



## **DON'T CONFUSE SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS WITH NETWORKING IN YOUR JOB SEARCH**

There's no question that networking is one of the best ways to land a great position in today's job market. Unfortunately, the concept is misunderstood and often assumed to mean that someone has a significant number of individuals they're "connected with" through social media. Having a strong social media presence can help your job search, however, this might not be as helpful as you think. Worse yet, this might actually detract from your efforts.

### **How social media tools can facilitate networking:**

The belief that your number of connections is the number of individuals in your career network is absolutely false. Just because someone accepted your invitation on LinkedIn or sent you an invitation doesn't mean they're going to assist in your job search or career development. A rule of thumb is that a connection means this person is willing to have a discussion or exchange ideas with you. A general definition of networking is "building relationships of trust that produce direct and/or in-direct benefits to both individuals." Connecting on social media for the purpose of mentoring, career development, and improving a job search is consistent with this definition and requires that you give to receive. A great way to leverage and engage with your contact list is to conduct informational interviews. This simply means you have a 'career-related' discussion with someone on your list. It can be over a cup of coffee or lunch (please offer to pay if you extended the invitation), on-line via emails/blog/chat, or by phone. Regardless of the method, an important rule to follow is that you shouldn't inquire about specific jobs they might be trying to fill when using this technique, unless the other member first introduces the topic.



### **Ways that social media can harm a job search:**

Use of social media is a good way to begin the networking process, however, too much can also become a problem. Here are some additional ways that social media can detract from a job search effort:

- Inconsistencies between on-line profiles and resumes which might cause a hiring manager to think you're not telling the truth somewhere
- Digital dirt (inappropriate activities) that become obvious, especially if these are illegal or unethical
- Inappropriate relations that result in a conflict of interest or interactions with competitors

### **Why the lack of a profile can hurt your job search:**

While too much social media activity can be a problem, the lack of a profile can also detract from your job search. Since most employers review candidate profiles, it's highly recommended that you have at least a basic presence that's professional, accurate, consistent with your resume, and has a current and professional photo of just you.