

Web 2.0 – Maximizing LinkedIn in your Job Search

Excerpted from *Up To Speed: Resources for Professionals In Transition*, an e-book written and published by Steve Prentice.

A free podcast version of this essay is also available. Visit our Career Transition page at www.bristall.com/career_transition.htm for details.

If you have further questions about LinkedIn, Web 2.0, or jobsearch strategies, please post them at the Career Transition page.



Web 2.0 is a term that refers to the second generation of Internet usage. It is not an actual piece of software or hardware, but a collective description of the types of actions and attitudes that the Internet has now embraced.

To put this in perspective, Web 1.0, the first generation of Internet usage, existed from around 1995 to 2008 – a period in which everything was about *information*. People posted information about themselves or their company up on a web page. They sent messages directly to one another via e-mail. They expected people to read, learn and then act.

However as internet speed got faster, bandwidths got wider and access to the net became easier (think wireless, cellphones and the BlackBerry), the transition happened. The theme of Web 2.0 became *interaction*. People today expect to communicate directly with each other in real time, to place their comments, to talk, be heard and to be empowered (or at least feel empowered).

So what does this mean for job-search in the Web 2.0 age? A few things actually.

- First it changes the way you'll market yourself to hiring companies
- Second it changes the way companies look for the people they hire
- Third it adds extra requirements to your professional abilities, since having practical knowledge about how Web 2.0 works are skills that extend well beyond the job search – they are critical to your potential success as a leader and contributor at your future company.

From the wide selection of networking sites, by far the most effective at this point in time (May, 2010) is still LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). It is a networking site in the truest sense of the word. It is a place where people network, and seek to expand their connections. It is based on the traditional old-school networking principle that every person in your direct circle knows about 500 other people. LinkedIn seeks to make those connections so that further business and opportunities can arise.

LinkedIn is about business: Finding business, sharing leads and knowledge, keeping in touch on a professional level. Compare this to FaceBook, for example, whose focus is primarily social – reconnecting with friends and family to communicate mostly on non-business issues.

How LinkedIn Works for a user

Consider the following example.

I, Steve Prentice, am a writer and a speaker. I have a profile on LinkedIn.

Mary Jones also has a profile on LinkedIn. She also knows me professionally.

In the real, face-to-face world, Mary knows me and my work well enough that if someone were to call her up and say, “Mary, do you know someone who could give a good speech at our annual retreat next October?” she would likely recommend me without reservation.

So Mary and I would do well to connect on LinkedIn. We know and respect each other professionally.

I invite Mary to connect with me on LinkedIn. She accepts. She would have the opportunity to decline or ignore my request if she wished. After accepting, Mary shows up on my profile as a connection of mine, and I show up on her profile as a connection of hers.

Mary also connects with John, a lawyer. Again, she knows of his work, and would be happy to recommend him to someone looking for legal services. John is now connected to Mary.

Through LinkedIn, I am now acquainted with John by one degree of separation. Although I do not know John personally, I *know of* him through Mary. If Mary thinks highly of him, then I'm justified in thinking highly of him also. After all, that's what networking has always been about.

If John chooses to connect with other people on LinkedIn, those people now connected to me by two degrees of separation. I have *trust* in their abilities due to the calibre of John and Mary. If I wished to make contact with any of John's connections, I could only do so with John's permission. This reduces unwanted contacts or potential abuse of this multi-thousand member database.

Just as in the real world, where a personal-professional network means being connected to thousands of other people, so it is online. Even in this simple example above, my professional connection to Mary gives me access to other qualified professionals. When you use the Linked in Database correctly, these numbers grow substantially.

Set Up Your Profile

Membership on LinkedIn is free, and your profile can be updated as much as you wish. Follow these steps to maximize your LinkedIn presence and employment potential.

- 1 Add all information about your past work – employers, contracts, volunteer work, and responsibilities held in each.

TIP: *I stated earlier that the term that summarizes Web 2.0 is “interaction.” This doesn't just mean conversations between you and another person. It extends to “findability;” The ability for you to interact with other people who find you through keyword searches. The more keywords you use in your LinkedIn profile, the greater the chance that people will find you.*

2. Look for people you know and invite them to connect with you.

TIP: *Take the time to type something personal and unique to the individual, rather than using the prepared LinkedIn text.*

3. After having connected with a few people, ask for Recommendations from them. These recommendations will show up on your profile and add more credibility to your profile.. Nothing beats good word-of-mouth. Ask for recommendations from people who know you and have worked with you, including your past employers or clients. Colleagues are also a great source Be sure to reciprocate and write a few recommendations for others.

TIP: *Don't go overboard with this; a few – say 5 – looks realistic. Many dozens of recommendations start to look less credible.*

4. Take note of your LinkedIn profile and add it to your email signature, resumexx and business cards – in fact anywhere that you promote yourself.
5. Join some relevant professional groups within LinkedIn. These groups are populated with people who work in your industry and are a direct line to interview and opportunities.

Make LinkedIn Work for You

- Get the word out. Tell your LinkedIn community you're looking for new work. There is no stigma in being in transition. It's something that everyone faces, either as a reality or a significant possibility. To be out on the wires, using Web 2.0 technologies increases your status as an up-to-date professional.
- Keep your "status updates" up-to-date. This allows your network to know about your day-to-day (or week-to-week) status, which will keep you in the forefront of their minds.
- Contribute to Group discussions. Not only does this allow you to share your expertise, it also gives you the chance to interact with others – again staying front of mind, as well as being findable through the diligent use of keywords.
- Congratulate others. Reply either publicly or privately to contacts whose status updates or profile updates mention a new achievement.
- Promote your blog in your status updates A blog is a public-facing collection of essays or opinion pieces written by you and intended to be found, read, commented on and linked to by others. The are a demonstration of your expertise and are highly valuable.”

LinkedIn Job Search Techniques

The best jobs are not found by waiting for the “Help Wanted” sign to appear in a window or in the Careers section of a newspaper or even a jobsite. They are hunted down through active networking.

1. As mentioned above, let your network know that you're looking.
2. Join some Groups and let the people in those groups know that you're looking.
3. Use the search panel to seeking out people who are in the same business as you, people who you think might be able to give you some advice, a lead or a recommendation. If the people you find are connected to you by a degree of separation or two, then you can contact the people in between to arrange an introduction. Even if there is no connection, you can still send a message asking to connect or asking for assistance.
4. Use the Jobs feature to search for actual jobs posted by hiring companies. Many job listings that state clearly that preference will be given to LinkedIn members.
5. If you find a company that is hiring, then use the search panel once again to research the company and see if you already have any connections on the inside who might be able to give you some help or advice.
6. Search in reverse: Perform an advanced search for people who have the same skills as you, or who hold the job you'd like to have. For example, if you're an accountant in Toronto, search profiles in your postal code region using keywords with your skills, to find out which companies employ people like you. Then, leverage your contacts to find out who to talk to in that company about landing a position.

TIP: Remember – not all jobs have to exist before you make your pitch. Sometimes, just talking tot he right person about a particular skill that you have that could help the company, might create an opening – even a short-term contractual opening – for something they never knew they needed.

7. Research a company's current employees – even those you have no connection with, since their profiles will show where they *used* to work – companies that may have an interest in your particular skills.

8. Be bold – ask them directly. Research employees at a company that you would like to work at, and contact them directly – ask them how they got hired: who they talked to, or what specific doors they had to knock on, and which gatekeepers to avoid.
9. Download and use the JobsInsider. Possibly one of the coolest features to come along in a long while is the JobsInsider. This is a downloadable module that watches as you perform your online job search on jobsites other than LinkedIn (such as Monster.com) and tells you who you are connected to and who might be available to help you out.
10. Offer to help others. A new feature recently released in the LinkedIn Jobs area allows you recommend a job opportunity to another person in your network. So, if the job listed is not one you want, LinkedIn will analyze the specifics of this job, and will also analyze the profiles of the people connected to you. If there is a match, it will suggest you forward the job opportunity to that person. This is a great gesture, and the type of action that will be well-remembered.

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