Using Social Media to improve your Career prospects
Why you should have a professional presence online – the facts.

- 91% of employers currently use online social networks or social media to support their recruiting efforts
- 68% of employers always check candidates’ social media profiles when vetting them
- 58% of employers have successfully hired candidates through social networking websites

Research shows social media will continue to grow and develop, becoming the dominant option for business and recruitment.

Engaging with social media professionally is generally seen as a good thing by employers – some employment sectors even expect you to have an active online presence.

You can research career opportunities and vacancies, get feedback on recruitment processes and gather information on your sector.

Employers can look for you and get an idea of what you are like beyond your CV. The ability to harness social networks, evaluate and appraise these resources, as well as research opportunities and labour market information is an important employability skill valued by employers.

Keeping up to date with your industry

- Set up RSS feeds – from sites that offer the vacancies and news you are interested in – these can then be sent to you as and when they are advertised.
- Use social bookmarking tools to mark material you might want to come back to and share with others
- Search and subscribe to blogs on topics that might interest you or written by people working in your field.
- Google alerts – sign up to receive email updates on the latest Google results
- Get recommendations of content based on your interests
- Use a feed reader – a kind of personal webpage – to collectively gather all the news, blogs and information into one place, ie Google Reader
- Use your connections on social media – Twitter, Facebook etc to find out information on your prospective industry and possible job opportunities
- Create Twitter lists to help organise your followers in easy to find groups
Creating your personal brand

What is your online presence like at the moment? Have you checked your privacy settings? If you Google your name what turns up? (Employers do check potential employee's online profiles). It is a good idea to start to think about having a separate professional online profile and making sure your personal life stays personal.

- Before you start job hunting, remove pictures or quotes/updates that give a poor image of you as a potential employee.
- Keep gripes off line, for example don’t say you are really bored at work and can’t wait for the weekend or that your boss is an idiot.
- The content you produce should always be professional it can take the form of a blog, podcast, LinkedIn account or Twitter account or all of these.
- Add content regularly, try and add your own content but also comment on other people's content, this will help you network with people in your industry.
- Stay active even if you are not working. Get involved in industry discussion groups, mention any volunteering you are doing demonstrate to employers that you are committed to self improvement and have career focus.
- Promote yourself - make sure links to your blog, LinkedIn profile or website are included on your CV, business cards and email signature
- Create a splash page (acts as an online business card) which can be attached to email signatures; used extensively in America but catching on here now too

By doing all these things you will come up in internet searches making you easier to find and easier to network with.

Your professional online presence - using LinkedIn

LinkedIn – what is it?

A professional networking site. LinkedIn has 120 million users and is growing rapidly it is fast becoming the place for employers to do their recruiting and others to do their job hunting and professional networking.

It allows you to
- Manage and update what potential employers learn about you from the internet.
- Connect, interact and network with a large cross section of individuals including potential employers, key people in your industry, academics and fellow students both in the UK and further afield.
- Find job opportunities, placements and internships in your local area and beyond.
Personalise your connections

• The principles of effective networking are the same whichever medium you use.

• Don’t simply befriend employers or people you want to make contact with, personalise that contact, say how you know someone or make reference to a company’s products or services.

• Be polite, courteous, respectful and helpful.

• Always write professionally checking your spelling and grammar.

• Don’t go overboard and hassle an employer too much. Interact where appropriate and do enough to help you stand out and prove you’re a good and confident communicator.

Below is a link to getting started with LinkedIn from a student’s point of view and gives you lots of tips on how to get the best out of the site.
http://learn.linkedin.com/students/step-1/

Your Profile

This is an opportunity for you to showcase your skills and abilities to potential employers on LinkedIn. There is an example of a student profile below which may help you get started. http://uk.linkedin.com/in/samuelroutledge

• There are sections for you to include examples of your work, for instance show reels, presentations or papers you have presented.

• You can also include details of volunteering you have undertaken and get recommendations from people you have worked with or for.

• You can complete a key skills section, this section is often used by recruiters to find candidates with particular abilities.

• Try and complete your profile as fully as possible

How to use the groups section

The groups section is where you can find people who are working in the area that you wish to get into or have interests similar to your own. Within these groups there are discussion threads that you can read and if you wish contribute to; it is an opportunity for you to network with people you may not normally have access to. Always may sure you have a professional approach and thank people who offer advice or help to you. Examples of useful groups could be Marketing Industry Network, Event Managers, UK solicitors – Law networking group and Cloud computing network. There are many others. You just need to put your area of interest in the search box.
The company section

This section will allow you to search and follow companies you may wish to work for and keep up with industry news. It will also show you if they have any vacancies. Once you have clicked on a company’s site it will also show you people in your network that work for that company and also people who work there that attended your University. This information will also give you opportunities to network.

Finding work using LinkedIn

You can search for jobs using the search box, the advanced search feature allows you to specify not just the type of job you want but in what location. In the search box you put the word graduate and all opportunities relevant to graduates will appear. Once you have successfully completed your profile you may well get job opportunities sent straight to you.

Twitter

- Twitter is particularly good for sharing ideas, making contacts and developing commercial awareness.
- You need very little to get started on Twitter just an email address and a user name; try and choose something professional.
- Twitter only allows you to post up to 140 characters at one time so you will need to keep your comments short and to the point. If you wish to include a link to some work then you can use one of the sites to shorten your link such as http://tinyurl.com
- Networking on Twitter can be as simple as “following” someone. They will get a message to say you have shown an interest and may even follow you back.
- Use @ in front of a username to mention someone in a tweet
- A # tag joins subjects together so if you are looking for jobs in IT do #Itjobs and all the jobs in IT will appear or just #graduatejobs to see a wider variety of options. Use the # option when you first start to find people tweeting about your industry and things you are interested in.
- TwitJobSearch (www.twitjobsearch.com) is a vacancy search engine – search by job title, location and keyword. You can also search via an interactive “job map” to focus on jobs in specific locations.

Here are a few twitter feeds that you may find useful when looking for work.

@graduatejobfeed @gradplus
@graduatejobsuk @milkroundonline
@graduate_ldn @ratemyplacement
@UWLCareers
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This statement is in compliance with the University of West London’s Equal Opportunities Policy Statements which can be accessed on the website: www.uwl.ac.uk/about-us/policies/equality-and-diversity

We value your feedback. If you feel we have not addressed any issues concerning the above, please let us know.

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