

How to effectively network on social platforms

No matter where you are in your career, learning how to effectively network on social media is an important skill to hone. You can safely assume any new contacts or potential employers will search for you on social media, so you will want to make sure your presence on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and even Instagram projects your personal brand. The following tips can help you make sure social media works for you, not against you.

Determine how to maximize individual platforms

As you will learn in any good writing class, know your audience. This is especially true on social media. You are communicating with different audiences on LinkedIn and Twitter, even if your connections and followers overlap. As you develop your profiles on each, consider the reasons you use each social network, and then pattern your contact after that. For instance, you do not go to Twitter to learn about colleagues' new positions or projects—that's the kind of content you will find on LinkedIn. Instead, you look to Twitter for commentary and links to interesting content.

Contribute to the community

If you want to use social media to professionally network, you can't be a passive observer or "lurker." You need to react to content posted by others. This can take many forms: sharing interesting articles, commenting on others' posts, and participating in discussion groups.

One great way to engage in conversations and stay on top of industry developments is to master the use of hashtags. Each industry has

Facebook and Instagram have a more personal vibe than LinkedIn or Twitter. Depending on your industry, it might be appropriate for you to professionally showcase your personality on these platforms—and, if you are in retail, food or hospitality, you will almost certainly need to. Potential customers will want to check out your wares on Facebook and Instagram.

Tip: If you haven't actively used a social platform, spend some time learning its culture and lingo before making a splash with your personal presence on it.

Build out a solid profile

An incomplete, out-of-date or neglected profile can hurt you in the social media world. Spend time fleshing out your LinkedIn profile, making sure the details match your resume. Be sure to upload a recent photo. It doesn't have to be a professional headshot (though that is preferable), but shy away from selfies or anything too filtered.

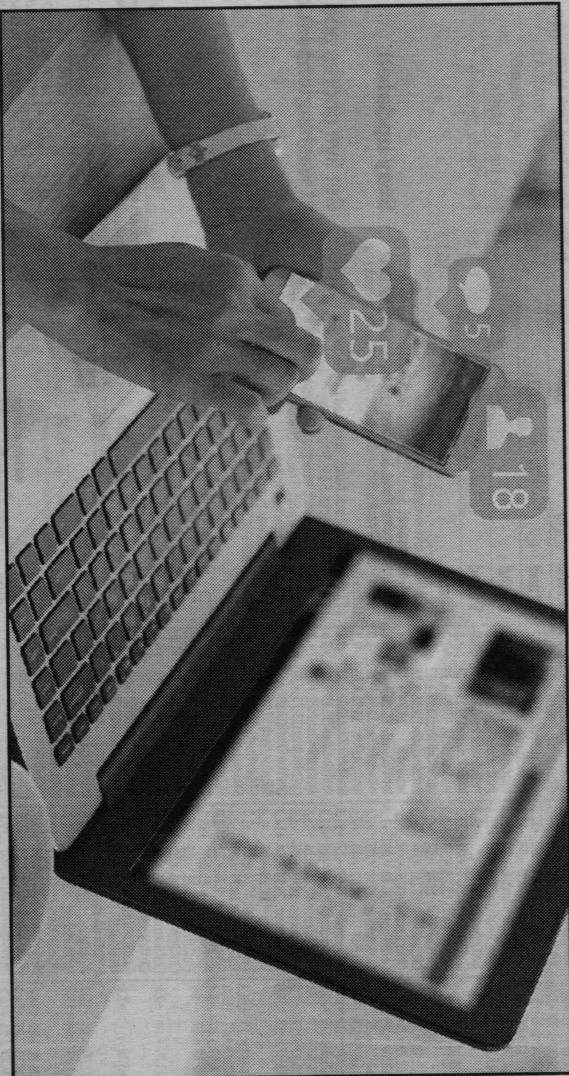
On Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, consider how public you want your profiles to be. Even if you have a strict friends-and-family-only policy, remember certain aspects of your profile (your profile pic and bio information) will always be public. Check out what the public can see and consider how it reflects upon you.

its own specific hashtags that make it easy to search for content. For instance, you will find #corpgov on posts in the audit and assurance industry. Sometimes hashtags are obvious: #marketing, #projectmanagement, etc. Start following influencers in your industry, and you will quickly see which hashtags to use and follow.

Consistently post engaging content

In addition to commenting on others' posts, you will want to initiate your own content appropriate to the platform. You might post links to your professional portfolio, react to industry news, or even develop your own articles or videos on hot topics. Your goals for social media use will dictate how often to post original content. (Be sure to use hashtags so others find you!)

It also makes sense to establish your social media presence before you need to use social media to look for a new position. If you only ap-



pear on social media when you're on the market, your connections will become suspicious.

But don't overdo it

There is a fine line, however, in posting enough to be consistent yet not wearing out your welcome. Don't cross the line and become spammy. That's a sure ticket to losing followers.

Effective networking on social media does require some effort. Each platform has its own culture, and if you don't adhere to it, you will stick out. But spend some time cultivating your presence, and you will find yourself with a whole new world of contacts and potentially even friends.

This special advertising section was prepared by independent writer Kate Johanns. The production of this section did not involve the news or editorial staff of The Washington Post.