



# Job hunting in the digital age

Leveraging the web in your job search and preventing social media from hindering your efforts.

# It's a digital world.

Job hunting has changed dramatically in the past decade. Companies and job seekers alike have moved away from traditional print advertising to the Internet and its many forms of social media to find "the perfect fit." Online resources like LinkedIn, MySpace and Facebook are surging in popularity and all age groups are quickly adopting these as tools to aide in the job search process.

Though recruiters and personal relationships remain the most effective means to building your network and securing a new job, using the latest digital mediums can be a great way to supplement your search. And as HR professionals and recruiters embrace these new technologies from a recruiting perspective, knowing how to capitalize on the available digital mediums is essential to a successful job search.

## **If it's on the web, it's public!**

Some of today's saviest job seekers are using social media outlets such as MySpace (40 million unique users), Facebook and LinkedIn to get their foot in the door and become the

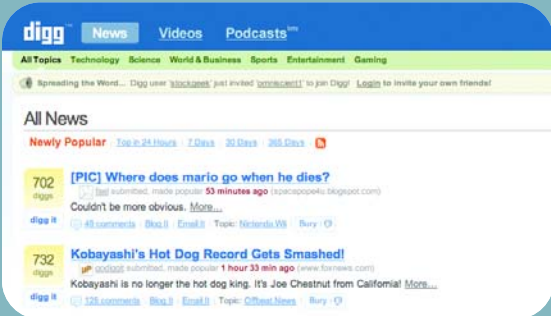
top candidate in a search (through such practices as networking sites, blogs and video resumes). But just as using these sites can help a search, social media outlets can just as quickly harm a search — if the content on the web is deemed unprofessional.

Employers are scouring the web more and more for candidates and, thanks to the information available online, they can conduct instant background checks — most commonly by "Googling" an individual's name. Personal information on job candidates is everywhere these days — from websites and chat rooms to alumni sites and more.

"Because social media and online job searching components are now part of the norm, candidates need to know how to benefit from the use of these tools in order to be successful in their search," says Bernadette Kenny, Chief Career Officer at Ajilon. "A job seeker's personal posts on social media outlets, as well as their overall 'persona' on the Internet, can harm their hunt for the perfect job — or they can turn it around and use these same tools to help them land a great position."



"I posted a bulletin to all my friends on my MySpace page in hopes that their companies may be hiring — and if not, that they knew someone else who was. Within a week, I had a number of quality leads — and they weren't just names of companies. I had job descriptions and internal contacts, too!"



## What is social media?

According to Wikipedia, social media describes the online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other.

A few prominent examples of social media applications are MySpace (social networking), YouTube (video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), Digg (news sharing), Flickr (photo sharing) and Miniclip (game sharing). These sites typically use technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, wikis, and vlogs to allow users to interact.

## Social media reference guide

**Avatar:** An Internet user's representation of himself or herself, or the personality connected with the screen name of an Internet user.

**Blog:** A user-generated website where entries are made in journal-style and displayed in reverse chronological order.

**Digg:** A community-based popularity website with an emphasis on technology and science articles.

**Facebook:** An English-language social networking website originally developed for university students, faculty and staff, but has since expanded to include everyone, including high school, corporate and geographic communities.

**Flickr:** A photo sharing website and web services suite.

**Message board:** A facility for holding discussions and posting user-generated content.

**Miniclip:** A games, entertainment and virtual community website.

**MySpace:** A social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music and videos.

**Podcast:** A media file that is distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds, for playback on portable media players and personal computers.

**Second Life:** An Internet-based virtual world which enables its users to interact with each other through motional avatars.

**YouTube:** A popular free video sharing website which lets users upload, view and share video clips.

**Vlog:** A blog that includes video.

**Wiki:** A website that allows visitors to add, remove and otherwise edit and change content, typically without the need for registration.

## Job hunting in the digital age

### **How social media sites are used by employers and job seekers.**

Social media sites such as MySpace and Facebook are used by millions as networking tools. Users connect with hundreds of friends with whom they can share photos, blogs, personal statements and comments. Wildly popular with Generation Y, these sites can be open to the public or put to “private view” — where only a person listed as a “friend” can access the information. Video sharing on YouTube and photo sharing on Flickr are just as popular and also provide a glimpse into a person’s private life, while in a very public domain.

According to a study conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), one in ten employers will use social networking sites to review a job candidate’s information — gaining access through the public Internet domain into a person’s private life. More than 60 percent of employers who review the sites say that the information they glean there will have at least some influence on their hiring decision.

According to a *New York Times* article, “Many companies that recruit on college campuses have been using search engines like Google and Yahoo to conduct background checks on seniors looking for their first job. But now, college career counselors and other experts say, some recruiters are looking up applicants on social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, Xanga and Friendster, where college students often post risqué photographs and provocative comments about drinking and recreational drug use in what some mistakenly

believe is relative privacy. When viewed by corporate recruiters or admissions officials at graduate and professional schools, such pages can make students look immature and unprofessional, at best.”

When it comes to looking for candidates, employers have a vested interest in learning all they can about prospective employees.

Interestingly, in a recent Ajilon Workplace Insights survey, 66 percent of Generation Y respondents were not aware that these seemingly private photos, comments and statements were audited by potential employers. The information found by recruiters could be used to help secure a job offer — or prevent one.

### **Using social media to your advantage.**

Auditing your Internet profile is an important step in it not being used against you in a job search. Unfortunately, the majority of respondents to a recent Adecco survey wouldn’t know how to do so. Follow these steps to cleaning up your Internet profile so you can use social media to your advantage and prevent it from harming your hunt for a job.

#### **1. Protect your online persona.**

##### **For people with profiles on social networking sites:**

- Don’t post anything that you wouldn’t want a prospective employer to see. This includes derogatory comments, revealing or risqué photos, foul language and lewd jokes. These are a reflection of a person as a whole and managers want to find employees who have all-around professional characteristics.



- Set your profile to “private” so it is only viewable to your selected friends.
- You can’t control what others say about you, so consider a “block comments” feature.
- Check your profile regularly to ensure it remains professional and appropriate for a potential employer to see should they search and find it.

### **Keep tabs on what the Internet has to say about you:**

- Do a Google search and find out what the web has to say about you. This will give you a good idea of how you appear to others online.
- If there are items online that are not flattering, you can contact the web page’s controller to try to have it taken off.
- Getting rid of negative material can be difficult. It is easier to create positive content about yourself and post it. The more positive content you post, the more likely that it is going to be pushed to the top of Google and other search engines — and more likely read than older information pushed to the second or third page of a search.

## **2. Create a positive virtual presence.**

A blog is an important component of who you are virtually and, for many, may be as important as your resume.

“A resume is a great tool to get you in the door and may put you on the long list of candidates, but the blog is a tool that really helps you come out on top of a search,” says Bernadette Kenny, Chief Career Officer at Ajilon. “A blog helps you be seen as a thought leader in your particular field. It helps define you as an expert

on your topic and can be instrumental in building relationships with others in your industry who are thinking about and talking about the same topic and who may be hiring or know people hiring.”

Ways to help grow your virtual presence include seeking out blogs in your industry or field that interest you, becoming a member of and contributor to a blog hosted by another leader in your industry, or simply starting one of your own.

## **3. Build relationships.**

- Scour the Internet to find out if there are people at companies you want to work for, or in your career path and above you in level, who have blogs. Get to know their blog and start networking with them. Post a positive comment on their site to start a conversation with them. You can also reference a book or speech they gave in your own blog or site — it is likely that the person is monitoring their blog and will respond to you.
- Use social media sites, such as LinkedIn, to help you connect to a network of hundreds of people with similar interests and skills.
- Use MySpace and Facebook to your advantage. Censor your risqué photos, delete any information that a potential employer may deem unprofessional and leverage your virtual network of friends to help you land a job. Post a bulletin to all your friends about your job search. The bulletin goes to your entire network of friends who can subsequently let you know of openings at their companies.

### Online job search tips for savvy job hunters.

**Be cautious of turning over your personal information.** There are a number of bogus job search sites out there that are exploiting personal information for illegal uses. Beware of sites that don't name the people behind them, do not offer contact information, or that have an inadequate privacy policy (or none at all).

**Use a separate email for job searching; not a personal one that says too much about you.** For example, coreyrocks@killerbands.com isn't appropriate, whereas csmith@hotmail.com is.

**Be careful of what you say and what you show online.** Clean up your social media sites and be prepared for someone checking up on what you have put out onto the web. Make sure it doesn't contain anything you wouldn't want a potential employer knowing about you.

**Beat a potential employer to the punch.** You know there is a chance a potential employer will check up on your social media sites. Add information to your sites and blogs about your work experience and volunteer work in order to help highlight your achievements.

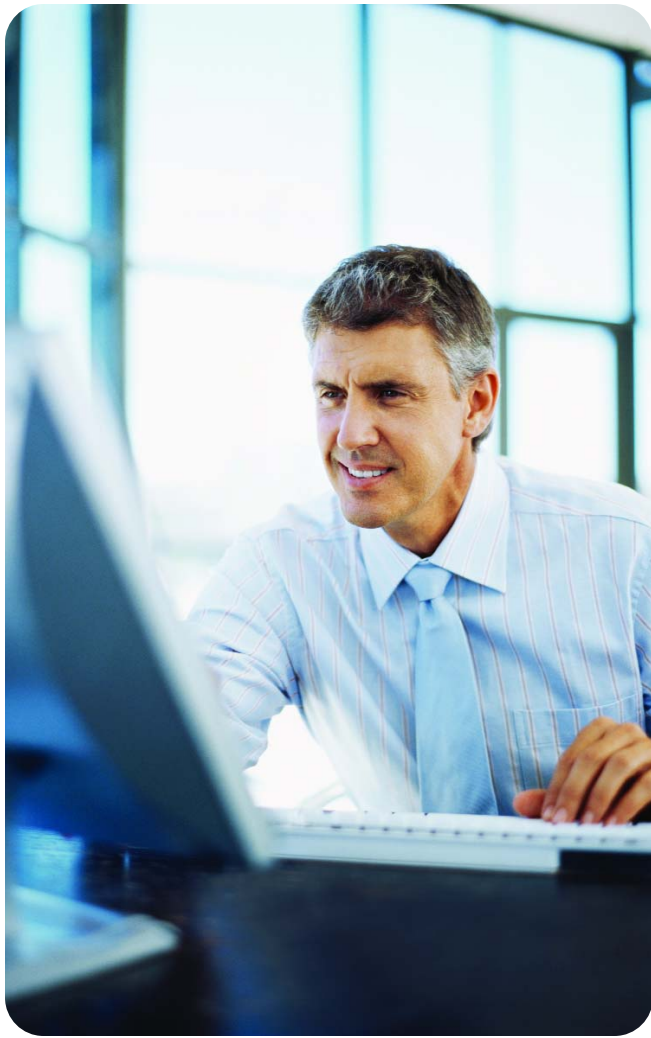
**Use the Internet to your advantage.**

Go online and research a potential employer as well as the people who are interviewing you. It's important to go to an interview knowing the background of the company and the individuals you may be working with and for.

**Pick and choose the social media sites you join.** When joining a networking site as a means to find a potential career opportunity, seek out and find the ones most fitting to your career plans.

**Populate your resume with words and phrases that are most commonly used in your profession.** With the growth of online job boards, electronic resume submission is more prevalent — leading to an increase of electronic resume review by employers. Sometimes when important words and phrases are missing from a resume, the electronic screening program will not pick up a potentially worthwhile candidate and you won't get a call for an interview.

**Don't conduct your job search at your current employer's expense.** Many companies monitor computer use and email and will know if you are job searching on their dime.



Do a Google search on yourself and see what it turns up.

Think like a recruiter — would the information gleaned in the search be a positive or negative factor in landing a job offer?

### **The Internet — where personal meets professional.**

While over half of the respondents to an Ajilon survey do not feel that it is fair for the information they have online about themselves to be a factor in the hiring process, it is now part of the norm. “The lines between personal and professional are blurred when it comes to the Internet,” says Bernadette Kenny. “Our recent study found that about 70 percent of respondents do not feel there is anything in cyber space about themselves that needs cleaning up prior to a job search. Unfortunately, that may be a case of thinking that what is personal stays personal on the World Wide Web, when, in fact, we know that’s not the case.”

The Internet is the first stop for many recruiters and hiring managers to determine if a potential candidate is a good fit. Ensuring their search turns up positive information is the responsibility of candidates.

Social media’s connection to digital job searching is here to stay. Candidates need to be prepared and use it to their advantage. Do a Google search on yourself and see what it turns up. Think like a recruiter — would the information gleaned in the search be a positive or negative factor in landing a job offer? The great thing about the Internet is that you can check it in real time; populate it with your own information; and turn your forays into social media into your own personal job hunting forum. Networking, information gathering and job searching are clicks away — use them in your favor to bolster your professional growth.

**To learn more about job searching in the digital age or to get connected with one of our recruiters to begin your job search, contact Ajilon at 866.GO AJILON or visit [ajilonfinance.com](http://ajilonfinance.com).**

## About Ajilon

Ajilon Professional Staffing is a leader in recruiting and project consulting, with specialty divisions in finance, office and legal. In North America, more than 200 offices service a range of clients through an integrated suite of human capital solutions.

- Ajilon Office offers clients specialized administrative and management professionals on a temporary and direct-hire basis.
- Ajilon Finance specializes in the temporary and direct-hire placement of premier accounting, financial and bookkeeping professionals.
- Ajilon Finance Solutions provides senior-level financial and operations professionals to companies on a project or interim basis.
- Ajilon StaffWise Legal places highly-qualified candidates in a wide range of specialized positions including attorneys, paralegals and legal support professionals.