

How to clean up your online presence

1. Search Yourself

Run your name through search engines and social media to see what comes up. Then put yourself in an employer's shoes – does the person you see in this search seem professional, interesting and useful to them? If not – it's time to go to work.

2. Clean out the old

Deactivate any old profiles (Myspace, anyone?) that appear in your search. Delete or update old posts on accounts you still use which feature old information. Sometimes you might find things about yourself on other websites – be sure to contact the webmaster if you need information taken down.

3. Get to know your privacy settings

Most social media platforms feature privacy tools which can range from everyone seeing everything you do, to only a select few people. Most privacy settings are found by clicking on a lock or gear icon to get into your account settings. Here are some things to look out for and think about:

- Who can see or search for your online profile
- Who can see posts or updates you make
- Who can see photos you post
- Who can 'tag' you in photos or posts
- Who can see locations you have been to

Be sure to check what you have already posted and who is currently following those posts too! It's important to remember that anything you've posted on a public feed – whether it be to your friend's account or an official account for a company – this can be seen by *anyone* no matter what your privacy settings are. This includes photos on your friend's account that you have been tagged in – stay aware of what you put out online.

4. Keep your posts clean

No matter how private your profile is, try and keep in mind that it's difficult to control anything you put online – be mindful of what you post at any time, and don't rely on your social media platform's privacy and security settings. Here's the kind of things to avoid:

- Photos depicting sexual, drunken or illicit behaviour.
- Information about your support of any kind of drugs.
- Updates badmouthing current or past employers.
- Posts revealing plans and other private information from your current or previous workplace.
- Posts with poor spelling or grammar.
- Posts that have content showing prejudice against different races, religions, gender, sexuality, etc.
- Posts and profile information that makes it obvious/seem like you've lied about your qualifications.
- Drunk posts (you know the kind).
- Anything about yourself that you wouldn't want a potential employer to know or see.

With an ounce of common sense and self awareness, you can still have fun on your social media while keeping it presentable enough to get that job.

Social media for job hunting and networking

1. Get following

Not only are many of the employers you'd like to work for on social media, a lot of them even have profiles specifically for careers in their company. Search the name of the company along with 'Careers' and see if anything pops up. Even if nothing does, you can follow their main profiles and keep an eye out for any posts about job openings. There's plenty of places on social media that will post career opportunities from all sorts of employers too! These are great value as they will often post plenty of career advice as well.

2. Use #hashtags

Now that Facebook has introduced hashtags, you can use both it and Twitter to search for a wide variety of job hashtags. On Twitter, you can refine your search by ensuring that after you have searched a Hashtag you click 'Near You' – as long as you aren't using a VPN, you will only see posts in your area. Here are some common hashtag searches to look at:

- #jobalert
- #hiring / #NowHiring
- #JobOpening
- #employment
- #job / #jobs
- Check out #recruiting and #HR to both find jobs *and* to see tips being swapped by recruiters and HR people – know what you're up against!

3. Engage

If you're comfortable enough with your social media profile, get out there and approach employers. Their social media profiles are online because they are trying to engage with people like you, so go ahead! If you're using LinkedIn, you can also use your connections to reach out to people – use this with caution, as not everyone likes to be contacted out of the blue. Remember to be polite and ask to start a conversation, don't just go straight to asking for work. LinkedIn even **lists some great examples** of people who've used it for networking!

Some things you can do to engage with employers online:

- Like/favourite their posts to show them you're interested
- Add a comment or reply to ask more about their post, or add your own insight/opinion (keep it relevant, polite and presentable)
- If your profile is public or you're happy to make a public post, share their post on your own profile and make a polite, relevant, insightful comment about the post.
- Talk directly to them – message them a question to ask for advice or industry insights. If they reply you can even start a conversation!

4. Get out there

It's one thing to be cautious online, but you could be missing out on some great opportunities if you're invisible. If you'd like to keep your personal social media profile private, why not think about setting up a second, professional profile?

Here are some tips on building a professional presence online:

- Get a LinkedIn profile and fill out every section.
- Use a nice, professional photo of yourself (not a selfie) on your social media profiles.
- Use your real name.
- Ditch the funny email address and get an account with your name in it (eg. john.smith@email.com).