be a frustrating waste of time when all you want is a simple answer.

- The Career Services Department at Villanova University's **Job Search Online Resources Guide** is a surprisingly comprehensive guide to specific careers, industries and regions.
- Never walk into an interview cold. Do your homework. There's no better place to start than Google. Is the company performing well? What's the CFO's name? Check a publicly traded company's financials and basic information on **Google Finance**. Is the board of directors under indictment? Did the new drug win FDA approval? Follow articles and blogs that mention the company on

Google News. For deeper research check a service like **GlassDoor.com** (free) or **Harris InfoSource** (partial subscription).

- See what people are saying about you or a potential employer on **Twitter**.
- To research a company's less-tangible qualities, like, “Is it a nice place to work?” rely on the good old news media. Fortune's **100 Best Companies to Work For** survey is exhaustive. Your company may not be on here, but the survey explores such topics as best cafeteria and most unusual perks. Sources like Working Mother magazine's **Best Companies** survey profiles companies from the perspective of its specific audience.
- What sites did you use in your job search? **E-mail us** with your suggestions, and we will share them with TheLadders.com community. ■

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engine. But be sure not to inundate followers with a constant stream of boasts, Olson said. Blatant self-promotion or begging for work will turn off your audience

If you're using a site like Twitter or Facebook to promote yourself, make sure you slip in your sales pitch between useful information like articles from trade publications, white papers on your industry and helpful advice.

Don't be shy, don't be pushy

Don't hesitate to ask for introductions to another's contact or circle and expect to do the same, said Gillin. It feels like trading, but it's networking, he said.

"(There's nothing) wrong with asking people to write a recommendation; it's a normal business request," he said. "It's a give-to-get situation. Often when you write a recommendation, even unsolicited, you'll get one in return." But don't shake down your contacts, said Isabel Walcott Hilborn, owner of Strategic Internet Consulting and founder of SmartGirl.com, a 200,000-member social network for teenage girls. "People are nice. They usually are happy to help if it's a genuine request and not just spam or self-promotion."

Don't be a creep

Consider the creep factor when calling someone you've researched online or through social networks, Gillin said.

"If someone contacted you out of thin air and had all this information about you that you didn't know was out there, that might creep you out," Gillin said. "The way to get around that is to be open with who you are and where you got the information. Say, 'ZoomInfo said you used to work at this company while I was there too, and I was hoping to make a connection.'"

"Adopt a professional manner; it's a business contact, and you're reaching out in a business sense," he said. "Don't make it overly personal. That eliminates a lot of the creep factor."

Be active

A public profile can put you on someone's radar or keep you there, Olson said. Whether you submitted your resume cold or you were in for an interview, a connection on a social network and frequent activity can keep your name in a recruiter or contact's ear. "People aren't going to remember me because I made one recruiting call to them five years ago," Olson said, "but if they see me posting things all the time,

they're going to know who I am when I call."

Behave

As any number of college students and one Miss America contestant can tell you, it's bad form to record your indiscretions and post the evidence on a public Web site. Embarrassing photos or remarks can surface during your job search. Recruiters and hiring managers routinely search social-networking sites for background information, and many will hold photos of youthful hijinks against them.

Get Googled, get found

Web developers don't rely on luck to drive readers to their Web site. They use search engine optimization (SEO) to increase the likelihood search engines will showcase their Web pages. Your profiles on LinkedIn and other social networks should be no different. Make sure recruiters can find you.

SEO relies on the concept that the more prominently a Web page appears in search results, the more searchers will visit the page. Optimizing your profile pushes it toward the top.

SEO marketers (a budding job classification) add keywords, which are the terms that are most likely to be queried

by a Web searcher interested in the topic you are trying to promote -- in this case, your career. If you want to be noticed by anyone who needs a Database Administrator with MySQL experience, your profile should use include those specific terms, instead of more generic or less descriptive terms like "DBA" or "database admin" and any specific languages or skills the recruiter might search for.

Choosing the right network for your profile can also help. While Facebook might be a larger, more useful network for your profession, LinkedIn is particularly well positioned for Google searches.

Promote your ambitions, not your past

Now that you're finished optimizing your profile for search, make sure it matches what you want to do, not just what you've done, Olson said. Choose words that match your aspirations, not just your history.

"If I were a digital-marketing person and I wanted to move into an SEO job, I'd put it in as an area of interest or what-

“Adopt a professional manner; it's a business contact, and you're reaching out in a business sense. Don't make it overly personal. That eliminates a lot of the creep factor.”

—Paul Gillin

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ever,” she said, “as long as I got those key words into the text so I could be found on those searches.”

Don't just use one network

LinkedIn may be the most widely known and used social network purely for business contacts. However it isn't right for everyone or every situation. You may run into situations where you identify a company or individual you need to contact and use other searches to find e-mail addresses, phone numbers or other information to get you closer to that contact. ZoomInfo, Spock and other business-information aggregation sites are great places to gather information about your target companies or hiring managers.

Finish the job

The biggest mistake most people make using LinkedIn, Facebook and social networks is that they don't complete their profiles with all the information about their experience,

skills and miscellaneous information that could be relevant; what's more, they don't pursue contacts, said Shally Steckerl, a recruiting consultant and founder of Jobmachine.com. Omitting information makes it difficult for recruiters to find your profile and hard for you to connect to new opportunities through your contacts.

Follow through

Your network doesn't build itself. You have to take advantage of the opportunities to expand your reach. When you meet someone at an event or on the phone, ask if they mind if you link to them, then do it.

“It's exactly like real life, like a virtual water cooler where you talk to your friends or co-workers,” Hilborn said. “If you're the kind of person who never needs anything — a job or a plumber or advice on how to raise your baby — go ahead and skip the whole social-networking thing. But if you ever need anything from anyone else, social networks can help you.” ■

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—Walcott Hillborn

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on it, or when they put up a note about having had a hard day, you can commiserate or offer suggestions,” Hilborn said. “And if in the past you've sent three e-mails to Maria, you are on her radar screen, so when you send an e-mail to all your contacts saying your company is doing a round of layoffs and you're on the list, she's going to respond, where if you just had her business card, she wouldn't even know.”

“Half an hour on Facebook once a week is all you'd need to keep that social network totally thriving,” she said. “You have to pick and choose the things (to which) you respond to make them personal. But tiny little outreaches are quick; they take time over the long term, but one at a time, they're pretty quick. And it lets you stay in touch with a much larger community than you otherwise could.” ■

Career Advice from TheLadders

- Five Ways for Branding Yourself Online ... Fast
- Blogging Can Help – or Hurt – Your Career
- Now is Your Shot to Go Digital
- What's Your GQ? Build Your Google Quotient