

NETWORKING

Make Your Virtual You Virtually Perfect

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Hiring has always been done, at least in part, on the basis of reputation. And these days, reputation is even more important because we all have the power to create our own reputation, using the tools provided by the Internet and social platforms.

Twenty years ago, if a hiring manager or a recruiter wanted to find out about your reputation, she might make a few phone calls to her contacts, reach out to your past employers, or look up your educational record. Nowadays, she's much more likely to type your

name into search engines like Google or Yahoo!, as well as the search fields of social platforms

To help you make sure that what potential employers find enhances your reputation, we asked Lisa Quast — career coach, founder of [Career Woman Inc.](#), and Forbes blog contributor — to share her expert advice. Here's what she had to say:

It's all about networking. Don't just use social media for taking pictures of your pup. Seek out beneficial connections in your industry by researching friend and friend-of-friend profiles. Having an internal contact at a company makes it much easier to get your foot in the door. Also, don't be embarrassed to tell your social networks you're looking for employment. If they don't know, they can't help. (Bonus tip: Ask to meet offline. Face time is still important for building lasting connections, which can help tremendously with your job search.)

>> Don't Miss Monster's free ebooks on networking: [Monster's Guide to Online Networking](#) and the brand-new [Monster's Guide to Online Networking for College Students & New Grads](#).

Be the professional you would want to hire. Ditch that profile picture taken in the mirror and opt for a professional photograph. Give potential employers a glimpse of someone that can be taken seriously by scrubbing your accounts to get rid of inappropriate photos or status updates, and Googling yourself to ensure nothing incriminating comes up. (Bonus tip: Your social media profiles may be squeaky clean, but your friend who still beer bongs years after his fraternity days could reflect poorly on you. It's not necessary to delete these friends, but keep online interactions minimal during your job search.)

>> Get more tips in "[Advance Your Career with Social Networking Sites](#)."

Cover all your bases and don't forget the basics. Social media isn't the cure-all magic tool that will grant you a dream job. A stellar [resume](#), a great [cover letter](#), and relevant work experience are still a top priority. Once these are up to par, make sure they're easily accessible online by uploading to relevant networking platforms. To give your online credentials an extra boost, include recommendations from previous employers, co-workers or clients. (Bonus tip: It's always best to send your resume and address your cover letter to an actual person instead of "To Whom it May Concern." Social media makes this easier than ever.)

