

## Make Your Virtual You a Viable Candidate

By Lisa Quast

Stuck at [just over 8%](#), the unemployment rate just won't budge. What does this mean for you job seekers? Competition for open positions is fierce and you need to be smarter and more creative than your peers to land a position. In this digital age, there's a new opportunity for the unemployed to get noticed – social media.

To make sure that extra attention from potential employers is positive, I'm sharing my advice so you can all gain that competitive edge when searching for your next job opportunity:

**Network both online and offline.** Social media can be used for so much more than just taking pictures of your lunch. It can introduce you to your next co-worker, boss or client. Research friend and friend-of-friend profiles to find beneficial contacts in your industry – having an internal contact makes it much easier to get your foot in the door. Also, don't be afraid to ask for an offline meeting. Face-to-face interactions are invaluable for building lasting connections that can help with your career in the long term.

**Keep it professional.** Swap out your profile picture taken in the mirror in exchange for a professional photograph. Also, scrub your social media accounts to get rid of inappropriate photos or status updates and google yourself to ensure nothing incriminating comes up. Your online profiles should represent the qualified professional that you are.

**Keep an eye on your friends.** Your social media presence isn't made up of content solely from you. Friends can also share inappropriate photos. If you have college buddies who like to reminisce about your beer bonging fraternity days, send a quick message asking them to lock down or remove those photos while you're in the midst of a job search.

**Don't forget your job search basics.** A solid social media network isn't a replacement for a great resume, cover letter and relevant work experience. These should still be a top priority. Once they're up to par, use social media to make them easily accessible to potential employers. Upload your resume information to LinkedIn and update your work history on Facebook. Also consider supplementing your resume and work history with recommendations on LinkedIn from previous employers, co-workers or clients.

**Make it personal.** Social media makes it easier than ever to personalize your cover letter. Seek out an HR representative on LinkedIn at your desired company instead of using the boring and unfriendly "To Whom it May Concern" line.

**Position yourself as an expert.** Social media allows you to get your name out there by demonstrating your talent and setting you apart in your job search. Write a blog focused on your area of expertise or participate in online communities, such as Quora or Github for software developers.



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The bottom line here is that depending on how you manage your online presence, your social media profiles can either really help or hurt your job search. How do yours measure up to the advice above?

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