



Looking for a Job? Why You Need to Go Social

Your profile is your calling card to the new generation of recruiters

by Jane Bryant Quinn, [AARP Bulletin](#), June 2013

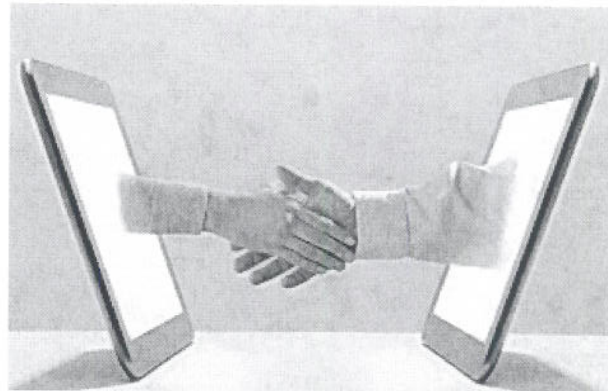
When you [apply for a job](#) today, here's what the recruiter is likely to do to get a more rounded view of your accomplishments: Check your profile on LinkedIn. Browse your Facebook page. Look for a blog or a website. And see if you're tweeting, which shows that you at least know what it is.

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If you [look competent online](#), you might get a response to the [résumé](#) that you emailed to the company. If you have no digital footprint, you're likely to get a pass. The only exceptions might be jobs at very small companies or [nonprofits](#), or lower-level jobs, for which [résumés](#) are enough.

All this might come as a shock to job seekers over age 50, who have been happy to leave tweeting to the birds. But employers today need people who are comfortable online, and digital recruiting is the way to find them.

I recently recommended an editor who was over age 60 for a job, and the first question I got from the recruiter was, "Is she good at social?" — meaning [social media](#). A job seeker over age 55 told me that even temp agencies want you to have a website as part of your job portfolio. "Seasoned, mature workers look young online, if they show they can communicate in the digital world," says James John, chief operating officer of Beyond.com, a job search site.



Job hunting through social media helps show potential employers you can operate in the digital world. — PM Images/Getty Images

1. Make yourself visible

If you're just browsing company job boards — boomers' favorite sources of job openings — and sending [résumés](#) online, you're not doing enough: Employers need proof that you're up-to-date. Even if you network the old-fashioned way, by calling friends and having lunches, the employment decision will probably be funneled through the hiring office, which will search for you online.

Get Social!

- [Social media can help with your job search](#)
- [Take the social media job-hunting quiz](#)
- [Are you Linked In?](#)

So before you even begin a job search, you should set up a digital profile or improve the profile you have. It's your calling card to the new generation of recruiters.

Begin with [LinkedIn](#). Last year, AARP launched a program on LinkedIn — now called [Life Reimagined for Work](#) — that brings together workers, employers and career management experts. On LinkedIn, there's a profile page where you present yourself — showing your employment history, skills, certifications, honors, volunteer work and anything else you'd like a recruiter to know. Don't hesitate to brag — your competition does. Post an appropriate head shot. Recruiters won't look at profiles without one.

Then search for friends and business colleagues on LinkedIn. If they have profiles, send a request to connect with them online, and ask key people to post a written recommendation on your page. See if the companies you'd like to work for have LinkedIn pages. You'll find job postings there, as well as company news.

"Some companies don't even ask for an emailed résumé anymore," one young job seeker told me. "When you're on their job site, they ask you to apply by clicking a LinkedIn button and uploading your profile." Don't even think of faxing. That's so yesterday, and a sign that you're out-of-date. Snail mail just wastes a stamp.

2. 'Friend' someone (lots of someones)

Use [Facebook](#) to set up a free profile page. Again, search for friends and business colleagues and send them a "friend" request to link to their pages. You can ask them about the job market or about the companies where they work. This is another place to inform your community about the work you're doing, such as consulting, writing or developing a part-time business. Companies have Facebook pages, too.

To step up your game, consider a personal website under your own name — for example, JaneDoe.com. You want the site to come up if a recruiter searches for you specifically.

A website is the place to demonstrate professional expertise. You can expand on your accomplishments and link to any work that already appears online, such as papers, articles or professional awards. (Enter your name into an online search engine to see what shows up.) Keep up with the news in your field and post commentaries — that section of your site is called a blog. Every couple of days, write something on the subject, under a headline that will attract attention.

(As an example of how this can work, take Mitchell Hirsch of Wilton, Conn. When he was out of work, he blogged regularly on unemployment data and issues. His posts were discovered and he was asked to add commentary to other websites. "At first, I was writing for \$25 a post," Hirsch says. "But I told my wife that something would come of this, and it did." Today, he advocates for the unemployed at the National Employment Law Project in Washington.)

Next page: [Learn the joys of tweeting.](#) »

3. Learn the joys of tweeting

Then there's Twitter — the place where you summarize the world in no more than 140 characters. Each post is called a tweet, and it's delivered as a text message. You can follow the tweets not only of colleagues who might be on Twitter, but also of recruiters or important people in your field. You also can follow companies that tweet job openings. Twitter doesn't carry the heft of LinkedIn, but it shows employers that you're keeping up with the digital world.

Once you've set up your digital presence, you have to feed the beast with regular posts, comments and links to interesting developments, which is a job in itself. But the modern job hunter can't avoid it.

"The online world is the new talent pool," says Dan Schawbel, founder of Millennial Branding. "If you aren't in that pool, because you don't have profiles on the networks, then you won't be found and aren't as employable."

If all this sounds daunting — and it flummoxed me when I first set up my profiles — you can find plenty of advice online. Search the Web for answers to your practical questions; buy a book about websites; ask your children and grandchildren for help; or, for help with everything from the most basic Web skills to how to use online organizing tools, hire a computer tutor or attend a continuing education class.

4. Start drilling down

Once you've established — or enhanced — your presence online, you're ready to drill down on jobs. Big companies and many smaller ones have "Careers" pages online. Job boards such as Monster.com, Craigslist.com and CareerBuilder.com list thousands of jobs.

Beyond.com will build a profile from your résumé that can go to any employer who checks you out. There are job boards for particular professions, such as JournalismJobs.com and newspaper want ads.

As in the old days, you still need a cover letter, tailored for the job you're seeking. Tip: Use the same keywords that the company put in its job posting. It will help the computer find you.

Once you get in the door for an interview, you can sell your experience, contacts and successes. The interviewer will have read your profiles, so he or she already thinks you might be a fit.

"Employers are always going to question the energy and relevancy of older workers," says Wayne Breitbarth, a social media trainer and author of *The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success*. "An online ID shows that you've already changed with the times."

Jane Bryant Quinn is a personal finance expert and author of Making the Most of Your Money NOW. She writes regularly for the Bulletin.

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