

Social Media & Careers: Get Started

Participating in social media is increasingly important for career development and job search.

Have you joined one or more sites such as LinkedIn? Are you satisfied with your results?

Are you unsure about how to participate effectively?

This worksheet is a free resource for readers of **Career & Work Life Matters**

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What is my Starting Point? (choose the one that describes you best)

- I am new to social media
- I use social media infrequently and/or reluctantly
- I participate regularly in one or more social media sites

Whether you are new to using social media, or would like to feel more comfortable with the process, one of the best ways to begin is **to start small and learn what works best for you**. You will be more effective if you take a little time to plan and create a personalized strategy based on what is most relevant for your goals, and what is manageable for your schedule.

Answer the questions on this worksheet to get started and increase the effectiveness of your communication. Even if you are already an active user, you can use it to review your current strategy and identify any changes you want to make.

What is my primary goal?

- Example: *I want to expand my network of professionals who might refer me for a new position.*

Who is my primary audience?

- Example: *Employees the next 2-3 above me in my company; in similar companies.*

- _____
- _____

Where Am I Most Likely to Find Them? (Brainstorm online and offline options)

- Examples: *Professional Association (meetings; online group on LinkedIn, Facebook group)*
- Groups: Internal _____
- Groups: External _____
- Discussion groups; Blogs; _____
- Conferences/Events _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

Choosing the Best Platform

Once you have identified a specific audience and your main communication goal, you are ready to move to the next step.

Decide which online platform you want to focus on first. Your first choice of platform will depend on your audience and goal.

Each social media site has its own culture. Get to know one by participating actively there before moving to the next. Though this checklist focuses on online communication, don't forget that combining online with offline communication is generally the most effective approach.

- My first choice of platform is: _____

Get to Know your Platform

The first step is spend some time “listening.” Review messages and notice you own impressions. Who gets a lot of responses? What types of posts generate the most interest? If the site is very active, you may want to evaluate a few of the top contributors. Depending on the site, you may be able to search messages by author.

- Does the site have posting guidelines? _____
- What topics are being discussed? _____
- Identify posts that appeal to you. Describe why. _____
- Identify posts that you don't like. Describe why. _____
- Identify successful contributors. What are they writing about? What are they doing to engage readers?

Before you Begin

Social media has developed so quickly that many companies are still catching up. Be sure to check if your employer has a formal policy. If not, are there informal guidelines that you can find out about?

- Make notes below about what you want to pay attention to, based on your company social media policy.

- What about your own preferences? How will you manage boundaries between your personal and professional life? Be sure to check that the privacy options reflect your preferences.

Easy Ways to Contribute

If you are completely new and feel unsure about what to write about, it may be easier to participate by responding to what others have posted. You can do this in several ways, such as answering a question, sharing a resource in response to a question, or adding a new perspective to a discussion.

Develop your Own Messages

The next step is to collect ideas for your own content. A little planning can make it a lot easier. Use the space below to write a list of topics you think you'd like to post about. You can narrow it down later.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

I hope that you find this worksheet useful. I welcome your feedback. What challenges did you have in completing it? Let me know how you use it and suggest improvements.

[Send me a note here.](#)

Coming Soon:

Look out for **tips on how to compose effective messages** in an upcoming issue. If you already receive *Career & Work Life Matters*, you will automatically get the information. If not, [sign up here](#) to get Part 2.