

Virtual Networking Basics

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Joining virtual networking sites like FaceBook and LinkedIn can be intimidating for the novice. But if you have a rudimentary understanding of the internet and aren't afraid of trying something new, it can actually be a rewarding experience. Best of all, it can significantly increase your odds of securing a new job because it taps directly into what is known as the "hidden" job market. These opportunities can only be found out through networking methods. So read on to find out how to get started now!

1. **Set Up Your Profile Page:** The first step in getting plugged into the virtual networking world is to set up your profile. Your profile tells everyone about who you are as a person and as a professional. You want to take your time with this step. Don't rush it because this will be a person's first impression of you. You should seriously consider uploading a good photo of you in professional attire as well as any relevant pieces of information you want people to know about you. Most networking sites have a very streamlined process that anyone can follow. A word of caution: Realize what your intention for a particular site may be. For example, if you join FaceBook to meet your future partner then the information you share will be drastically different than if you join to make professional acquaintances. In this case, do NOT mix business and pleasure. Stick with one or the other. If your goal is to get a job using a particular site, then you want to keep all information strictly in that vein...professional.
2. **Start Connecting:** Now that you have your profile page set up, start finding people that you already know. Chances are you will already have some connections on a given site that you may not even know about. Ask people if they are a member and then seek them out. Once you have a few people in your "base line" network, you can begin to branch out by looking at others profiles that are connected to your current friends.
3. **Always Remember the Law of Reciprocity:** Networking works because it is a two way street. People help you and in turn you may have the chance to help them in the future. Never forget your network even when times are good. Think of it like a garden, you must cultivate your garden in order for it to grow. So stay in touch with people in your network even when happily employed. You never know when you may need them again.

Virtual networking can vastly improve your odds of getting an interview. The smart job seeker uses virtual networking discriminately and never by itself. It should always be used conjunctively with more traditional methods to maximize the return on your investment of time and energy...

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