

Building a Brand with Social Media: The New Normal in a Job Search

by Allison Hembd, Vic Massaglia, and Diane Quick

Social media has taken the job search in a whole new direction. Job seekers now have the ability to create, develop, and maintain a personal brand that can be shared with potential employers. In addition, various social media sites have proven to be a powerful tool to connect candidates to employers.

According to Dan Schawbel, author of *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success*, a personal brand is a process by which we market ourselves to others. Everyone has a brand, and because a brand can now be developed continuously and monitored electronically, a personal brand has become increasingly more important. One's personal brand includes values, skills, talents, and experiences, as well as how these things are being perceived by others.

So how can law students and lawyers use the most popular social media sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ to build their brand? These social media tools can provide opportunities for users to demonstrate skills, interests, and capabilities while also providing employers with additional tools to determine which candidates stand out among the rest.

Getting Around on the Big Four Social Media Sites

LinkedIn

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is one of the largest online professional networks, hosting more than 120 million professionals in 200 countries. A 2010 study found that approximately 5,000 firms

had business profiles on the platform and that there were 4,000 groups with “law” as part of their title (Source: Apollo Business Development).

When creating a LinkedIn profile, law students and lawyers who are searching for a job should add key words and skills from their résumé to their profile, get recommendations from past employers, ensure that their profile is not only attractive to employers of interest but also up to date, and actively participate in college, law school alumni, and other professional groups to expand their network.

LinkedIn provides two avenues for employer recruitment. First, employers can post available positions as they would on a traditional job posting website. Second, they can also connect directly with individuals who seem to be potential candidates based on their profile. For job seekers and professionals, LinkedIn provides an opportunity to create a brand via an online profile. Continuously updating that profile is essential to promoting a personal brand. Job seekers can also use marketing materials gleaned online from potential employers to draft persuasive cover letters and résumés and demonstrate in-depth knowledge of an employer during interviews. To find out more about an employer, users can seek out and connect with current or former employees.

Twitter

Twitter (www.twitter.com) is extremely popular these days and for good reason. It is a fantastic way to connect with individuals with similar interests. Many employers are now using this social media site to promote their own brand and to recruit new employees. Twitter is a microblogging site

that allows job seekers to connect with other personal websites including LinkedIn, Google+, and Facebook, and to represent their personal brand in a more streamlined fashion. When searching for jobs, law students and lawyers should use Twitter to follow potential employers and people of influence; candidates can also retweet relevant information from these sources. With Twitter, candidates should keep their updates public so others can search their tweets and find them easily. They should also be sure to tweet information or links relevant to their professional interests and use hashtags so their tweets can be found easily.

Facebook

In the United States, users spend more time on Facebook (www.facebook.com) than on any other social media site. Initially Facebook was meant to connect personal friends to one another, but now Facebook can be used successfully to conduct a job search. Job seekers can use the “common friends” application to identify and connect with individuals on a more personal level by having their introduction come through a mutual friend.

Similar to LinkedIn, once connected with others, candidates can use their Facebook status to update their progress, reflect their personal brand, and let others know their professional interests and goals. Facebook has also expanded in recent years to include apps such as Marketplace and Beknown to allow employers and candidates to connect with each other as well as post and search jobs. Since the marketplace is not heavily used, there is likely less competition here than on other social media websites. Finally, law students and lawyers should join Facebook groups of particular interest and participate in online conversations on topics related to their professional interests; this can lead to personal connections and an expanded network of contacts.

Google+

One of the newest and most rapidly expanding social media websites is Google+ (www.plus.google.com). This tool allows its members to organize their contacts into what

Google+ calls circles. This lets users to keep their personal and professional contacts separate, making it easy to maintain a professional brand while still engaging in personal networking. Google+ also has an application called Sparks that allows members to find and share their interests and start discussions based on relevant information.

Like other social media websites, Google+ has the ability to search current job listings. Although employer profiles are not yet available on Google+, it is very likely that individuals from an organization that is hiring will have Google+ profiles, giving candidates a method through which to network.

Recommendations

The legal industry has traditionally been slow to adopt new technology for the recruiting process. However, because social media offer a low cost, easy way to identify and recruit candidates, there is no doubt that recruiting through social media is here to stay. Moreover, as more law students and lawyers look to other industries for either traditional legal positions or nontraditional opportunities, they will need to be armed with an up-to-date personal brand that can compete in the marketplace. Here are some final recommendations to share with students and lawyers on effective use of social media to develop an online brand as part of their job search:

- **Make a good first impression:** you never know who may be following your online brand. Post photos and information relevant to your professional brand, and be sure your posts have no typos or grammatical errors.
- **Be consistent:** be sure that information you post through all of your social media accounts reflects a uniform brand that leaves no doubt about your abilities and interests.
- **Get out there:** the more your brand is known, the more opportunities will arise. Use multiple social media approaches to be

proactive in networking with others; join groups and participate in their conversations.

- **Stay in control:** keep your brand up to date and professional. Use proper privacy controls available at each website to maintain your brand. Never forget that your personal brand is an extension of yourself and that you hold the power to market your brand online.
- **Play!** Enjoy social media! Be professional but have some fun; you'll project a more engaging sense of yourself.

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