

Today, 85% of employers use social networking sites to find out information on potential employees and 43% of candidates are eliminated based on recruiter findings. First, a note on terminology. The phrase “social networking” has been around long before the invention of Facebook. It generally refers to interconnected groups of individuals who are “tied” together by some common thread, whether it be dating, sharing news and information or a love of Frisbee golf. The term has been co-opted by exploding internet phenomenons like Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace and Twitter and now is commonly used to denote an internet service that facilitates connecting and re-connecting with friends, colleagues and family (and ex-girlfriends) to share information, stories, pictures and videos, and to let everyone know exactly what you are doing, all the time. But apart from mere amusement, there is significant value in using these resources in a strategic manner to enhance and expand your job search. Below are a few suggestions to get you on your way.

### **Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))**

Unless you have been hiding out in a cave for the past few years, you are at least familiar with Facebook. In fact, Facebook reports that it has more than 175 million active users, with the fastest growth activity in the over-30 demographic. Think about that for a second. Where else can you, an individual, get access to 175 million people, and their associated 350 million eyeballs? Unless you plan to buy a Superbowl ad, the answer is “nowhere.”

#### **What it can do for you:**

- First, it may be time for a Facebook face lift – Recruiters use this tool to screen candidates BEFORE an interview.
- Second, join Facebook groups. Lots of them.
- Third, don’t be afraid to let your Facebook contacts know that you are in the midst of a job search.
- Lastly, if you just aren’t ready to tidy up your Facebook world in the midst of your job hunting and would like to leave up all of the tawdry, bawdy and other morally-questionable information and photos, be sure to strictly control your privacy by permitting only your immediate friends to see the information on your Facebook page (change access rights under “Settings”).

### **LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com))**

LinkedIn has been described as the professional Facebook. It actually is a very powerful business tool where you can post an exhaustive CV and, similar to Facebook, join myriad professional and social networking groups. Once you “link” with people on LinkedIn, you typically have access to all of the connections of your connections — sort of like a professional version of six degrees of Kevin Bacon.

#### **What it can do for you:**

- You can exchange private mail, seek introductions to third parties through your connections, post messages to networking groups, and peruse job listings.
- Contrary to Facebook, LinkedIn is all business and you should treat it as such.
- Be sure to take advantage of its powerful search tools, which give you an opportunity to conduct focused and effective research on potential employers (and interviewers) by using an advanced search function. LinkedIn is an excellent personal marketing tool and is a must for all job seekers in today’s economy.

### **Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com))**

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users' updates known as *tweets*. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length which are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have subscribed to them (known as *followers*). Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow anybody to access them. Users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, Short Message Service (SMS) or external applications. The service is free to use over the Internet, but using SMS may incur phone service provider fees.

#### **What it can do for you:**

- Afford access to other professionals in your field. When you follow industry leaders, you’ll know who spends time with them, what conferences they attend (and what they think of the speakers!), what they’re reading and what is on their minds. This is great information to leverage for your search.
- Provide exposure and credibility as well as personal and professional relationships when you connect to others in your industry.
- Offer you a venue to demonstrate your expertise and share information in quick, pithy bursts of wisdom. This is perfect if you don’t have the time or energy to create a blog.

*(Summarized from Dan Schambel, author of [Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success](#))*