

John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

## research brief

# Social Media for One-Stop Career Center Frontline Staff: Supporting Job Search and Improving Customer Service

by Michele Martin, Savannah Barnett, and Robb C. Sewell

*This brief, the third in a series on using social media to support job search, is directed at frontline staff and managers in One-Stop Career Centers. It discusses the growth of social media in recruitment, reviews key tools, and discusses strategies for using these tools to support job seeker customers. For a more complete overview of social media tools, refer to the Heldrich Center research brief entitled, Social Networking for Workforce Professionals: A Primer.*

## Introduction

As social media use explodes among all Americans, businesses are increasingly turning to tools such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to fill their job openings. These same tools also provide job seekers with unprecedented access to information, networks, and branding tools they can use to enhance their job search efforts.

In today's tight job market, it is vitally important that One-Stop Career Center staff understand how online networking, through the use of social media, is reshaping the job search landscape. This brief is designed to help One-Stop Career Center staff understand the growing use of social media tools in the job search process so they are able to more

effectively advise and support their job seeker customers on how to take advantage of these tools.

## How Employers are Using Social Media

A number of recent surveys indicate that employers are increasingly turning to social media to recruit new employees. A SelectMinds survey found that 72% of employers are using social media for recruitment/talent acquisition, with 85% saying that they are actively seeking or plan to invest in social media technology.<sup>1</sup>

A recent Jobvite survey puts the number even higher, finding that 80% of employers use social media for recruitment, with 64% indicating that they've successfully hired using social media.<sup>2</sup> Sixty-four percent report that they use at least two social networks for hiring (LinkedIn and Facebook lead the pack), while 40% use three or more social media tools.

When employers first ventured into social media, they were using social media tools to pre-screen applicants, looking for "digital dirt" to help them determine if a potential candidate should continue through the

hiring process. This was a form of reference checking that helped them weed out applicants.

While this screening continues, businesses now are increasingly using social media to directly source and recruit the talent they are seeking. Through LinkedIn and Twitter, they reach out to their online networks to ask for recommendations to fill positions that have not been posted yet — the “hidden job market” at work in a digital environment. They are also turning to LinkedIn to run skill and experience searches for people who meet particular qualifications and are then reaching out to applicants directly, inviting them to apply.

While employers may continue to use more traditional means to advertise job openings, including job boards, newspapers, and company Web sites, they are using social media tools to help them identify and engage their top candidates, particularly for more “professional” level jobs.

## Implications for Job Seekers and One-Stop Staff

If job search is about going where the jobs are, then in today’s labor market, this means that job seekers need to be online and proficient in using key social media tools in the job search.

Since many job seekers lack the skills to effectively use social media in the job search, One-Stop personnel need to provide the appropriate support and training to ensure that job seekers are prepared. Further, staff must be able to use these tools themselves so that they are able to identify job opportunities and help job seeker customers connect to the “hidden job market” and to connect to human resources staff and recruiters in their local job market.

The remainder of this brief will discuss key activities in the job search and how social media tools can be used to support the job search activities of One-Stop Career Center customers.

## Supporting the Job Search with Social Media

Job seekers engage in a number of activities to support the job search process, most importantly:

- Identifying job leads,
- Researching companies, and
- Selling their skills and qualifications to employers.

Social media can support job seekers in each of these main tasks.

## Using Social Media to Identify Job Leads

To identify job openings, job seekers must work both the public and the “hidden” job market. With so many jobs being filled without ever being advertised, job seekers must be aware of how to use social media to find both those jobs that are advertised, as well as those that may not be.

### LinkedIn

There are a number of ways to use LinkedIn to find and access job openings:

- **The “Find Jobs” Feature** — The most basic LinkedIn tool is “Find Jobs,” accessed through the main LinkedIn dashboard. Employers can list job openings through their LinkedIn accounts and jobs that match with the job seeker’s qualifications will be listed on the job

seeker's "Find Jobs" page. Job seekers merely click on the link to get further information on the opening.

- **Advanced Search** — From the "Find Jobs" page, job seekers can access the "Advanced Search" tab. This allows them to search for positions using specific keywords, job functions, geographic locations, companies, experience levels, and industries.
- **"Similar Jobs"** — Each job listing page features links to similar jobs. As job seekers look at individual job listings, they can expand their options by reviewing these similar positions.
- **The LinkedIn Job Insider** — This tool, available through the LinkedIn Web site, can be downloaded as an add-on to a web browser. As job seekers find jobs on sites such as CareerBuilder and Monster, the Job Insider will tell them if they have any connections within that company. Job seekers can then contact their connections to network their way to the opening.
- **LinkedIn Company Pages** — If job seekers have an interest in a particular company, they can visit that company's LinkedIn page and check the "careers" section of the page for job openings. They are also able to see if they have connections within that company that they can use to access the unadvertised jobs available through that company. Company pages also show employees' previous employers and the employers they go to when they leave the company. These can offer job seekers additional options for identifying job leads.

#### A Note on Social Media Site Blocking at One-Stop Career Centers

It is important that to most effectively support job seekers in learning how to access and use social media tools, job seekers and One-Stop Career Centers must have access to these sites at the One-Stops.

However, a number of One-Stop Career Centers, in an attempt to keep job seekers focused on the job search process, block social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs at their locations. Instead of recognizing their growing necessity and value in the job search process, these One-Stops regard them as personal use sites that necessitate limiting their access during business hours.

Today, One-Stop Career Center job seekers and staff need access to these tools in order to use them for job search. Blocking these sites is a liability for job seekers unskilled in their use and a detriment to their ability to learn to use and take advantage of these sites. Further, as the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) begins using these sites for national efforts (see the recent agreement between USDOL and Facebook at <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/OPA20111538.htm>), it is important that One-Stop Career Center personnel be in a position to understand their utility and access them as well.

One-Stop Career Centers that currently block social media sites should instead develop policies, strategies, and tools that facilitate job seekers in the effective use of these sites for job search. If there are issues with staff and/or job seekers using sites inappropriately, these sites should be managed through monitoring and usage policies, rather than by blocking access altogether. There are many online resources for assisting with drafting a social media policy. Please see the "resources" section at the end of this brief for specific links.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) is the most widely known and used employment-focused social networking platform. It boasts over 115 million (and counting) members, with over 44 million in the United States alone. Over one million companies maintain company profiles, which can be used by job seekers for research, to find contacts, and to find job openings. Individual users create profiles, a sort of online résumé that can also include links to the job seeker's other online profiles and a variety of social media-enhanced digital work samples, such as PowerPoint presentations and online portfolios. Job seeker profiles can also be enhanced with LinkedIn's "skills" feature, which lets job seekers identify key skills that employers can also search for when looking to identify potential applicants.

At the heart of LinkedIn is the ability for job seekers to visualize their networks. After building their profiles, job seekers identify and make connections among colleagues, classmates, professors, supervisors, friends, etc. Job seekers are able to see who their connections know and where they've worked previously, making it much easier to target their networking efforts to the right people. They are also able to see second-level connections (who do people in their network know) and third-level connections. This makes it easier for them to get introductions to the right people who can help them expand their networks. In fact, recent research by Carnegie Mellon University suggests that LinkedIn's capacity to help people access and build networks is more effective as a job search tool than job boards and other more "traditional" strategies.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike a traditional résumé, LinkedIn also allows users to endorse each other through recommendations. These recommendations can add credibility to a user's profile and provide more information to potential employers and colleagues.

Company profiles are an equally rich source of information on LinkedIn. Job seekers can "follow" individual companies, and receive updates when new information is added to a company profile. They are also able to see the kinds of people a company hires, if they are connected to someone within the company, the career paths of people who have worked for the company, and other valuable job search information.

- **LinkedIn Connections** — Job seekers can utilize their connections to find out if there are openings in the companies where their connections are working. They can also get introductions to new connections who may have an "in" with particular companies.
- **LinkedIn Groups** — Another feature of LinkedIn is the ability to create and join groups. Job seekers can find and join groups related to their occupation and/or their industry to network with other professionals in their field who may be able to point them to potential jobs. In many cases, employers are also using groups to advertise their openings before putting them out to a larger network or advertising them officially.
- **LinkedIn Answers** — Although unlikely to provide direct information on job openings, this feature can be a way for people to make connections to other LinkedIn users to access hidden jobs. Anyone can post a question and then other users can respond to those questions. Job seekers can build their credibility and connections by providing helpful answers to questions in their industry and/or occupation. Their responses are linked to their profiles and provide potential employers with additional information on candidates.

## Twitter

Twitter, the 140-character micro-blogging tool, can be another valuable tool for finding leads.

- **Tweets with Links to Job Openings** — Many companies use Twitter to send out links to their job openings. These can be accessed through a tool like Twitjobsearch (<http://www.twitjobsearch.com>) or by following specific companies that interest the job seeker.
- **Hashtags** — A key feature on Twitter is the hashtag (#). This is used to organize information so that people can see what many different Twitter users are saying about a particular topic. Job seekers can search on hashtags like #careerchat or #hirefriday, both of which are popular tags for discussing career and job search-related topics.
- **Direct Messages** — Many company representatives have their own Twitter profiles. These can often be found through an individual's LinkedIn profile and/or by doing a search on Twitter for the individual's name. Job seekers can then send a direct message to contacts they want to make through Twitter.

## Facebook

Although Facebook probably has limited utility as a strategy for finding job leads, those job seekers who want to tap into their personal networks can do so through the site by:

- Posting a status update indicating that they are searching for a job.
- Sending messages to their personal networks asking for job leads and potential networking contacts.

## Twitter

Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) is a “micro-blogging” service that allows users to create status updates or “tweets” of 140 characters or less. These updates can include links to other Web sites, photos, videos, PDFs, documents, and other information.

Twitter users can “follow” other people who may provide valuable information. They may also have “followers” — people and organizations who are interested in what they share in their tweets.

Many companies are using Twitter to announce job openings that provide a link back to their company Web sites where job seekers can apply. They also use Twitter to share information about their companies that can be used by job seekers for research and to get a feel for the company's priorities and business issues, including having human resources and recruiting staff available via Twitter.

Individuals within a company may also have a Twitter profile. Many companies are using Twitter to provide online customer service, respond to customers' questions and issues, etc. Following these individuals can be another way for job seekers to obtain company information and make connections.

Job seekers in more professional positions and in high-tech industries should consider creating and using their own Twitter accounts. Twitter can be used as a tool for “branding,” allowing a job seeker to demonstrate knowledge and experience in an industry. It is also an effective way to build online connections and contacts that can be added to the job seeker's network.



- “Liking” careers pages of companies they might be interested in.
- Using special job search applications like BranchOut (<http://www.branchout.com>) that can be downloaded to their Facebook profiles and utilized for extending the job search.

### Using Social Media to Research Companies

Social media is an invaluable tool for conducting company research. It allows job seekers access to information and connections that would otherwise be difficult to find. This information provides job seekers with the ability to target their résumés, cover letters, and interview presentations to specific companies and people, increasing their ability to demonstrate value as a potential employee.

#### LinkedIn

Through LinkedIn, job seekers can obtain a wealth of information that is useful for the job search.

- **Company Pages** — Over a million companies maintain company pages on LinkedIn. Through these pages, job seekers can learn about a company’s products and services and recent company news. They can also see who they may be connected to in the company so these connections could be contacted for more information. Many companies include links to their Web sites and other online information that job seekers can access and use for targeting their communications.
- **LinkedIn Connections** — Connections are the heart of LinkedIn. Job seekers can research their own networks to determine if they know people within a

company. They can also research who their direct connections may know within a company and ask for an introduction to a new connection to gain additional information.

- **LinkedIn Groups** — Many companies start their own groups on LinkedIn that job seekers may join. It can also be helpful for job seekers to identify people within a company, view their profiles to see which groups they belong to, and then join those groups to view their posts and learn more about what may be going on within the company.

#### Twitter

Many companies are using Twitter to provide customer service and talk about their online brands. Job seekers can follow these companies and view their messages to gain insight into what the company values and is looking for in its overall business.

They can also find individual employees on Twitter, either through a Twitter search for a specific name or through the employee’s LinkedIn profile. By following these individuals, job seekers can gain additional insight into the work and environment of companies that interest them.

#### Facebook

As a company research tool, Facebook offers limited usability. However, many companies do have fan pages that Facebook users can view to see the kinds of comments and conversations that are taking place about the company’s brand. Job seekers may also find that some organizations have careers fan pages that specifically highlight work at that company.

## Facebook

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), like LinkedIn, is an online social network in which users create personal profiles. However Facebook is much more “social” than LinkedIn and historically has been used by people to connect with friends and maintain personal connections, rather than maintaining a professional network.

Today, a growing number of large and small companies are using Facebook to create career pages that let them promote job opportunities within their organizations. Facebook users can “like” these “fan pages” and receive updates and information on recruitment opportunities through that company.

There are also Facebook applications for job search that can be connected to a user’s profile. BranchOut (<http://www.branchout.com>), for example, can offer relevant career information from a user’s Facebook profile and help the job seeker connect with other Facebook users who may be able to assist in the job search.

Using Facebook as a job search tool can be challenging and requires that job seekers have a good understanding of Facebook’s ever changing privacy settings and how to use them. They also need to look carefully at how they use Facebook’s features to enhance the job search process.

Positioned to potentially revolutionize Facebook’s role in the job search is a new partnership between Facebook and the U.S. Department of Labor, among other partners. The newly launched Social Jobs Partnership will conduct research on ways job seekers are using social media for the job search, develop systems for posting jobs on Facebook, promote employment programs, and serve as a portal for materials on using social media for the job search.

## Selling Skills and Qualifications to Employers

Social media is especially effective as a tool to help job seekers highlight and sell their value to potential employers. Savvy job seekers, especially in more professional positions, need to use these tools to their full advantage.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the “go-to” network for employers, so job seekers should make special efforts to ensure that they have complete profiles that highlight their qualifications and the value they bring to a potential employer.

Specific areas to pay attention to include:

- Completing the work history and education sections of the profile.
- Adding a current professional photo.
- Adding links to their Twitter and other professional accounts, including any online portfolio they may maintain.
- Obtaining recommendations from their LinkedIn network, particularly from supervisors and managers at previous employers.
- Adding appropriate skills to their profiles via the LinkedIn skills tool. It helps for job seekers to do some research on the most “in-demand” skills in their field so they

can be sure to include the appropriate skills tags in their profiles. This will make them more “findable” by employers.

Job seekers can expand the reach of their LinkedIn presence by including a link to their profile in their email signature and featuring it on their business cards and electronic versions of their résumé.

### Twitter

Job seekers can use a Twitter profile to demonstrate their interest in and knowledge of their industry. They can “tweet” about news and information related to their industry, connect to other Twitter users, and participate in online conversations on professional issues.

### Facebook

Facebook is one of those sites that can make or break a job seeker’s online reputation. For the job search, users should:

- Check their privacy settings and ensure that they are using tight controls on what is shared with other people. This limits who can see any damaging information they may have in their accounts.
- Revamp their profiles to focus on a more professional look and approach. Their profiles can highlight their qualifications and the type of work they are seeking. Photos can focus on participation in professional events or activities. Status updates and wall posts should feature links and comments that highlight professional interests.
- Find fan pages that are connected to their professional interests and the work that they want to do. They can “like” these pages, which will then show up in their profiles.

- Carefully monitor the activity of their friends on their profiles. Job seekers should remove any comments, photos, videos, or web links that may cast a negative light on them. They should also “untag” themselves in any questionable photos. Job seekers on Facebook should always feel free to “unfriend” individuals whose online behavior may be detrimental to their job search.

### Online Portfolios

A variety of digital tools make it easy for job seekers to share work samples and other information about themselves in an online portfolio.

- PowerPoint presentations can be uploaded to Slideshare (<http://www.slideshare.net>), a free presentation sharing site. Job seekers can create their own “channel” on Slideshare that allows employers to view PowerPoint presentations directly online. These presentations can also be embedded in other Web sites and added to the job seeker’s LinkedIn profile.
- A number of savvy job seekers are creating videos of themselves giving their 30-second “elevator speech,” responding to specific interview questions, and/or selling their features and benefits. They are then uploading these videos to YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) or Vimeo (<http://www.vimeo.com>) and sharing them with potential employers through their LinkedIn profiles, email signatures, and other online tools.
- Free tools like Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com>) allow job seekers to create an online portfolio where they can embed presentations from Slideshare, YouTube, and Vimeo, and upload documents, such as work samples and scans of various credentials and awards. Job seekers can also use their online portfolio to create special highlights



pages that can be targeted to specific employers, based on the needs that employer may have. This portfolio can then be included on the job seeker's LinkedIn profile, in email signatures, and as a link in digital résumés.

## Conclusion

As employers are increasingly using online tools to recruit and hire candidates, it becomes ever more critical for One-Stop Career Center staff to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to support job seekers in their use. While résumés and cover letters are staples in the job search process, social media offers such great value to employers in the talent recruitment process that it is becoming a growing phenomenon. For now, it is more likely to be of value to higher-skill and professional services job applicants, but it is very likely that employers will be seeking social media savvy in all potential employees. Social media helps make people more “findable” and the more easily an applicant can be found, the better.

To be adequately prepared for the job search, One-Stop Career Center customers need access to social media tools through their One-Stops, as well as training on how to use them, through workshops, tutorials, tip sheets, and coaching. Just as workforce development professionals insist that job seekers learn how to create an appropriate résumé or participate in an interview, it is critical that they also learn how to use the tools that a growing number of employers are using to find them.

It is also important that One-Stop Career Center staff become conversant in the use of these tools. One-Stops should promote the creation of LinkedIn profiles for all workforce development staff, and encourage the active development and maintenance of their staff's online presence and networking. Staff should be actively encouraged to develop skills in the use of social networks for finding job

leads, researching companies, and selling skills online. Going online themselves will help One-Stop Career Center staff understand the culture of various online networks and know how to appropriately interact in those venues.

Social media tools are fast becoming critical to the 21st century job search process. It is, therefore, vital that One-Stop Career Centers know how to use and support these tools.

## Resources

**Job Search on Online Social Networks** by Rajiv Garg, Rahul Telang, David Bowman, and Murray Johannsen ([http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rgarg/linkedin/Research\\_Report%20-%20Linking\\_on\\_LinkedIn.pdf](http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rgarg/linkedin/Research_Report%20-%20Linking_on_LinkedIn.pdf))

**Guide to Using Social Media for the Job Search** — Archived webinar and resources (<http://www.discoverabilitynj.org/2011/04/using-social-media-for-the-job-search.html>)

**Cleaning Up Your Digital Dirt** — Archived webinar and resources (<http://www.discoverabilitynj.org/2011/03/cleaning-up-your-digital-dirt-presentation-and-follow-up-links.html>)

**Using LinkedIn for Branding and Job Leads** — Archived webinar and resources (<http://www.discoverabilitynj.org/2011/04/using-linkedin-for-branding-and-job-leads-webinar-and-follow-up-resources.html>)

**How to Use LinkedIn Company Profiles for Job Search** — CIO article ([http://www.cio.com/article/480610/How\\_to\\_Use\\_LinkedIn\\_Company\\_Profiles\\_For\\_Job\\_Hunt\\_Networking\\_](http://www.cio.com/article/480610/How_to_Use_LinkedIn_Company_Profiles_For_Job_Hunt_Networking_))

**Using Free Internet Technologies to Support Job Search and Customer Service** — Garden State Employment and Training Association presentation (<http://gsetaconference09.wikispaces.com/Technology>)

**Garden State Employment and Training Association Blog** — An array of links to social media and job search resources (<http://www.gseta.org/>)

**10 Must-Haves for Your Social Media Policy** — tips from Mashable.com (<http://mashable.com/2009/06/02/social-media-policy-musts/>)

**CareerOneStop – Social Media in the Job Search** features helpful information and links (<http://www.careeronestop.org/jobseekertools/jobseekerchallenge.aspx?category=5&subcategory=&keyword=&searchtab=&recommended=y&recommendedcategory=&recommendedsubcategory=>)

**CareeRealism** features résumé tips, job hunting guides, webinars, and other resources on social networking and the job search (<http://www.careerealism.com/>)

**Mashable.com** features news, guidebooks, and how-to's on all things social networking (<http://mashable.com/>)

**Pew Internet and American Life Project** features survey data and topical news stories on Internet and social media usage (<http://www.pewinternet.org/>)

**“Using Free Internet Technologies to Support Customer Job Search,”** a presentation to the Garden State Employment and Training Administration along with other presentations and social media resources (<http://gsetaconference10.wikispaces.com/Social+Media+for+Job+Search>)

An array of books about navigating LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are available for purchase, including *The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success: Kick-start Your Business, Brand, and Job Search* (Greenleaf Book Group, 2011); *Facebook for Dummies* (For Dummies, 2010); and *All a Twitter: A Personal and Professional Guide to Social Networking with Twitter* (Que, 2009).

## Endnotes

1. SelectMinds Survey: 72% of Employers Use Social Media to Recruit, retrieved from: <http://www.selectminds.com/blog/2011/10/05/selectminds-survey-72-of-companies-use-social-media-to-recruit-candidates/>.

2. Global Recruiting Roundtable: 80% of Companies Use Social Media to Recruit, retrieved from: <http://www.globalrecruitingroundtable.com/2011/09/12/80-of-all-companies-use-social-media-to-recruit/#.Tt9c93NW5oC>.

3. Job Search on Online Social Networks by Rajiv Garg, Rahul Telang, David Bowman and Murray Johannsen, retrieved from: [http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rgarg/linkedin/Research\\_Report%20-%20Linking\\_on\\_LinkedIn.pdf](http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rgarg/linkedin/Research_Report%20-%20Linking_on_LinkedIn.pdf).

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## About the Heldrich Center

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, based at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, is a dynamic research and policy center devoted to strengthening the nation's workforce. It is one of the nation's leading university-based centers dedicated to helping America's workers and employers respond to a rapidly changing 21st Century economy.

The Center's motto —“Solutions at Work”— reflects its commitment to offering practical solutions, based on independent research, that benefit employers, workers, and job seekers. The Center's policy recommendations and programs serve a wide range of Americans at all skill levels.

Learn more about the Heldrich Center at <http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu>.

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You can use your smart phone to take a photograph of the barcode below and immediately visit the Heldrich Center Web site? All you need is a QR (or Quick Response) Reader, a smart phone, and an Internet connection. Learn more at: <http://www.mobile-barcodes.com/qr-code-software/>

