

**From STUDENT
to SALARY
with SOCIAL
MEDIA**



NORTHERN LIGHTS PR & MARKETING

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Introduction

This book is for students, parents, teachers, lecturers and university bosses to help young people use social media to get jobs.

Social media is turning the world of job-hunting on its head.

Employers no longer need to place advertisements or use recruitment agencies to find top quality people for their business. Students can target and get to know potential employers by having conversations direct on Twitter, responding to LinkedIn requests and finding job opportunities on all manner of social media.

And while there are real opportunities to find jobs through social media – there are also risks. If an employer does a Google search on you, what will they find? Is your personal digital footprint one that will make an employer want you in their team – or get you dropped from the shortlist?

We say there are opportunities and risks – but who is teaching the students about all this?

In the last year we have delivered dozens of workshops to schools, colleges and universities. While there are pockets of enthusiasm and expertise - and generally far more in schools than in colleges or universities - the majority of lecturers have been dismissive of social media at the start. There is almost a sense of intellectual snobbery about it and far too many have closed their minds to its potential.

When we run our workshops, you can see a dawning on the faces of most lecturers - a realisation that actually this is really helpful to their students. And an understanding that used well, social media could help their students to stand out in an extremely tough and competitive jobs market. And of course, this will help their employability targets.

Our concern is - if lecturers are only just waking up to the potential of social media, and only starting to use it themselves, are students being short-changed?

Look at these stories

- Josh Jervis, a third year student from Leeds University completed his LinkedIn profile after our lecture - and within 24 hours was offered an interview and then a job through LinkedIn
- Another student was trying to break into the music industry. Her parents (not connected to music in any way) used their LinkedIn connections to get introductions for her into the music giants - she is now being mentored by a senior manager from EMI
- Sabrina Johnson started writing a blog about her passion, shoes. She has had invitations from London Fashion Week and Harvey Nichols. Even though she doesn't want to work in this field, the blog helped her get a job in IT by demonstrating her skills, motivation and commitment

And then there is the story of an employer who was about to offer a job to a junior manager. They did a Google search on him and found terrible comments about his current employer on Twitter and very inappropriate comments on Facebook - without any privacy settings. They saw this as poor judgement and did not offer him the job.

Students need to understand their digital footprint. Yes there are opportunities but they must realise that what is on the internet as a student will remain there forever. And you don't need to be a digital geek to find it - a simple Google search can throw up plenty of horrors.

If you don't believe that social media is important in the recruitment world, look at the headline below. The 'shock' is that 55% of HR directors believe social media is an *ineffective* recruiting tool. But look at this another way: there are already **a third of employers using social media to find candidates**.

You can no longer ignore social media in the job-hunting world. The figures quoted in this book will already be out of date – its use is changing extremely rapidly.

And you need to make sure you are using it to be found and to find jobs. As well as ensure that when you are found, an employer doesn't reject you because of what they saw online about you.

20 MARCH 2012 - 4:19PM | BY STAFF WRITER | 0 COMMENTS

55% of HR directors believe social media is an ineffective recruiting tool

Research by recruitment firm Robert Half has found that 55% of HR directors believe that social media platforms are an ineffective recruiting tool, or are not sure how effective it is, with only 30% using social media to find candidates.

The survey of 200 HR directors found that 63% believe that profiles on sites such as LinkedIn will not replace the traditional CV in the future.

It was found that 22% of the HR directors surveyed check the social media profiles of candidates, while 32% use it to communicate with candidates.

Source: www.thedrum.co.uk



55% of HR directors believe social media is an ineffective recruiting

NB if you are starting from scratch on social media and are not sure what LinkedIn, Twitter or blogs are or how to use them, then read our free ebook first, [Why you can't ignore social media in business](#). It talks you through the most important social media, how to sign up to them and how to use them strategically, as well as being packed with case studies and tips.

1 Can an employer find you? And what will they find?

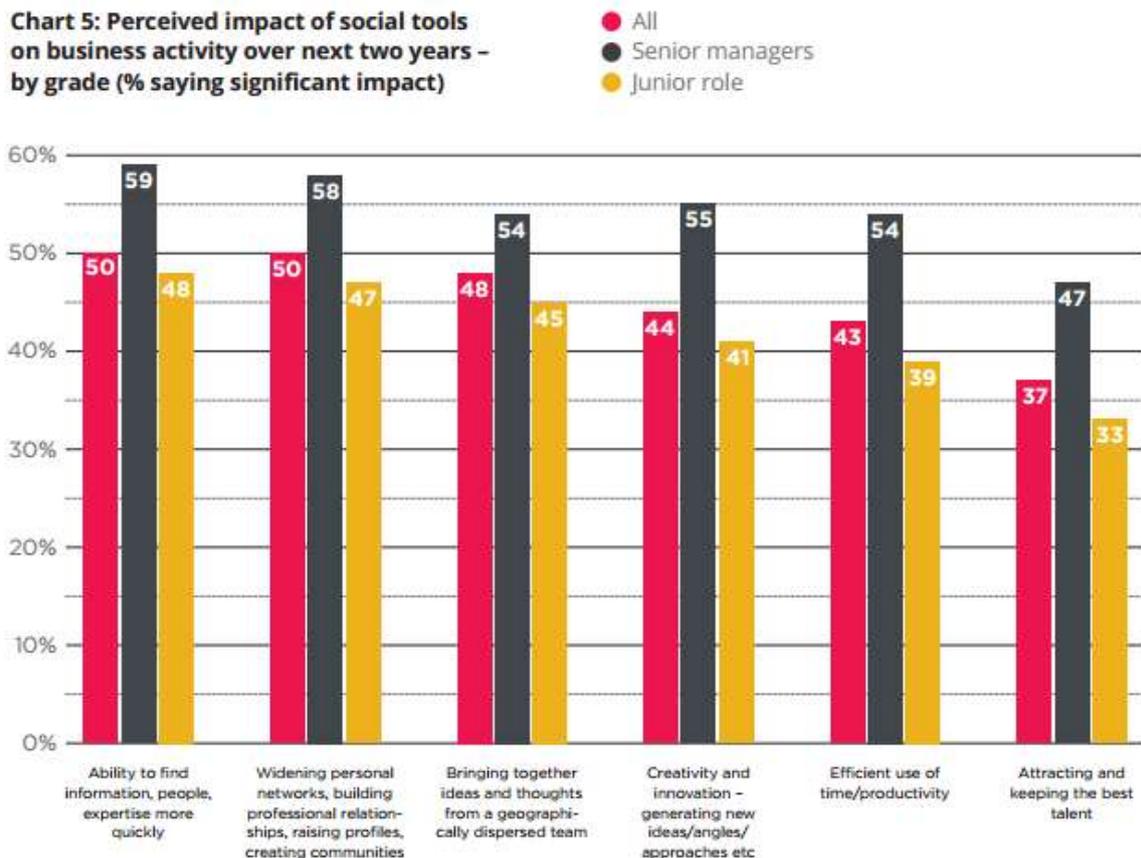
When recruiting, employers are increasingly likely to do a Google search on potential employees – often to find a recruit initially but also to check a candidate out.

How can you give yourself the best chance of being found? And make sure they like what they see when they find you?

As a first step, Google yourself. What comes up? Do you want to employ yourself? When you look at the information about you on the internet, do you immediately get a snapshot of your expertise and how you could be useful to an employer? If not, keep reading.

1.1 The employer search process

It is important to realise the extent that social media is increasingly being used by business people. Research carried out by Google Enterprise shows that 59% of senior managers say that social media will have a major impact on how businesses find information, people and expertise more quickly. Interestingly, senior managers are using its potential far more than those in junior roles.



Source: Millward Brown 2012 research for Google Enterprise

First of all, put your mind into the head of an employer. What might they go onto Google to search for, what keywords would they type? How about these sorts of phrases?

- A graduate in Warwick
- Engineer technician, work experience in UK and China
- Publishing project manager
- PR degree student with public sector experience

When Google searches, it will look for phrases that match as nearly as possible to what has been typed in. So if your LinkedIn or Twitter profiles include the words 'PR degree student with public sector experience', there is a reasonable chance your name could come up on a search for that.

How would this work in practice? Look at this job advertisement for a graduate trainee planner at Doncasters Bramah, the aerospace division of the Doncasters Group in Sheffield

Job details: An exciting opportunity for a recent graduate to join the commercial team at Doncasters Bramah. Based in the Sheffield office, the successful candidate will possess a 2:1 in a related degree.

The post holder will support the existing team members in customer demand and forecasting, generating the factory production schedules, ensuring the customer meets their OTIF (on time in full) targets while focusing on cost reduction and minimising stock holdings where possible.

In addition you will contribute in the analysing and resolving supply chain issues as and when they arise.

If Doncasters had decided to use LinkedIn to find someone, they could have done an Advanced Search on LinkedIn

- They would probably search for someone using the keywords¹ in their advertisement, such as customer demand forecasting; factory production schedules; OTIF targets; minimising stock holdings; supply chain analysis
- In the job title they might leave it blank or put graduate or Planner
- They might choose a geographical location – such as within 50 miles of Sheffield – or 'anywhere'
- They might tick an industry sector box

The point here is – have you written information about yourself in the best way so that you would be found on these searches by an employer? Have you included keywords in your profile, included your location, put in a job description and ticked an industry sector?

This is what an Advanced Search looks like – look at all the boxes that an employer might search on and think how your profile could get picked up in a search (you also need your profile to be 100% complete – which we cover in Chapter 2).

¹ 'Keywords' is a technical phrase - they are the words that people type in when searching for something on the internet. You want your profile to include the keywords that employers might type into Google when they are searching for an employee. If you have the right keywords in your profile, you increase your chances of being found.

LinkedIn Account Type: Basic | Upgrade Victoria Tomlinson Add Connections

Home Profile Contacts Groups Jobs Inbox Companies News More People Search Advanced

Find People **Advanced People Search** Reference Search Saved Searches

Keywords: customer forecasting, supply chain analysi

Title: Graduate

Current or past

Company:

Current or past

School:

First Name:

Last Name:

Location: Located in or near:

Country: United Kingdom

Postal Code: S1 Lookup

Within: 50 mi (80 km)

Search

Premium Search
Find the right people in half the time

Premium Search Tools:

- Premium filters
- Automatic search alerts
- Full profile access

Upgrade

or Learn more

Industries:

- Legal Services
- Legislative Office
- Leisure, Travel & Tourism
- Libraries
- Logistics and Supply Chain

Seniority Level:

RETA

- All Seniority Levels
- Manager
- Owner
- Partner
- CXO
- VP
- Director
- Senior
- Entry
- Students & interns
- Volunteer

Groups:

- All LinkedIn Members
- Bradford University School of Management Alumni and Students
- Maritime Network
- Deloitte
- ThosenMedia

We recommend that you have a professional profile, with good quality content, in a number of relevant media - and including the keywords for your particular job. For most you will want to be on LinkedIn, Twitter and writing a blog – all of which we cover in more detail later.

1.2 Your personal digital footprint

What did you find when you Googled yourself?

Were you proud of it? If you were an employer would you think 'I'd like this person on my team'? Or did you see a bank of late night party revelling, bad language, unpleasant comments and worse?

And what could you have seen if you were an employer? Sign out of Facebook and any other sites (so Facebook doesn't recognise you and sign you in automatically) and use another computer to do a search on yourself (in case there are any cookies on the computer you normally use that will recognise you). Then do your search. What can you see about yourself – and have you set your privacy settings?

Like it or not, people make judgements on what they see – and photos are the quickest way to present an image. The old saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' was never truer.

When an employer is recruiting, generally they are looking for reasons to exclude people from a shortlist. For most jobs, there will be dozens of candidates who fit the criteria – they can't interview them all so they have to find a way to knock out most of them. One or two will stand out and excite

an employer (and we will tell you how to do this later), but generally they are trying to get to a manageable shortlist as quickly as possible.

So you want to minimise everything that raises a question over you.

Remember that your 'digital footprint' – the information about you on the internet – is there forever. You can get rid of photos on your personal profiles but comments and other peoples' photos can be extremely hard to supersede.

1.3 The view of an employer

Claire Morley-Jones, managing director of HR180, recruits everyone from part-time staff to chief executives on behalf of her clients. She says that social media is now an essential part of the recruitment process particularly in relation to headhunting or finding the perfect candidate who might not yet be actively looking for work.

She says: "We do use social media to find candidates and our clients might check out their digital profile as part of deciding whether they are happy with our shortlist. Unfortunately, more often than not we are concerned about what we see online – though very occasionally you find content, views and professionalism that makes someone stand out as really excellent.

"Some of the worst cases have involved searching for potential candidates and discovering online content that involves salacious, 'peeping tom' style photos of a recent night out, accompanied by comments of a derogatory, insensitive and callous nature towards the participants!

"These logically reflect poorly on any candidate, as they clearly demonstrate the individual's lack of confidentiality, judgement, respect for their own friends and empathy – along with poor team work. They could even be construed as bullying in some cases. Whilst not wishing to be totally over the top and prevent individuals from having fun or enjoying themselves, at the end of the day, the qualities listed above are certainly not admired by friends, let alone prospective employers.

"I am also constantly amazed at the number of applicants who go for the "blanket" application approach. Candidates seem happy to sacrifice quality in favour of quantity and yet they do not realise that their application is identical to the other 2,000 you have on your desk.

"Candidates need to put themselves in the recruiter's shoes and realise that with so many candidates applying for each role (we usually have at least 150 for most vacancies) we have to screen them quite quickly and cannot devote 10 minutes per applicant (this would equate to 25 hours of screening!).

"The ones that are easy to identify instantly, are the excellent candidates and the worst candidates – although this leaves all of the 'average' applicants in the middle who need a little bit more attention. Why would you want to put yourself in the position of being in the middle? Research the company, write an outstanding letter telling us why we should pick you above anyone else and get involved in the company.

"When I'm recruiting I want to see passion and interest in the company – but also passion just generally. And you can use social media to add to that picture. I would look at a blog and yes, companies would notice if students were engaging with them on Twitter. It all makes you think 'this person would be great for us'."

1.4 The view of a headhunter

We gave this book to a number of people to check out whether they agreed with our advice (luckily they did!).

Anne Watson, author of the Definitive Job Book, said: “I recently gave two talks at the University of St Andrews - one on creating a CV and one on job hunting in general.

“Although my prime focus was not social media, I emphasised its critical nature in both. I started with the Word document, the hard copy of their CV, and how to get that right. Then showed how they can use it for everything else. While social media opens all sorts of doors, it is still critical to get the CV itself right.”

We have written this book to fill a gap in the market about how to use social media in job hunting. Because there is so much good advice out there on how to write a CV, it is not covered in this book. But it is really important that you don't think that social media can replace the need for a winning CV. This is still the cornerstone to landing a job. If you make good connections through social media, almost the first thing someone will say is 'Can you send me your CV?'. So this document still needs to deliver on all fronts.

Anne Watson adds: “Aiming for perfection in job hunting is too exhausting – go for choice! Your job search needs to be comprehensive, high volume and high quality. Use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blogging to attract the right attention. Volume is very important in job hunting - and social media is one of the ways to do this. The more people you know, the more you are in touch with them and the more jobs you apply for, the greater your chance of success. It's obvious really?

“Make sure you build connections and use them - friends, parents, relations, holiday jobs. Social media is an ideal way to do all this, particularly getting in touch again in a non-embarrassing way and then staying in touch.”

Action tips

1. Understand the basics of social media – read our free ebook
2. Write down all the words that an employer might use when searching for somebody with your skills and experience. This is your list of keywords and will form the backbone to all your profiles
3. Do a Google search for yourself. What do you find? Do you want to employ yourself? If not, write down what you need to change

2 Targeting employers

There are a number of ways to use social media to target employers.

As always, start with imagining you are the employer. When you work in a company, particularly if you own it or are the chief exec, then you want to feel that people out there know about your company, really rate you and want to work with you. So anything you can do to convey that message to them will put you head and shoulders above others applying.

If you are really clever, you can also create your own job. If you are in regular contact with a business, an employer may eventually think ‘actually, I wonder if they could help us on.....’ when there may not even be a specific job that they are recruiting for. It might only be a small project – or it could be a bigger job, but in the current market it is all experience and possibly money.

2.1 *Engage with employers on Twitter*

Who would you really like to work for? And what would your ideal job be? Narrow your choice to a handful of employers (maximum ten but maybe fewer) and get to know them through social media (but see 2.3 below – not all employers are on social media). More to the point, get the employer to know you.

2.1.1 **Blacks law firm**

We’ve chosen a really go-ahead law firm, [Blacks Law](#) in Leeds, to show you how you could target an employer on Twitter. They have won a lot of awards for their use of social media and a number of partners have personal Twitter accounts, so you can actually get to know a bit about the person tweeting. With corporate/company accounts, it is harder to engage and find personality there – particularly with very large businesses.

It should be stressed that what Blacks is doing is not yet the norm for a law firm – but it is changing.

So how could you engage with Blacks? Let’s look at Asad Ali’s account first. He has 1900 followers and engages with people, so this is all credible. You can spot tweeters who don’t ‘get’ social media because they just put information out and never really reply to or retweet their followers.



How could you get to know Asad?

- Get to know him before you jump in. This may take several weeks or even months. Look at what he tweets about, the style of his conversations, what interests him
- Next, retweet one or two things that you think are interesting or useful
- You'll spot that Asad tweets a lot about corporate deals – his area of work. If you spot an interesting article on a deal that he hasn't mentioned you could say 'thought you would be interested in this deal' and do a link to the article. At the very least he will probably retweet it, he might thank you
- Then see if you can make occasional comments. Let's look at the tweet below – Asad has retweeted something by his colleague, Paul Kelly, with a link to an article about forcing employees to retire



If you are a law student, you may have had a debate on Age Discrimination – have you got any views to share?

Or similarly, on any of the following topics that he tweeted about.



In the following tweet, Asad has retweeted about a radio programme that Blacks will be on. At the most basic, wish them good luck or that you will listen but better, listen and tweet them afterwards to say what was helpful to you or you found interesting.



We spoke to Asad Ali and he said that in fact they have taken on a number of work experience students who made contact on Twitter. He said: “For any business that is serious about social media, it’s really hard to ignore someone who is interested in you and your firm, who wishes you good luck, or that asks how an event went.”

“One student tweeted to us that they were applying for a training contract and that they really liked our new website. He asked to talk to us about placements and for advice on his CV, which we gave him. Our advice was to lose the ‘cool dude photo’ that he was using - and the next day there was his photo with him in a suit. So he asked and he listened. We liked that. To be honest, he jumped the queue because of the way he engaged with us.”

Asad agrees with the tips given in this ebook. They have numerous law students following them - mostly doing one or two things in this ebook, but not as engagingly. He explained: “We wouldn’t consider employing for a graduate position without checking out their social media profiles. We definitely disregard some because of what we see online, but equally there are others coming over as extremely professional and that counts as a plus.”

The key to all this is to be genuine. Clearly there is no point in targeting Blacks if you don’t want to become a lawyer or work in a law firm (in jobs such as marketing, IT, HR).

If you have no interests in common, don’t pretend that you do. You will soon be found out – and particularly if all this works and you get an interview. You may be asked to expand on something that you tweeted about!

But if you spot someone who you feel an affinity with, then it’s worth seeing if you can build a relationship. Take your time to do that – follow them for a while. Then maybe retweet one or two things that you genuinely like or find interesting. Respond if they ask a question or ask people to retweet (RT) something. And you could do a #FF mentioning them to your followers as a good site to look at.

You can spot if a relationship is starting to build by some of the following

- They thank you for retweeting something
- They recommend you in a #FF
- If you respond to their tweet and offer an opinion and they then reply to agree/disagree with you

If you have got to know them over a period of months, you could then ask an occasional question ‘do you have any tips on how to get a placement in a law firm?’ and see what comes back. Some employers may be really helpful – others may shut down on this.

2.1.2 Incisive Media



Stuart McLean has set up this Twitter account to help with his company’s recruitment – this site links to a job advertisement site. He is just promoting jobs so he may not be able to help you directly, but it is worth following him to see when jobs are posted that might interest you.

2.1.3 Donna Baeza



Donna is a good example of someone you can follow and can both learn from and engage with. She is a director of Blytheco, a software company and posts really interesting comments on Twitter.

Have a look at these tweets. You could engage with Donna by

- Re-tweeting lots of her tweets, they have links to interesting articles
- Commenting if you find a useful tip in the article on 15 Powerful things Happy People Do
- Giving your view on the Forbes article that Google and FB might completely disappear in the next five years – do you agree or disagree and why?



2.1.4 Northern Lights PR

You can also engage with companies, rather than individual people in a company. Depending on the size of the company, this may be difficult to do with a large organisation and you won't necessarily know who is behind the Twitter account.

If you look at our own company, Northern Lights PR, our Twitter account is @nlightspr. I have to say I am amazed that we must have at least 100 PR degree students following us and I don't ever remember any of them trying to engage or get to know us through Twitter. If they have, it's certainly not been long term and consistent.

How could you get to know us?

- We occasionally put surveys online for our clients. You could forward the link to people you know and then tweet us 'have forwarded your survey to my uncle and some of his business friends'. We would certainly be grateful and clock you
- We write a blog and tweet about it roughly once a week. You could retweet some of them and sometimes do a comment 'thanks for the blog on xyz, it really helped me in my essay'
- We try and ask questions in some of our blogs or ask for views; occasionally we are quite controversial. You could agree or disagree with us – on Twitter or as a comment on the blog. We might come back and discuss it further. We'll certainly be pleased that it's been noticed and interested someone

If you were consistently helping us, commenting and engaging with us over six or more months, eventually you will almost feel a part of our team! If we had a small project or were looking to

recruit someone – yes, you would certainly be there in our mind to consider. Particularly if your comments are genuine and you come over as really professional and with some skills.

2.1.5 The view of a student

Sarah Larby is a classics student at Newcastle University. She spotted a job on the university's careers site and went on Twitter to research the name of the contact for the job.

She said: "Our careers advice is always to personalise your application. The job I was applying for only had an email address to send to and I wanted to use the person's name. I was really surprised at how easy it was to find the person on Twitter. I could see she was female and she looked about 28 in the photo, so I wrote to her as 'Dear Ms Smith'. It is an easy way to research people."

Sarah read this ebook to see what else she could do with social media: "I had never thought of using Twitter to follow and get to know companies, but it's a really good idea. Stalking but in a good way and getting to build relationships.

"I haven't got a LinkedIn profile and now realise how important this is - and the tips in this book are helpful to make sure you get your profile 100% complete."

2.2 Engage with employers' blogs

Again, who do you want to work for? Look at your target list of companies and see if any of them have a blog. Chances are one or two will and more will be starting over the next year or two.

Get to know the employer through their blog and start leaving occasional comments.

How would this work? We've chosen two blogs below – one from a firm of architects and the other from HR180, an outsourced HR business.

2.2.1 bere:architects

Have a look at the blog from bere:architects, below. This is a post on insulated homes and whether they overheat in the summer. Below this, you can see the blog has received 14 comments and quite a heated (forgive the pun!) debate on this subject. Have you been studying insulated homes – what is the latest thinking from your academics? Would it add to the discussion to share this?

22.04.12
Well insulated homes do NOT overheat in summer

Temperature and Relative Humidity for the week commencing 27 Aug 2011

Passivhaus approach maintains cool summer temperatures

I've been prompted to prepare this blog posting after Mark Epton highlighted a blog entry by Mel Stars on a new group of housebuilders calling itself the Futures Group. This group includes Taylor Wimpey, Barratt Homes, Bovis, Redrow, Miller and McCarthy & Stone and they have produced a report that tries to put a brake on the forthcoming improvements required in the UK Building Regulations.

http://www.melstars.com/elements/2012/04/22/major-housebuilders-play-their-hand-with-regards-to-part-1-2013-and-the-future-of-csh/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=

One of the old myths that is being peddled is the notion that well insulated homes overheat in summer. The report says:

"...concern is being expressed about summer overheating in well insulated new homes. Evidence is anecdotal in the main, with little published, verifiable information available, but studies to date suggest that OAD is inadequate in this area and an

Blog archive

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Centon Passivhaus Residential

Focah House forwards Passivhaus Residential

Larch House Passivhaus Residential

Mayville Community Centre, Passivhaus Retrofit

Permalink Submitted by Ian Biggin on Tue, 2012-04-24 15:39

It's no real surprise that it doesn't overheat. External insulation was used which meant that the house had 230 mm of solid brick thermal mass up against the room air. If they'd had to use internal insulation then the results would have been different.

reply

Permalink Submitted by site manager on Thu, 2012-04-26 23:17

Ian - good to speak to you at the BRE today too. Yes internal insulation would have given a different result, but in maintaining cool summer temperatures, a large amount of thermal mass on this project, whilst very useful, is not the decisive factor!

reply

Permalink Submitted by Sofie Pelsmakers on Thu, 2012-04-26 09:09

A well designed building - which a Passivhaus is - is not only well insulated but will take account of orientation, contextual shading, sizes of windows and appropriate shading devices;

2.2.2 HR180

Claire Morley-Jones, quoted in the first chapter of this book, writes blogs for the Huffington Post. She covers all sorts of topics that you could tweet about or post comments on her blogs.



Claire Morley-Jones
RSS Feed 

GET UPDATES FROM CLAIRE MORLEY-JONES

Managing director, HR180 ltd

Blog Entries by Claire Morley-Jones

Will Changes to Unfair Dismissal Legislation Create a 'Hire and Fire' Culture?

(2) Comments | Posted 14 May 2012 | 10:41

Since 6 April 2012, employees can now only contest being struck off on the grounds of unfair dismissal after two years' continuous employment. It is part of a range of measures by the Government to help boost recruitment in tough times and get the jobs market moving.

Some are arguing...

[Read Post ▶](#)

Government Work Experience Scheme - How Can it Work for SMEs?

(0) Comments | Posted 9 March 2012 | 14:24

The debate about the government's work experience scheme has been raging for a couple of weeks now - and it has mainly been about the role of big corporates like Tesco.

My view on all of this is that the possibly unintended result of employment benefits is that someone is...

[Read Post ▶](#)

Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill

(0) Comments | Posted 14 February 2012 | 15:20

2.3 Points to note on employer engagement

If you are very new to social media, it is important to understand some key points

- Not all employers have any kind of social media accounts. If you think about your fellow students, your parents, friends of your parents – some will be very active, some barely understand it. It's the same with companies, but it is changing
- Even if you find an employer on social media, they may not be very good or very active. Some companies think social media is more about advertising themselves and don't know how to engage. We have purposely chosen blogs above to show you what an active and engaging blog looks like. If you find a company with good social media, you might still tweet,

comment on a blog, engage on LinkedIn and never get a reply. Don't be put off, just keep going until you find people who 'get it' and engage with you

- Don't bombard employers. Be more interested in them, not pushing information out about yourself. There is no rule about how often to comment or engage, but probably at least once a month and not more than once a week – unless you strike up a debate/conversation in which case reply straight away

Action tips

1. Research ten employers you would really like to work for
2. See which employers are on Twitter, LinkedIn and have a blog
3. Start following them, make notes about each. What they post and how often, the subjects, the style of what they do and if you can find out about the individuals posting
4. When you feel comfortable you know them well, start engaging, using the tips in this chapter. It's fine if this takes several months
5. If none of your dream employers is using social media, don't worry. That's still normal. Draw up your next list of employers to follow until you find ten or so to engage with through social media

3 Demonstrate your skills to an employer

Last year, someone I know in business asked me if I could help his daughter to find a job in HR. She had just got a 2:1 degree in drama.

It set me thinking. This is a big leap from drama to HR. Honestly, how credible does she look if she starts applying for HR jobs, no matter how junior? Somehow she needs to demonstrate that HR is not a whim, that she is really serious and that she understands what the job entails.

And now with social media this is not a major task.

3.1 Write a blog

The great thing about writing a blog is you can demonstrate your understanding and expertise in a market at no cost at all.

If we take the HR example, what could the graduate start writing about that would demonstrate their commitment to HR? Here are just a few ideas

- Do a review of HR websites
- Analyse and write about HR issues appearing in the newspapers this week
- Create a list of top ten HR blogs and pull out the key tips that will be the most useful for an employer
- Her ranking of top ten HR blogs for newbies in HR, like herself
- A blog on how an organisation's response to job applications affects their image and people buying products from them. To do this, she could talk to her friends and do a mini-survey and write about the differing views
- Produce a checklist of ten tips for employers on how she thinks an employer should respond to job applications

Of course, some of these blogs will undoubtedly seem naïve to an experienced HR professional. But no-one will expect a 21 year old to be expert – what the blog can demonstrate is an ability to read

around a subject, analyse it and come up with her own views. And above all it demonstrates passion and commitment for this subject/career.

A small word of caution. Employers love passion and enthusiasm – but they don't like arrogance, particularly if not backed up by expertise. You can be (gently) opinionated on areas where you genuinely have experience and views – such as how employers respond to job applications and talk about your perspective. But try and get a balance and think about the employer side as well – what might their side of the argument be?

And in all of it, take care that you don't sound as if you know it all or have nothing to learn. That won't impress bosses or help your case.

Here are our tips for your blog

- Make it professional and keep it focused on your career subject
- Give it a title that identifies it and might be found on Google eg 'The HR student blog'
- Post regularly, whether that is once a week or once a month. Google spots how often a website or blog is updated and searches on that basis. You want a rhythm to your blog posting
- Stick to your subject – don't start writing about your holiday or exams, unless you find an angle that is relevant to the career subject. If people start following your blog, they want to know it will be consistent on a topic
- Write your blog in Wordpress – it's free and really easy to create and upload – and ensure people can leave comments
- Photos and video clips in your Wordpress help your blog to be spotted by Google
- Send out an email to a few people with a link to your blog and ask them to leave a comment. Few will do so initially, but you have to find a way to get your blog spotted and active
- Tweet about the blog with a (shortened - use bit.ly) link to your blog
- Print out a screengrab of your latest blog and use it as part of your CV. If you are emailing an employer, include a link to your blog

3.2 Start tweeting

Set up a professional Twitter account. Give your account a professional name and write a professional biography to describe yourself. Yes, I've used the word 'professional' a lot to make the point! Your Twitter account should not be about your night out or banter with your mates.

Keep focused on your career ambitions. What field do you want to be known in? Focus your account on all things to do with this.

Below is a really excellent example of an extremely focused Twitter account. @sabinajohnson has a passion for shoes and manages to achieve a very difficult combination of being completely focused on her subject – shoes – but also be engaging and tweet on a wide variety of topics. But all with a shoe angle!

Here are the good elements of her Twitter

- Her background image is a picture of shoes – you know what she tweets about
- Her profile is 'shoe blog editor for statement and emerging designer heels. Advocate of heel-less shoes'. There are a number of phrases here that will get picked up by designers, the media, fashion houses – and employers. And of course Google
- Her Twitter account name is professional and says who she is; she says where she lives – London UK; and there is a link to her blog

- She tweets on shoes – the Eurovision comments were about Sweden not having shoes – and her evening. She has posted a picture of the shoes that she and two friends wore for going on a night out



This may seem frivolous but someone in the fashion world would be impressed with this blog. Particularly as Sabrina is followed by the likes of Harvey Nichols and receives invitations to London Fashion Week - connections all built through Twitter and her blog.

What could you tweet about?

Read the papers and online trade magazines for stories affecting your career. Tweet about interesting articles, adding your own comments.

If you are an engineer, find stories about the shortage of engineers; an innovative new engineering design; progress of a design project that you are involved in and what you are finding particularly interesting. Learning from Sabrina, you could tweet from your personal life but make it relevant to engineering: fixing the car at the weekend and a design feature that you like or hate on your car; a photo of a table that you think is cleverly designed from a night out or a programme on TV about engineering through the ages.

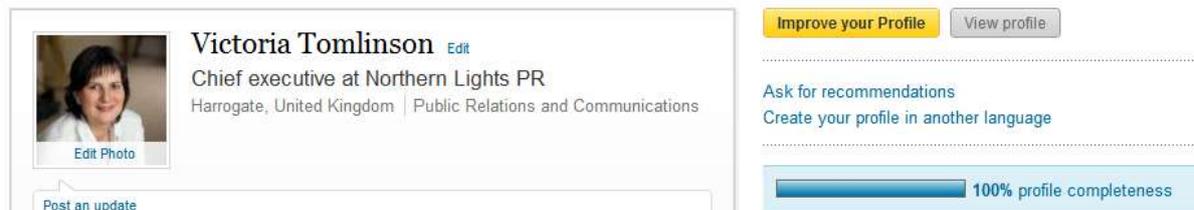
Who you follow on Twitter is a really important part of creating a strong profile. You want to follow people related to your career, such as

- Journalists
- Key academics
- Employers
- Government bodies
- Recruitment agencies in your field

3.3 Create a LinkedIn profile

Create a (professional!) LinkedIn profile that tells an employer exactly who you are and your experience and what you can offer an employer. You will have to fill in a job title on LinkedIn. Make sure this explains who you are and includes the phrases that employers might search for you on, such as 'Third year accountancy student looking to join accountancy firm on graduation'.

It is important to make sure your profile is 100% complete – go into the edit mode of your profile and you can see a bar telling you how you are doing. Having 100% completion will help you to be found on LinkedIn and Google searches.



3.3.1 100% complete profile

You need to complete the following sections on your profile to ensure you get the 100% completion

- Photo (not of you out with your friends, but the one you want employers to see)
- Education
- Summary
- Specialties
- Skills
- 3 recommendations

A lot of people feel embarrassed about asking for recommendations. Don't be. Look at the figures below. There are now 131m people on LinkedIn – and the majority of these will have 100% complete profiles. To do that, they have had to ask for three recommendations.

LinkedIn Q3 Report

131,200,000 members

+15.4m since Q2 2011

+63% since Q3 2010

87.6 million unique visits/month

66% of all members

Top Industries

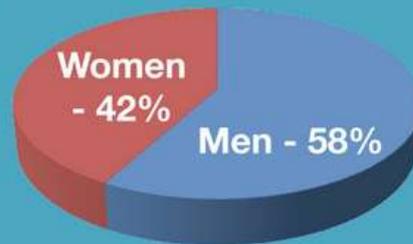
1. Entrepreneurs (12%)

2. Sales (10%)

3. Administration (9%)

4. Academics (9%)

5. Operations (9%)



You could ask the following for recommendations

- Teachers (you'd be surprised how many are now on LinkedIn)
- Your college lecturers or university professors
- People you have done work placements for or worked with
- Aunts, uncles, parents, cousins who are on LinkedIn

Search on LinkedIn for profiles that you like - and that you think an employer would like - and copy the style. Include keywords about you that an employer might search on Google to find.

As an example, if you are in engineering you might want to include keywords in your profile such as

- Project management
- Team work
- Prince2

While someone in sales would use the following sorts of keywords

- CRM
- Call sheets
- Disciplined research and planning
- Networking
- Commercial awareness

3.3.2 How you can benefit an employer

When writing this book, we put a question on LinkedIn asking people for their tips for this book. Michelle Veasey, client services manager at Limehouse TV, came back with these helpful ideas.

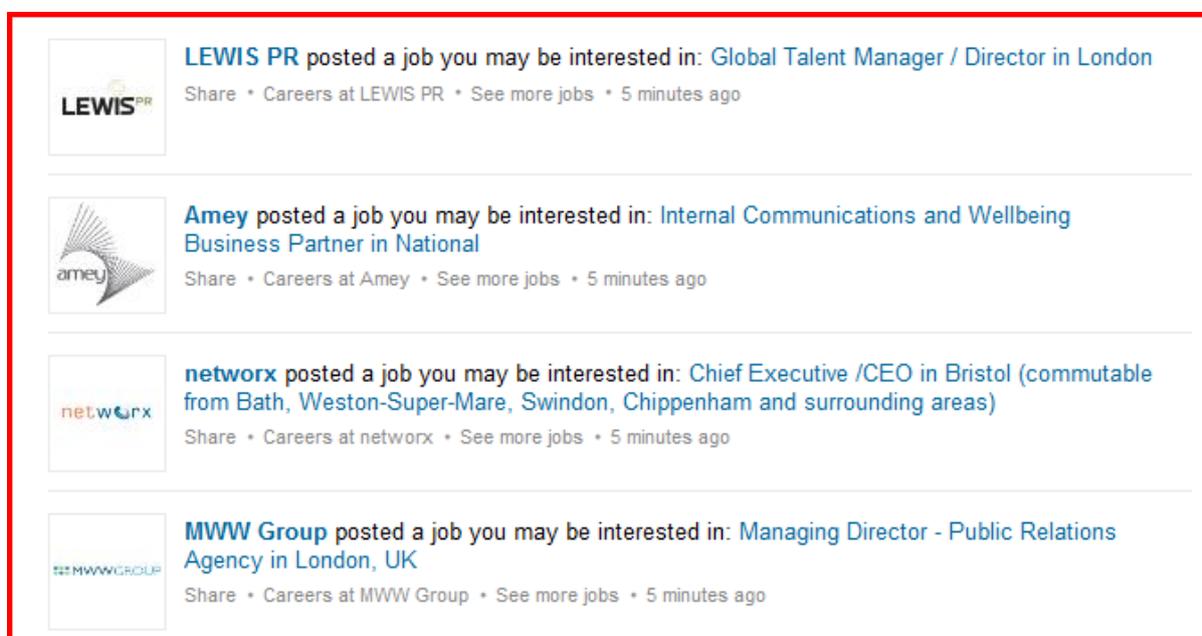
She said: “I would recommend your LinkedIn profile is geared up to say not what you have done, but how you have done it. How their personal experience can benefit a potential employer. I would also use it to hunt out the decision makers for the roles they are applying for. Identify companies they want to work for, find out who is in charge, research them and what they are looking for. Then make tailored approaches directly to them.”

There is a really good point here. Apart from targeting employers to get a job, you can also use LinkedIn to research people who are going to interview you. You can check out their experience, common ground, maybe even some mutual contacts. These will all help you to do the interview with confidence – you’ll know who you are meeting and what their specific areas of expertise/interest are. But you will also impress them that you have done your research.

3.3.3 Look for jobs on LinkedIn

Once you have registered on LinkedIn, you will start getting updates by email. LinkedIn will send you information about jobs that have been posted that are relevant to your profile.

These are the job suggestions that I received on my last LinkedIn update – and you can see why it is so important to include words in your profile for the career that you want. LinkedIn decides which jobs are relevant to you based on the words and phrases that you have included on your profile.



The screenshot shows four job suggestions from LinkedIn, each with a company logo, a job title, and a link to see more jobs. The jobs are:

- LEWIS PR** posted a job you may be interested in: [Global Talent Manager / Director in London](#)
Share • Careers at LEWIS PR • See more jobs • 5 minutes ago
- amey** posted a job you may be interested in: [Internal Communications and Wellbeing Business Partner in National](#)
Share • Careers at Amey • See more jobs • 5 minutes ago
- networx** posted a job you may be interested in: [Chief Executive /CEO in Bristol \(commutable from Bath, Weston-Super-Mare, Swindon, Chippenham and surrounding areas\)](#)
Share • Careers at networx • See more jobs • 5 minutes ago
- MWW Group** posted a job you may be interested in: [Managing Director - Public Relations Agency in London, UK](#)
Share • Careers at MWW Group • See more jobs • 5 minutes ago

3.3.4 Build relationships when connecting

When you start connecting to people on LinkedIn, remember this is part of building relationships with people who could help you get a job. So don't connect until your profile is complete and test out with people you know if it is clear what sort of job you are looking for.

If you find someone to connect to and press the 'Connect' button, LinkedIn automatically creates a template message. However, do NOT use this. This is your chance to remind someone who you are and that you are now looking for a job – they could help you. You can only write a short message (the first message is limited to just 300 characters) but use it to maximum effect. Something on the lines of

Hi John

I'm about to leave uni and enter the real world of jobs! I would love to connect and would appreciate any thoughts you have as to who might be looking for [insert what job you are looking for]. I am keen to get as much experience as possible so would also be interested in placements.

Hope all is well – I see you have been promoted earlier this year. Congratulations!

Best wishes

Stephen

If you just do a standard 'I want to connect' request, the chances are slim that they will reply.

However, by doing a personalised message, you are encouraging them to think of you in a close way and engage with them. And a bit of flattery – the congratulations – never goes amiss, even if they are very senior!

There is a high chance of people replying to a personal message – you have asked them for their thoughts in a non-pushy way and, at the very least, they are likely to say 'sorry don't know of anything going but good luck'. Even that reply will have put you higher in their mind than just a bland 'connect'.

And you may be front of mind when they next hear of a relevant job.

3.3.5 Target employers through LinkedIn

Go back to the list of employers who you would like to work for. When you have built up a reasonable number of connections - 50 is a start, 200 is good - go to Advanced Search on LinkedIn.

Type in the name of the company you want to work for and press 'Search'. LinkedIn will then tell you who you know who is connected to that company. You might find

- Your uncle works for them and you never realised
- Your lecturer did some consultancy for them
- Your best friend from primary school is now working there

Or you may find a number of people who you know are 2nd degree connections in the company.

With all these people, ask them to help you - unless you know them really well, your best response is asking them for advice or contacts. Below is a suggested email - but tailor this to the person who is introducing you and the person you want to talk to. Not every request will be successful but it is surprising how helpful people are when it is a LinkedIn request.

Dear Amy

I am in the job-hunting process and researching a number of companies I would like to work for. My dream employer would be working for Boots! I spotted that you are connected to Jane Smith who is head of buying there.

Do you think Jane would give me ten minutes on the phone to talk about the company and the best way to apply for jobs there? Would really appreciate any help she can give me.

Thanks

3.4 Create a professional Facebook profile

On the whole, working people keep LinkedIn for their working life and Facebook for their private life. However, Facebook groups are starting to be used for recruitment purposes – both by employers and individuals.

Michelle Veasey said: “I’ve seen someone set up a group on Facebook specifically to help her find gainful employment – I thought it was quite innovative. She has added all the people she knows and keeps the group engaged and updated on her progress.”

So this is using your existing network to help you find a job – the perfect use of social media.

The screenshot shows a Facebook group page. At the top, the group name is "Help Heidi Waddington find gainful employment" with "About" and "Files" tabs. Below the name, it says "Open group" and a description: "I believe in the power of social media. I also believe there is a job out there with my name on it. I believe that someo... See more".

The main content is a post by Heidi Waddington. Her profile picture is visible. The post text reads: "So, I just saw a job that I think I would stand quite a good chance of getting an interview for, but it's in field sales (where I have been for the past seven years) and I was really trying to steer myself back into the arts.... good money though and I know I would be good at it too. BUT long hours and TARGETS (ugh!) what to do? do I apply?". It is dated "Yesterday at 15:01".

Below the post is a comment section. A comment by Isla Salisbury says: "Is it this one? <http://www.totaljobs.com/JobSearch/JobDetails.aspx?JobId=53724253&Keywords=customer+account+manager<xt=halifax&Radius=5&distance=0.0&precision=2>". It is dated "Yesterday at 18:04 via Mobile".

Heidi Waddington replies: "nope x not that one x but I have seen that one too - waiting to hear back what the salary is....". It is dated "13 hours ago".

Below this is another post by Suzi Allsopp. Her profile picture is visible. The post text reads: "Hi Heidi - look at JH Recruitment (JHR) Leeds on fb - they are advertising for a marketing campaign manager (mat cover) and several sales and business development roles. If you want to apply direct & not through the agency copy & paste the job ad into google & often you'll find the ad directly on the companies website or a job board. Are you doing much on linkedin with your job hunting? I'm just getting my recruitment head back on after having Maisy so if I can help at all just let me know x". It is dated "Yesterday at 15:34 via Mobile".

Below the post is a comment by Heidi Waddington: "Heidi Waddington likes this.".

At the bottom, a comment by Heidi Waddington says: "Thanks Suzi x I will have a look x if you would".

Action tips

1. Create a LinkedIn profile. If you already have one, make sure it is 100% complete – if not use the tips in here to get it to 100% completion
2. Use your list of keywords – does your profile include all the words that an employer might search for you on? If not, amend your profile to include these words
3. Start linking with people you know – but ALWAYS write a personal message to them
4. When you have 50 connections, start researching employers who you want to work for on LinkedIn. Who do you know who works there or knows someone? Ask to be introduced to understand more about the company
5. Consider starting a blog, but make sure you can write regularly before you start. Write ten blogs before you publish any – that way you can practice and your blog looks good when you launch
6. Create a Twitter account – write a professional description of yourself which includes your keywords
7. Research and follow people who you want to work for, who are professionals in your area of work or who could help you gain expertise

4 Look out for employers online

Many employers are setting up groups and pages for potential recruits to get to know them online first.

The accountants, Grant Thornton, have won awards for their social media activities in recruitment. They have a [Facebook page](#), Grant Thornton Recruitment UK. This has a link to their blog, Spilling the Beans – written by trainees for trainees – so you can find out what it is like to work at Grant Thornton. You can also take part in discussions if you are interested in joining them.

One of our clients, Bradford University School of Management – a top business school – has set up a LinkedIn group for prospective MBAs. The MBAs can ask questions direct, ‘meet’ other potential students and get a feel for the School.

You can expect more groups to start springing up on both Facebook and LinkedIn to start getting to know potential recruits before they join or apply.

Action tips

1. Look at the websites of companies you want to work for. See if they have LinkedIn or Facebook groups for people interested in joining them
2. Join up, get to know the group and start posting occasional (intelligent) questions or interesting comments. Don’t forget this is the equivalent of a preliminary interview, make sure you come over as professional and really interested in the company

5 Professional conduct

If you are looking for a job at the moment, it may seem hard to start thinking about using social media after you actually find a job.

However, it is important to understand how you will be expected to use – or not use – social media in a job.

We heard a really sad story of a trainee midwife who delivered her first baby, took a photo of the baby – and posted it on Facebook. Have a think about this. When you go to see a nurse or doctor you know that they are bound by rules of ‘patient confidentiality’. That means they do not tell people who their patients are, what they have discussed and absolutely do NOT post photos of their patients.

And that applies to a new-born baby as well.

Just because you have grown up sharing your life on Facebook or YouTube, does not mean you can carry on doing that in your working life.

In the case of the trainee midwife, she was sacked. However harsh and unfair that may seem, she broke the fundamental code for her profession.

Action tips

1. Find out what the professional codes of conduct are for the industry or jobs that you want to work in
2. Think through what those rules will mean in terms of how you use Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media
3. Check your profiles and make sure you follow those codes in everything you post

6 Clean up your act

We said at the start, look at your sites as if you were an employer. Don't give employers cause for concern. If a student's profile has endless photos of them looking ill after too many drinks, in provocative poses or scantily clad, it just does not help your case.

Some rules that we would suggest

- Don't swear online
- Don't bully or post unpleasant comments about people
- Do look professional
- Don't have profile photos with provocative poses and clothing (or lack of clothing)
- Do have professional names to your accounts – a Facebook account called 'Hollypissedonthetown' tells you a lot
- Set your privacy buttons for friends and family – but also realise that if you have several hundred friends, any of these might know a future employer of yours and show them what you thought was private to your friend. There is nothing to stop anyone taking a screengrab of your profile and forwarding to someone they know

Action tips

1. **Sign out of Facebook and any other social network sites that you use. Go to another computer and search for yourself on Google. Make notes of what you see – and want to change**
2. **Check all your privacy settings**
3. **Amend descriptions of yourself to reflect your new professional life**
4. **Remove inappropriate photos, language, comments**

Further reading

We have already mentioned our free ebook, [Why you can't ignore social media in business](#). This explains Twitter, facebook, LinkedIn and blogs from scratch, tells you how to create accounts and how to engage online. It's packed with case studies and tips to get started and how to research.

We have our own [Northern Lights PR blog](#) with lots of posts on how to use social media - search in the Social Media category for all of these. We have run an internship for graduates from BAME communities for the last few years – look out for their blogs with advice and tips.

If you want inside tips from recruiters and headhunters, [The Definitive Job Book](#) by Anne Watson is a goldmine about how to write your CV, prepare for interviews and write applications.

An interesting survey on "[How social technologies drive business success](#)" by Millward Brown for Google Enterprise includes a chapter on how high flyers use social tools to get ahead.

There is a very useful video clip [by Ivan Misner who founded BNI](#), Top 10 Traits of a Master Networker. The principles of what he says absolutely apply in social media – networking in person and online are pretty much the same.

Another networker is [Will Kintish](#) and his website has a large resource of free tips and video clips on what you should do when meeting new people and how to follow up and stay in touch.

Greig Wells stresses all the things we say about making sure you can be found on LinkedIn and that you have the keywords in your profile. He has some great tips and webinars on www.befoundjobs.com

John McGrann believes in 'total networking' and linking your social media activities to 'real life' networking to help you build contacts and relationships. His blog, [Drive Social Media](#), is packed with tips and advice.

John Purkiss stresses the importance of a [3 second answer to the question 'What do you do?'](#). He points out that you never know who you will meet who could be useful. You need a concise and memorable answer and highlight just two things that you do.

Rob Wilmot gave a great presentation on [Getting the best out of LinkedIn](#) - and stresses ALWAYS to personalise invitations to connect. Although particularly focused on generating business from LinkedIn, it is just as relevant in the job hunting market.

And finally for women, Heather McGregor aka Mrs Money Penny of the Financial Times has very sound advice in her [Careers Advice for Ambitious Women](#) – you can never start too soon.

Good luck!

About Northern Lights

Northern Lights PR was founded 22 years ago and is an award winning PR and marketing consultancy, based in Yorkshire and with an office in Dubai. We work in a number of sectors – B2B and education particularly. We regularly work with universities, colleges and schools including

- Bradford University School of Management
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- University of Leeds
- York St John University
- Harrogate College
- Hull College
- Harrogate Grammar School
- Ilkley Grammar School
- Leeds City College
- Red Kite Alliance

In their voluntary capacities, Victoria Tomlinson is on the advisory board of Bradford University School of Management and an Enterprise Ambassador to the University of Leeds; Carol Arthur is a Centurion at Leeds Metropolitan University and moderates their PR degree course from an employer perspective.

We run workshops to help students use social media to get a job; as well as training for lecturers and university professionals to help them incorporate social media into their employability support for students. Our workshops include

- LinkedIn to be found by and to target employers
- Writing and promoting a blog
- Setting up and using Twitter strategically
- How to network with employers

All workshops will include a free eBook for each participant attending. Contact us to discuss prices for bulk purchases.

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What others say

“This book is very good, simple, easy to read - and not too long! You can digest the whole thing in an evening and start using all the tips. I didn't have a LinkedIn profile and now realise how important this is - the tips in this book will make sure you get your profile 100% complete.”

Sarah Larby, third year classics student, Newcastle University

“I had a LinkedIn account for a while but never actively took any interest in it. After I heard you talking about the importance and usefulness of LinkedIn I decided to complete my profile and actually start to use it. Within a day companies had shown interest in my profile and asked me for interviews.”

Josh Jervis, third year economics and management student, University of Leeds

“This is an excellent book, opening students' eyes to the potential of social media in the job hunting field. Practical and helpful, it shows them how to research and target employers through Twitter and blogs and to create a LinkedIn profile that will help employers to find them. We will certainly be using this as part of the Taylor Bennett Foundation internship programmes.”

Heather McGregor, headhunter and author of Careers Advice for Ambitious Women

“These are difficult times for anyone looking for a good job but never more so than for graduates. Victoria's ebook provides some valuable insights into how to use social media to increase the chance of success. The undergraduates and postgraduates I work with intuitively understand the power of social media but many seem to have overlooked the important role, what Victoria calls their 'digital footprint' plays in getting the job they really want. I particularly like the way the ebook draws on multiple perspectives: students, employers and HR professionals.”

Nigel Lockett, Professor of Enterprise, University of Leeds

“Victoria you have done it again, your first social media eBook was great and this is fantastic! I recently gave a talk to more than 150 delegates at the conference for the Association for Marketing and Development in Independent Schools. During question time I was amazed at the general lack of basic knowledge when I was asked, "Do you have to pay to set up a YouTube account?" It's clear that in schools, education in this field is vital. Simple tips like researching people who are going to interview you are priceless. I would recommend that if you are connected to the education system or are involved in job searching, you should take note of the reports and clear advice given in this eBook.”

Jonny Ross, Digital Marketer, Jonny Ross Consultancy, Leeds

“Social media is the fundamental building block to any graduates embarking on a career. This book provides first class, up to date and relevant, practical advice. Ignore it at your peril.”

Anne Watson, headhunter and author of The Definitive Job Book

“The advice in this ebook will show you how to target employers through social media. A number of law students have successfully contacted us through Twitter and landed work experience this way. It's really hard to ignore someone who is interested in you and your firm, wishes you good luck, or that asks how an event went. The ebook rightly points out the importance of 'personal digital footprints'. We definitely disregard some candidates because of what we see online, but others come over as extremely professional and engaging in their social media and that counts as a plus.”

Asad Ali, partner, Blacks Solicitors LLP