How To Land A Job Using Social Media

Michael B. Maine

http://www.michaelbmaine.com

mail@michaelbmaine.com

214.699.1758

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Today I was reading FML when I came across this post:

> *Today, I was turned down for a job as a cashier at Best Buy. I worked like hell to get into and then graduate from one of the top Telecommunication schools in the country. I spent all my time with extracurriculars to help my resume instead of partying like my friends. I can't even be a cashier. FML.*

Finding a job, especially right now, can be difficult. Sometimes it seems like you've done everything right, but still can't get things to fall in your favor. There are jobs out there, and you can have the best credentials in the world, but if the people doing the hiring don't know about you or your credentials, you won't get the job.

Today's job market is extremely competitive and differentiation is key to landing and keeping your job. Starting next Monday, I will publish a 5-day "minicamp" on using social media to find a job, network, and advance your career. In the meantime, here's a homework assignment for the weekend.

Resume

Your resume, while becoming a dated method of screening, is still heavily used in the hiring process. Remember, recruiters are getting several resumes a day and only spend about fifteen seconds with each one, so you need it to be as effective as possible:

Proof read for ALL errors and typos.

Have somebody else critique it. An HR person would be ideal.

Use keywords in your resume to make it searchable in databases, but don't overdo it or use them for the sake of using them.

Don't just list what you've done. Make your experience relevant to what you can do for the prospective company.

Please, please, please make sure you include a valid phone number and email address. There are several cases when the employer wanted to hire a candidate but couldn't reach them to offer the job.

Proof read for ALL errors and typos…again.

Cover Letter

I know it sounds tedious, but each cover letter should be tailored to the particular employer (not industry) for which you want to work. Here's a list of questions to answer in your cover letter:

Why do I want for this company?

What skills are necessary for this job?

Do I have these skills? If so, how can I demonstrate them?

What unique qualities to I bring to the table?

What makes me the ONLY qualified candidate?

List of References

Although not always required, a list of professional references can help set you apart from other applicants. Take the time to build a list of 4-6 people (ask for the permission first) and create a center-aligned document that shows: *Company Name, Person Name, Phone Number, Email Address, Years Known*.

Network

I can't stress this enough. Take a while (an hour, two hours, however long it takes) to map out your network. Look at family, friends, friends of friends, teachers, coaches, neighbors, anybody with whom you have a positive rapport and ask around for any potential leads. By the way, you should be networking all the time, not only when you are looking for a job.

Online

If you haven't already done so, purchase your name as a domain name. Some of the popular places to purchase a name are GoDaddy, HostMonster, and Nettica. If your name is already taken, try using adding a middle initial or name. I wanted michaelmaine.com, but that was already taken, so I added my middle initial to get michaelbmaine.com. Maybe one day, the other one will become available and I'll have both pointed to the same place. Having your own domain name will help when people search for you during the job hunt. Also it will create a space where you can control your image. I'll give more details next week.
Those are the basics. I hope this gives you something to get you started. Check back on Monday when I start covering how to use various social media maximize your job search efficiency. Please subscribe to this blog or pass it along to anybody you think might benefit from the help. Also, if you have any other tips, comments are always welcomed. Until next time…peace.

E-Branding

E-branding is the process of developing your personal brand online. As more recruiters perform searches through various sources on the web such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google as part of background checks, it is important to ensure that you have a positive presence online. The first step to developing your positive web presence is to know what is already out there about you.

Google yourself and set up Google alerts

Take a moment to "Google" yourself and see what results come up. LinkedIn, Facebook, and Associated Content profiles normally rank high in Google searches. Check the top ten search results and make sure they show you in a positive light. For example, if your social media profiles show up among the top, make sure they are free from photos that could jeopardize your chances of getting a job. Even if they are not among the top, chances are a recruiter will at least try to find you on Facebook. If the top result is a news article that shows you getting into legal trouble, it may be time for some person public relations work. Go to www.google.com/alerts and set up an alert on your name. This will notify you whenever your name appears on the web and searchable on Google. Knowing where you are brought up and what is begin said will help you manage your online presence. Also set up an alert for industries and companies in which you are interested. They will help you have intelligent conversations during interviews.

Besides Google, you can also set up a search on Twitter for "jobs in (city, industry, etc.)." You can also establish a search for your name, companies, and industries there as well. I prefer TweetDeck, but feel free to use whatever Twitter client you like.

Secure your name where you can

On almost all social network you have the option to set your own sub domain name (profile URL). For example, my linked in address is: http://www.linkedin.com/in/michaelmaine. Set these up with your name if available. If they are not available, try to get as close as you can. That way, when a recruiter searches your name, there's a better chance your profile will be among the top results, helping you control your online identity.

Purchase your own domain name

Domain names are becoming scarcer each day. Try to purchase your name as a domain. Some reputable registrars are GoDaddy, HostMonster, and Joker. Again, once put to use, having your own domain will help you control what recruiters find and place you among the top of search engine results for your name.

Email Addresses and Voice mail Messages

When you are looking for a job, it is not a good time to use comical email addresses or voice mail messages (unless the industry you are targeting appreciates that kind of creativity). Make sure your name is present in both. For example, try using firstname.lastname[at]gmail.com instead of sillyeyedgoofball[at]gmail.com. This way a recruiter doesn't have to struggle to

find out who is contacting them or vice versa. Ringback tones are not helpful here. If you absolutely want to have funny email addresses and voice mail messages, consider creating a new email account for more professional uses and a service such as Google Voice or YouMail to establish group-specific voice mail messages.

<u>Clean up your social profiles</u>

If you have any suggestive pictures, remove them.
If you are under 21, take down any pictures of you drinking.
Don't have any pictures of you doing drugs.
Update privacy settings allow only you to tag yourself in photos.
Make sure your "about me," "favorite quotes," and other sections are appropriate.

Maximize Your Network

Now that you have read the Intro and Day 1 this mini camp on how to use social media to find a job, it's time to put some of those tools to work for you. Today, I'm going to cover how to utilize your organic network to look for a job for you, how to establish a website and blog, and how to use those tools effectively.

Put your friends to work for you

It drastically increases your effectiveness to have your entire network looking for jobs for you. To call upon your network, simply email all of your friends, family, associates, past teachers and professors, and anybody with whom you have a decent relationship. (***Note***: use the BCC field to input the addresses in order to protect their privacy by blocking their e-mail addresses). Here's an example of an email you can use (taken from p. 249 of The 4-Hour Workweek , Timothy Ferris):

Dear all,
I am considering making a career move and am interested in all opportunities that might come to mind.
Nothing is too outrageous or out of left field. [If you know what you want or don't want on some level, feel free to add, "I am particularly interested in…" or "I would like to avoid…"]
Please let me know if anything comes to mind!
Best,
Michael Maine
214.699.1758
mail [at] michaelbmaine [dot] com

A friend of mine used this technique and was offered three interviews in one day and a job by the end of the week.

Bonus*:* After you've done this, copy and past the message (minus contact info) as a note in Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, or whichever social network where it makes sense to do so. Use twitter to drive traffic to the note.

Some additional tips I'd like to add:

- Start using an email signature with your ***name, email address,*** and ***link to your website***.
- Use the BCC field when sending an email to multiple people
- Let your network know that you have a résumé and references available upon request, but don't send them in this email. Get permission first.

Your Personal Website and Blog

Personal web sites are no longer exclusively for celebrities. Everyone can, and should, use them to showcase their talents, increase their value, express opinions, and become easier to find for opportunities.
If you're read the previous two posts, you should have already purchased your domain name. If you haven't done so, go ahead and do it today. If you can't afford to do this, keep reading.

Check out this previous post for tips and recommended domain registrars. It's now time to put that domain name to use. Some people like to keep their personal website separate from their blog, or have several blogs that serve different purposes. Personally, I have chosen to integrate my blog into my website so you can see a more complete picture of me as a person and professional in one space. For some this may work. However, everybody is different, so make the decision that suits you better. Below I'll show you a few options and provide a step-by-step guide to get you started. I'll also tell you exactly what I'm doing and my reasoning behind it.

What I'm Doing

Where I host

I host my email, domain names, and a few sites with HostMonster.com. I pay about $8 or so total per month for unlimited email addresses, bandwidth, and storage space. They offer various levels of service if you need SSL security or need a dedicated server.

What website/blogging software I use

I host www.michaelbmaine.com website with Squarespace. For $20 a month, I get hosting, all the features I need in a personal website, a professionally designed template, and blogging capabilities. I could have used Wordpress, Joomla, Drupal, TypePad or another website/blogging software, but I prefer the convenience I have in squarespace. I also get much less spam comments than I ever had with an open source platform. However, even in the open source side, there are things you can do to prevent this. It just takes a little more effort (although not much). There are tradeoffs, but overall, I'm willing to pay for the service. It suits my needs well for now. Things may change later.

What You Can Do

Step 1: ~~Purchase Domain Name~~
Step 2: Choose Hosting Provider
Step 3: Choose if you want to keep your website and blog separate or if you wan to integrate the two (This will help you decide what platforms to use)
Step 4: Either design your website or use software or services to do it
Step 5: Create content and promote site

Choose a Hosting Provider

There are several options to choose from here, and you'll have to make your decision based on your needs, level of expertise with servers and databases, ability (or inability) to manage and design yourself, and price. If you are an IT guru, then you can manage everything yourself or use Rackspace or similar providers to remotely host your site. For others, like myself, options like HostMonster and GoDaddy offer a more user-friendly experience. Some services, such as Google Site, offer free hosting and site publishing tools in exchange for the opportunity to advertise on your site. They make it easy with templates, access to various tools, and you don't have to know any coding. However, I only recommend this route if you absolutely can't afford to pay for hosting. If you can afford plans starting at

about $8 per month, you will be able to have a much more professional looking site and more control over your content.

Alternatively: Wordpress.com allows you to host for free but you won't be able to use your own domain name. However, this blogging software does allow you to scale it into a full-fledged website for free. It's a viable alternative if you can't afford hosting and want a good looking site with blogging capabilities. TypePad offers both a free and paid option and Squaespace offers a paid alternative.
*Check out the resources for some hosting companies to check out.

Set up your website

Congratulations! You're almost there. You now have your domain name and a hosting provider. Now it's time to get that website set up. If you're good at web design, feel free to design it yourself. Otherwise now is a good time to choose a platform for your needs. If you used HostMonster or GoDaddy, installing a platform is easy as clicking a button and following the instructions. Popular platforms for setting up sites are Joomla!, Wordpress, and Drupal. There are several others, so feel free to use what you like best. I have used all of them and I like them all for various reasons. For ease of use, use **Wordpress**, especially if you want to use there sophisticated blogging system. If you want more site capabilities (weaker in blogging), and have more time and patience, then go with **Joomla!**. If you want a rock solid platform that can do anything you want it to do, but has a steeper learning curve, go with **Drupal**. All of these allow you to have a website with blogging built in. Also, all of them can serve as stand alone blogs.

Whichever you choose, here are some things to include on your site:
- Home Page
- About Me Page
- Current Projects Page (If you have any)
- Portfolio Page (If you have one)
- Contact Me Page
- RSS Feed Subscription Widget
- Optional
- Downloadable Resume (minus contact information)
- Writing Samples
- etc.

Additional tips for your website

Submit your website to Google and other search engines
Place a link to your website in your email signature
Place a link to your website in all of your social network
Note: Wordpress.com vs. Wordpress.org
Wordpress.com allows you to have free hosting of your site. It's really simple to use, there are tons of templates to allow you to have a nice looking site, and upgrades are automatic. However, you will not be able to use your own domain name. Instead you will have something like blogname.wordpress.com.

*Wordpress.**org*** is a standalone platform that you can integrate into your own hosting, allowing you to use your own domain name. It takes a little more work to set it up, but is the way to go if you have the capabilities. It takes a little longer to set up and slightly more work to maintain, but gives a more professional appearance and you can do more with it. You also have access to all the templates and widgets that make Wordpress appealing in general.

Set Up Your Blog

I've decided to merge my personal and professional blog posts into. I'm a fairly transparent person, and I want people to get the whole picture. However, again, you may be different. Feel free to blog about anything you want to. The key is to be consistent and put up at least two to three posts per week. I aim for one everyday, but I know I'm crazy. For me, there's a lesson everyday, and blogging is a way for me to reflect on them. Check out some of the following platforms to set up your own, unless you're integrating it into your into a larger website. Also, you'd typically want to keep posts fairly short unless it's of the "how-to" nature.

Alternative: Use RSS feed widgets or feed code from your various blogs and social networks to have a stream of content from various blogs display on your website. This way, you keep a steady stream from around web consolidated into one place.

<u>**Additional tips for your blog**</u>

- Update your blog at least 2 to 3 times per week
- Claim your blog on Technorati (It's where people search for blogs)
- Place a link to your blog on your website (if it's not part of your website) and on all of your social networks
- Place a link to your blog in your email signature
- Place a picture on the home page of your website and blog and on your "about me" page
- Submit your blog to Google and other search engines
- Promote your important links to your friends on Twitter and you status updates
- Place the RSS feed to your blog to automatically appear on your social networks

<u>**Resoures**</u>

Below are some resources. This is not an exhaustive list, but will hopefully be enough to get you started.

Hosting Companies:
- GoDaddy
- HostMonster
- RackSpace

Content Management System (CMS) Platforms a.k.a. Website Platforms:
- Drupal (Free)
- Google Sites (Free)
- Joomla! (Free)
- Worpress.com (Free)

- Wordpress.org (Free)
- Squarespace (Paid)
- TyepPad (Free/Paid)

Blogging Platforms
- Blogger (Free)
- Tumblr (Free)
- Wordpress.com (Free)
- Wordpress.org (Free)
- Squarespace (Paid)
- TypePad (Free/Paid)

Conclusion

As always, please let me know what you think. Was this helpful at all? Any questions? If you have any experiences with any of the mentioned resources, please leave your story here. Also, if you have something to add, feel free to leave your comments below. Let me know of any typos, etc. I'd also like to schedule an interview with some HR professionals to give more insights to people. If you or somebody you know may would be willing to give me a few moments, please let me know! Bookmark the site, subscribe to the RSS feed, and tell your friends about it. Until next time…peace.
Tomorrow I will discuss some of the little-known ways to use LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to increase your exposure, help you search, and land a job.

Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube

Today, I'm going to focus on how to make more effective use of some of the new media that you're probably already using: LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube. According to research from Internet usage data from Alexa, we spend a good portion of our day on Facebook and YouTube. When tend to use LinkedIn only sparingly, normally when we are looking for a job. Since we spend time at these sites, we might as well have them work as hard for us as possible.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional social network. Many people mistakenly refer to it as an online résumé or CV (curriculum vitae). When you understand how to use it, LinkedIn can serve as a powerful networking tool, brining you in contact with people you might otherwise not have the chance to meet. It can also provide you access to information on various issues from professionals who want to help others grow. Here are some tips on maximizing the effectiveness of LinkedIn.

Fully complete your profile

LinkedIn has a meter that shows you exactly how complete your profile is. Aim for 100%. The more information you have available, the more a prospective recruiter can use to determine whether or not you may be a fit for their business. It also gives you a better chance that your profile will come up when they search for specific skills. Don't just list previous jobs, but make your descriptions and job history relevant and showcase what you can bring to an organization. Use keywords when you can, as these will help with those searches. Include a profile picture of your face. (The picture should be a candid photo. It may be easy to find a shot of you and crop out your face.) Be honest.

Join groups

One of the best features of LinkedIn is the ability to join groups. There are all types of groups and many have their own job postings that only appear within the group page. I'm a member of *Future Social Media* and there are six current job postings as of this morning. Get involved, join discussions, and build a reputation among your peers as a resource. As you become more involved, you will get more invitations to connect, and increase the power of your network.

Ask and answer questions

Recently, LinkedIn introduced the ability to ask and answer questions in "Answers." *Answers* allows you to learn from practitioners in the field and share your knowledge to help others. There are many professionals willing to offer their insights on issues you might be curious about. Also, as you help people, others are more than willing to help you, answering your questions and growing your network. You also get the chance to discover blogs, news sources, etc. you might find useful. (Just yesterday, I answered a question about social media

and a partner at a marketing firm in Argentina invited me to connect with him.) Also, when you answer a question, introduce yourself and offer further help if they need it. I've found that this increases your chance of dialogue tremendously. I try to answer one question per day. And don't worry, not all questions are super technical. One popular question being answered right now is, "*What's your Twitter pet peeve*?" I know what mine is. What's yours? Answer the question here.

Add your website and use BlogLink to update your page

Install the application *BlogLink* (it's one of the featured applications, so its hard to miss) and add your blog's link to your *websites* section in your profile. BlogLink automatically finds the RSS feed and posts an experpt and link to your website. When people look at your LinkedIn page, they are likely to check out your blog if they want to learn more about you. I get referrals to my site from LinkedIn regularly.

Add your twitter account

LinkedIn has the option of adding your Twitter account. While you don't need to tweet about everything you do (this is very annoying and considered a social media no no), as you add value to the LinkedIn community, you will gain quality followers who value what you have to say. You never know when an opportunity might come up.

Import your address books

Find out which of your friends have LinkedIn profiles easily by importing your address books. If you click on "Add Connections" from the top right of the screen, you have the ability to import contacts from your various online address books, Outlook, Mail, or other desktop client.

Pay attention to your network updates

When you log in, the default page takes you to "Network Updates." Check this out regularly. If you don't log in to LinkedIn frequently, then you should subscribe to the RSS feed and keep an eye on them. Friends may connect with other people you know, get promotions, change positions, etc. These updates provide you the opportunity to reach out and congratulate, offer assistance, or find new people with whom to connect. I use Google Reader so I can have access to my feeds even when I'm not near my computer.

Use the search for things other than names of people
Here's how I was offered a job with a large, global consulting firm within a week while I was living in Chile:

Step 1: I searched for the company that I was interested in
Step 2: I found an HR person (who happened to be asking for a position to be filled)
Step 3: I requested to connect with her
Step 4: I sent a message to begin the dialogue
Step 5: Upon request I emailed her my resume
Step 6: Received an email to schedule an interview

That all happened in one day. Three days later, I had the interview and was offered the job. If there is a company, industry, etc. that you have an interest in, search on them and see what you find. Also search for previous colleagues.

Facebook

I primarily use Facebook as a conduit for distributing messages and keeping up with old friends and acquaintances. When I write a blog post, I place a link in my updates and not feel like I'm forcing it down people's throats. A good portion of my website traffic is referral traffic from Facebook. The more connections you have, the larger audience you have who may come across your message.

Poll your connections

Facebook is also a great place to poll people. You can create a poll using an application, but I prefer to simply ask a question in my "What's on your mind" space and wait for the comments to come in. People are more than willing to tell you what they think. If you post something like, "I'm looking for a job, does anybody know of anything?" you might be surprised with the results.

Safety

Facebook allows you to put a lot of information on the internet. Remember, your profile is searchable, is probably archived somewhere, and even with security settings established, there is a chance somebody may come across information you thought couldn't be seen. Take care to ensure you don't post things you don't want people to know. A couple things you might consider to avoid posting are:
- Phone Number (Unless you don't mind)
- Home address
- When you are going to be away from your home for long periods of time
- When your spouse will be away from the home for long periods of time
- How much you hate your current job (your boss might find out)
- How much you hate your current client (your boss might find out…or your client)
- Financial information (credit card numbers in messages, account numbers, etc.)

Add RSS Feeds

You can set up an RSS feed to automatically create notes out of blog posts. Ever wonder how people have so much time to write Facebook notes everyday? Chances are, they are actually posting on their various blogs and Facebook is importing the posts for them. These new notes sow up in the news feed and will direct traffic to your blog or website. This will also help build the popularity on your site, which will increase your search engine ranking, which will help your site be among the top results when people search for you. If a recruiter searches for you, the first place you want them to see is the space you control the most, your site.

Say Happy Birthday

One of the easiest ways to rekindle connections is stopping by their wall to wish them a Happy Birthday. If it's been a while, it may seem awkward to ask a favor. You can start the conversation by simply wishing them a good day.
YouTube

I know what you're thinking: "YouTube is something you use to lose your job, not get one." Well, if you spend more time on the job watching YouTube than working you might be right. However, with a cheap video camera (such as a Flip Cam) and free video editing software you can create a video résumé. The key is to be natural, dress like you're going to an interview, be professional, and add value. Keep the video short (2-3 minutes should be sufficient) and add the link for your video to your resume, website, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social networks. Believe it or not, recruiters are searching YouTube as well. A search on "video resume" on YouTube yielded 66,700 results for me this morning. Other video hosting sites include Vimeo, Blip.tv, ClipShack, Viddler, and many others.
Conclusion

Hopefully you found some of these tips useful. Most of them are geared towards people who are unemployed and looking for a job. If you are currently employed, you might take extra caution when expressing your interest in finding something new. Tomorrow, I'm going to cover a few more tips, and finish up this weeklong 101 on Friday with a guest interview from a professional career counselor. If you've found this useful, feel free to pass it along, share on your favorite bookmarking sites, and subscribe to the RSS feed. As always, any feedback and additional tips are welcome. Feel free to leave your comment below or e-mail me at any time. Until next time, good luck…peace.

Final Tips

At this point you have a basic command of the social media tools and how to use them to locate and find a job. Most of the material covered over the past couple of days will be relevant long after you find a job or make that career change. By maintaining a blog, increasing the power of your network, and becoming an expert in your field, you will increase the value of your personal brand. You'll find that opportunities will begin to look for you, you'll be able to demand more money, and you will have better control over your career. At this point, I would like to leave you with a few more tips that have worked for me. Hopefully they will work for you…

<u>Personal Branding Kit</u>

As I've mentioned before, and I'm sure you already know, the job market is extremely competitive right now. In order to receive any attention you must stand out. A year ago I applied to work for a local marketing firm. I don't have a marketing degree, had little to no experience in marketing or advertising (as a profession), there was no position open at the company, and my experience up until then had been in finance. However, my passion is using marketing strategy to make positive changes, and I wouldn't settle for a job where I wouldn't be happy. This is what I did to stand out among the competition:

- Found the name of the president of the company
- Researched both the firm and the top personnel
- Tailored my résumé to match the company mission and objectives
- Asked a graphic designer friend to professionally layout my résumé
- Included a list of references
- Wrote a custom cover letter and addressed it to the president (including examples of how I could add value)
- Printed copies of previous writing samples and case studies
- Created a CD with a PDF portfolio including résumé, cover letter, writing samples, references, and a link to my website
- Packaged everything in a FedEx package and shipped it overnight addressed to the president
- My friends thought I was crazy for paying for overnight shipping for a set of documents that was going to travel fifteen or so miles. However, I shipped the materials Tuesday evening and received a call to schedule an interview Wednesday morning. That's where I'm working today.

<u>The Interview</u>

My only advice for the interview is to be yourself. Some questions might be difficult to answer. However, if you go into the interview with a clear understanding of yourself, the company, and the position, you shouldn't have any problem answering anything they ask. *Please* check out the company website and do some research on the industry before you go to the interview. If you can express that you have thorough knowledge of the industry and the company's unique position within the industry, you'll stand out. The main things the

interviewer wants to know are that you are competent to do the job and the right fit for the company. Just in case you want some practice, here are some questions that might be thrown your way:

- How would you describe yourself?
- What do you know about his organization?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years? Twenty years?
- Why did you choose this organization?
- What are your biggest strengths and weaknesses?
- Why should we hire you over anybody else?
- How would a close friend describe you?
- Describe a situation where you found it difficult to work with somebody. How did you handle the situation? Looking back, would you have done differently?
- Do you think we would get along? Why?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be? (Seriously, I was asked this question)

Final words on LinkedIn

I forgot to mention in yesterday's post that one major strength of LinkedIn is the ability to provide and receive professional recommendations. It's a good idea to ask people with whom you've had positive work experience to write a recommendation for you. Also, you should return the favor. Endorsements go a long way when a recruiter is checking out your profile. It shows that you have made a positive impact in your past and are likely to do so in your future, brining value to the company. Also, other people will highlight specific traits about you they observed that you might not be aware you had.

Stay relevant, but have a life

Stay relevant by staying at the top of your game. Take refresher courses, read books that cover current trends, subscribe to magazines, follow blogs that cover your topic, talk to others who know about your industry, write papers, analyze stuff - do whatever you have to do to stay at the cutting edge. I read at least three books per month, subscribe to a couple magazines, and stay up on trade publications. Not everything I read is related to marketing or entrepreneurship. I like to break it up and read for fun too. But you also need to make time for yourself to do things you enjoy outside of work. If you can adapt to changes, you have staying power. Respect comes with expertise, but remain approachable. Things change all the time. Embrace it and be ready for it.

Be of service to those in your network

If you help somebody accomplish their goals, they are much more likely to help you accomplish yours. You don't have to keep score. That's not what it's about. But if you are truly an asset to somebody, they will want to see you succeed. If they don't want you to succeed, it might be time to reevaluate your network. Be open if somebody has a suggestion for you. They might be trying to make you better. Ask your network what you can do for them, but don't overextend yourself. I keep a copy of my closest friends' résumés in case I come across an opportunity in which they might have interest. Those same people help me

out when I need it. Friends, colleagues, and potential employers want to be around people who bring them value. Be added value and you make yourself irreplaceable.

Conclusion

That's all I have for you today. I honestly hope that using social media tools effectively will help you land that job you want, allow you to change or explore careers, or reach whatever goals you have at this point. If you have any success stories, please feel free to share. If you don't, let me know what worked and what didn't. How can we make this more useful to you? What other topics would you like to know about? Tomorrow we'll finish up this 101 with an interview from a career counselor who will provide job searching insights outside my scope of knowledge. Again, if you found value here, please subscribe to the RSS feed, share with friends, StumbleUpon it, Digg it, or whatever you need to do. For additional reading on social media and personal branding I recommend the following books:

- Me 2.0, Dan Schawbel. 2009
- Social Media 101, Chris Brogan. 2010

Interview with Alex Anderson

I have had the great fortune of speaking with Alexandra (Alex) Anderson, Associate Director of Career Services at Southwestern University, to ask some additional questions and receive tips on how to maximize the search effort to land your ideal job. With her years and expertise in the field of recruiting and career advising, Alex is able to provide information and insights straight from the people who make the hiring decisions.

How would you describe what you do?
I help people figure what they want to do and how to get there. With traditional-aged liberal arts college students at a rigorous university, the biggest challenge is simply motivating them to tackle the issue of career planning and decision making, since they are usually multi-talented and have such diverse interests (which attracted them to liberal education in the first place). Providing numerous opportunities for career exploration through panel presentations, job shadowing, networking events, internships and externship site visits is a big part of our job. Teaching the logistical skills needed for lifelong career development, such as self-assessment, resume writing, interviewing, job search strategies, etc. is the other main part of my job.

What is the first thing you look for in a resume and cover letter?
I look to see if the writer has targeted the resume to the position to paint a clear picture of how s/he would match with the opportunity to which s/he's applying. As an editor, I also look generally at the format to see that it makes the best use of the page and helps me find the relevant content easily.

What are the most common mistakes you see on a resume?
Lack of targeting toward a specific opportunity is the most common – and deadliest – error. An employer ideally would like to hire someone who's done the exact job they're recruiting for before. A resume writer should emphasize the skills and experiences s/he has that indicate as clear a match as possible for the employer.
Relying only on paid work experiences rather than building in ANY relevant experiences – whether from internships, volunteerism, leadership in organizations or even significant class projects.

Formatting that distracts rather than aids the reader. For many young college students, their first resumes are often laundry lists of clubs and awards from high school and don't have any descriptive statements that detail their skills. Resume templates from MS Word and other programs also have awkward formatting, such as listing dates with more prominence than positions, or using space-and-a-half line spacing, which wastes valuable real estate on the resume. Likewise, sticking with the giant 1.5-inch default margins in MS Word rather than reformatting often forces content unnecessarily to a second page.
Of course, there are often grammar and punctuation errors (especially commas and apostrophes). ALWAYS have someone else look at a copy of your resume before you submit it and invest in a good style guide.

What are the most common mistakes you see on a cover letter?

As with resumes, lack of targeting toward a particular position is the most common error. The other is wasting valuable real estate by repeating detailed information from the resume, rather than synthesizing one's experiences to summarize one's skills and personal qualities which relate most to the opportunity.

How has job hunting changed over the past five years?
Fundamentally, I think the job search is not so different – the most powerful source of job leads and opportunities is still referral. What has changed most is probably the means by which individuals can connect to gain those referrals – not just in-person or phone, but now also through numerous social media. While technology facilitates the ease and speed with which employers can advertise positions and candidates can respond, this ease leads to a deluge of applications which are costly (in terms of time) for employers to sort through and challenge candidates to stand out from the competition. Making a personal connection outside of this technology tidal wave is essential.

Another factor that has changed is simply the level of competition. With the huge number of job cuts that have affected so many areas of the economy, competition for even an administrative assistant role can include new college grads, individuals with Master's degrees and professionals with 20+ years of experience. I recently thought of the "starving artist" analogy as particularly relevant to today's job seeker: The person who wants to make it big in Hollywood usually needs to hit the street and get to meet everyone s/he can, usually works a day job while "auditioning" for other gigs and may take several years to break into the field of his/her choice. This process strikes me as not so different from what our job seekers today must do – especially new college grads.

What role do social media play in job-hunting today?
Social media help us maintain our "rolodex" of contacts in one convenient place. They also provide speedy access to contacts, increasing the size and interconnectedness of our web of contacts in comparison to what people probably used to manage. Social media are still just tools, though, to help us make and keep connections. Most people won't accept friend requests on Facebook or connection requests on LinkedIn from people they haven't actually met in person and interacted with. Consequently, the old-school, in-person networking process is still alive and well. That being said, social media sites like Facebook can help you find old friends who might now have relevant advice or resources to help you with your job search. LinkedIn can help you easily identify individuals working for a particular employer, research career paths (e.g. a veteran can search for his/her military job title and find other veterans' profiles and see what their career progression after the military has been), make direct contact without an intermediate introduction to an alumnus of your university who might be more inclined to help you and even get you noticed by a recruiter who did a keyword search and found your profile/resume rather than having to weed through resumes from an advertised position.

What networking 1.0 tips can you provide?
Tell everyone you know and everyone you meet that you're seeking a job – and be prepared to say what kind of position you're interested in and why you'd be good at it. You never know who will know someone who could be helpful – your neighbor, friend from high school, doctor, hairdresser, someone from your church, someone you sit next to at a wedding or on an airplane, and all of *THEIR* sisters, neighbors, friends, etc. Join groups –

volunteer for Habitat, join Toastmasters, lead the PTA. Most especially, join professional organizations in your field of interest. FOLLOW UP on all leads immediately. If someone goes to the trouble to provide you a lead, s/he will probably also follow up with the lead to see if you got in contact. If you don't, the person who tried to help you will not be so inclined to do so in the future! Also, send thank-you notes to anyone who helps you! And reciprocate – send interesting articles you come across or invite a contact to an event that might interest him/her.

What tools or resources would you recommend to a person who isn't completely sure what they want to do?
Visit with a career advisor – university students and graduates often have access free of charge or for low cost to professionals who exist to help with this question. Try self-assessment tools like personality and interest inventories. They're not magic, but they can give you ideas about what people who are similar to you have found to be rewarding careers.   And for a very low-budget and low-effort approach, talk to everyone about their careers – ask questions, ask to shadow or observe, even volunteer to help out to see what the work is like. When push comes to shove, just try it! Just because you start in one career field doesn't mean you're locked into it.

What little-known resources can help with the job search?
One great tip I've heard is, "Act like you already work there." We've heard some interesting success stories from graduates who have scouted out an organization that really interested them and then made the pitch to work for the organization for free (e.g. as an "intern") to prove their worth. By taking the initiative and then making themselves indispensible, they were able to turn their unpaid internships into job offers.

Don't try to reinvent the wheel. College career centers are in the business of trying to help you access resources. Even if you don't/didn't go to college, use a search engine to locate local universities in your area and search their sites for "career center" or "career services." Many sites, my office's included, have a wealth of resources and links that are free to the public. Many career centers allow the public to attend job fairs they sponsor and even have print libraries the public can browse in person.

Are job posting sites such as Monster.com and Careerbuilder.com effective?
It never hurts to look, especially just to get ideas or to find example descriptions of positions to which you would want to pitch your resume. However, because these sites require employers to pay a fee to post, they are naturally limited to the positions where a) employers can afford to post and b) it makes financial sense to invest the money in a posting. These factors mean that many government and non-profit jobs are absent from these sites because those employers may not want to invest their limited resources to pay for postings. Also, jobs or specific organizations that are in high demand are often absent because those employers don't need to pay to advertise – they are inundated with unsolicited applications as it is. Positions with high turnover (which a candidate might rightly be wary of) might also be more likely to recruit using these sites, since they need to drum up business. Nonetheless, I always recommend looking at the sites – they're free, after all – but limiting the amount of time you spend on them to about 5-10 percent of your total efforts.

Much more effective use of the internet is using a search engine to research what employers exist in a particular area (e.g. "Austin non-profits") and then looking up those individual employers directly. Employers are most likely to advertise postings on their own websites, if they advertise at all. Also, look for targeted third-party sites like professional organizations (e.g. in my business, the National Association of Colleges and Employers), which often have job posting sections.

You work with several recruiters for several companies. What feedback or comments do you typically hear from them? What do they look for?
A couple critiques worth noting come up regarding interviews: Candidates who didn't research the organization and position for which they're applying and candidates who don't dress professionally. In this day and age, there's no excuse for not knowing about an organization. Reading thoroughly and memorizing information found on an organization's website is a must. Use the information about a company's values and mission to craft statements illustrating how your own values and experiences are a good match for the company's.

For most employers, a candidate's experience is more salient than specific educational background. Don't limit yourself to looking for "jobs for psychology majors." Sometimes, however, you may need to educate an employer to look beyond a major (a shortcut technique a recruiter may try to use to screen large volumes of applicants) by showing them the transferable nature of the skills you gained through your educational experience and the other experiences in which you engaged outside the classroom.

Finally, beyond just the technical capabilities needed to do the job, candidates need to show recruiters that they are people the recruiters would want to hang around with! We're all human, and despite efforts to make hiring processes more objective, recruiters and managers are still swayed by their subjective likes and dislikes of an individual. Be friendly, respectful, enthusiastic – your best self.

What advice do you have specifically for a person entering the workforce for the first time?
This is one of the hardest lessons to learn, I think: Be a good follower. Make your boss look good. Especially for new college grads, entering the workforce can be a big change from school, where leadership is often the goal and individual performance is rewarded. In the world of work, you have to pay your dues and you usually have to work collaboratively toward a goal. Remember that every suggestion to change something is in effect a criticism of how it's currently being done (and therefore whoever said it should be done that way). While some people and organizations are very open to change and criticism, many are not. Listen more than talk at first, learn why things are the way they are before trying to change them, ask questions. Also, try to steer clear of office politics. While you want to be friendly, try to keep your personal life personal until you get a better feel for your organization's culture. Be sure to cover the basics – dress appropriately, show up on time (or early), limit personal activities while on the clock and complete your tasks as required!

What advice do you have specifically for a mid-level career person looking to switch careers or find a new job?

The basics of job searching remain: Network to meet people, use the internet as a research tool to identify and contact people and organizations that interest you. If you're a college grad, don't forget to consult your university career center about possible services for alumni. Consider a functional resume – one that organizes your experience by skill rather than by position. Avoid acronyms that may be unfamiliar outside your organization or current field.

What final advice would you give to anybody seeking new employment?
Persist, persist, persist. One quote I read was that this is a race that goes to the relentlessly steady!

BIOGRAPHY
Alexandra Anderson is the Associate Director of Career Services at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. Alex earned her BA in Spanish and Linguistics, MA in Spanish Linguistics and MEd in Higher Education Administration from The University of Texas at Austin. She has worked at the Universities of Texas, Arizona and California, Davis, in Residence Life and Career Services. Professionally, Alex also serves as the Newsletter Editor for the Southern Association of Colleges and Employers and chair of the Central Texas Liberal Arts Career Consortium. She previously served on the Board of Directors of the Southwest Association of Colleges and Employers. Alex has also written for the National Association of Colleges and Employers Journal and Spotlight e-newsletter and was recently accepted into the NACE Leadership Advancement Program.

Resources:
Southwestern University
Southwestern University Career Services Center

Contact Information

Michael B. Maine
http://www.michaelbmaine.com
mail@michaelbmaine.com
214.699.1758