

# Let the net work for you

Don't let your online persona get between you and that job. Make your online presence an asset.

**S**ocial networking sites are a great way to stay in touch with friends and family, organise events and share photos and videos. However, while this might seem like a comfortable environment to hang out with your friends, recruiters are increasingly using these same networks as a way of vetting their applications.

## So how do you balance both?

Whether you are a dedicated social networker or just spend a few hours a week on networking sites, it is worth giving serious thought to who can access your data. Unless you have made the effort to change your privacy setting, your profile could be visible to any Tom, Dick or HR person and may even be searchable on Google.

Joining location networks on Facebook will also open up your profile to anyone on that network, not just your friends. If you make use of Facebook's "check in" feature, others can easily find out how you have been spending your free time.

## Screening on screen

Most employers use social networks to screen candidates. This means that if your profile is public, your future employer could have insight into more than just your qualifications and work experience. Therefore the content you place online can have a big impact on your future.

This doesn't mean you need to remove every trace of your existence, just that you need to be savvy and ensure that your online persona portrays you at your best to employers.

## Managing your net rep

Think about what content you are happy for anyone to see and what you feel is best saved for people you already know. A good option is to use

LinkedIn for your professional life and Facebook for your private life.

Make use of the settings Facebook has introduced to help with privacy issues. You can choose who can see particular status updates, photos and anything else, including recruiters.

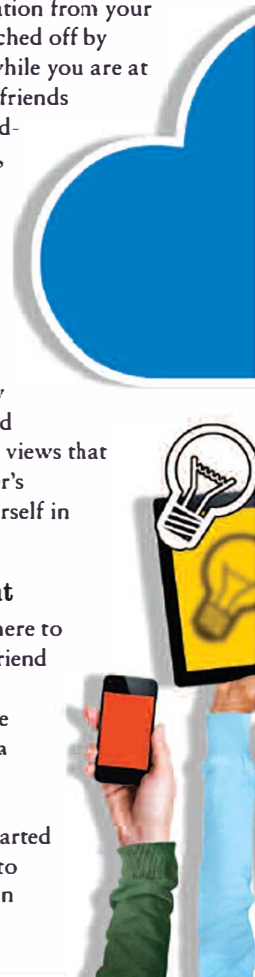
Pop your name into a search engine and see what comes up. Most social networks have a public listing that contains posted information from your profile and a link. This can be switched off by editing your privacy settings, and while you are at it, why not switch your profile to "friends only"? That way, should some clued-up recruiter search on the site itself, they will only have access to the content that you want them to see.

Don't forget areas such as blogs, forum posts and other applications such as YouTube. If you have ever posted anything under your real name it could show up in a search. So if you have ranted about an organisation or expressed views that are contrary to a potential employer's policies, you could be shooting yourself in the foot.

## Use the net for your job hunt

Remember that the web isn't just there to catch you out; it can also be your friend in the recruitment process. In one study, half of recruiters said that the information they had found about a candidate online had positively influenced their decision-making.

Some graduate recruiters have started posting groups on social networks to make it easier for graduates to get in touch and find out about their





organisations, which can be an excellent opportunity to network.

Twitter can also be a good way to connect with employers. You can use it to listen to what favoured recruiters are saying and to keep up-to-date with their latest news. If you are interested in working for an organisation, sign up to its Twitter pages to find out the latest company information and recruitment activities.

You could also interact with an employer on Twitter or LinkedIn prior to an interview and then refer to the exchange when you meet the recruiter in person.

Consider setting up your own website or blog. This will demonstrate initiative and, if you do it right, could be a good way of showing off your creativity and communication skills, as well as presenting a suitably professional image. You can use this space to describe your achievements more fully.

The web is a valuable resource and you can have fun with it, just remember it is a public arena. That way, with luck, it will be a help, rather than a hindrance, when it comes to finding your perfect graduate career.



### Tips for making social media work for you

- Be aware: Google yourself regularly to see what information about you is out there for anyone to find
- Be proactive: Use networking to help you develop and maintain your reputation and relationships
- Be consistent: Make your personal brand consistent across any platform that is accessible to a potential employer
- Be knowledgeable: Get to know what people in your target field are interested in hearing about to ensure your messages hit the target.