



FINDING WORK THE WEB 2.0 WAY

BRANDING KEY TO STANDING OUT IN TODAY'S JOB MARKET

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It wasn't so long ago that job searching was a one-way street: those looking for work would circle interesting opportunities in the Sunday newspaper and drop off a resumé by hand.

Today, candidates are no longer the only ones looking – many companies now search for employees on the Internet as well.

Since December, I haven't applied for a single job. In fact, I haven't even read a single job advertisement. But I have attended interviews with high-profile companies, I have picked up a few contracts, I was offered a few consulting positions and I recently accepted a full-time role with an international advertising agency.

How did I manage this? And how can you do the same?

Think of yourself as a brand and define your niche.

Rather than focusing

on what you want to do, focus on what you already do or have done that is relevant to your "dream job." Companies contacted me not because I wanted to work in the digital space, but rather because I had social media skills.

Defining what you do will help employers determine whether or not you have the skills they are looking for. Be clear and concise with your personal brand messaging – it should be apparent at first glance what it is that you do.

Treat yourself like a marketing campaign.

I'm not suggesting that you put banner ads all over the web to promote yourself, but you should use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to showcase your professional skills. Think about where your "target industry" hangs out – discussion boards, LinkedIn and Facebook groups, Twitter lists, etc. – and make sure

you're there, too.

I haven't been approached via Facebook yet, but it has worked for others. LinkedIn and Twitter, on the other hand, are goldmines when it comes to attracting attention from companies. In fact, the process that led to my current job began on Twitter when one of my followers contacted me.

Complete your profiles and keep consistency between them.

Without overloading your online profiles with details of everything you have ever done, your profiles should give more information than just the bare minimum. Complete profiles will not only give employers more insight into your skill set than just a name or title, but they will also help you show up more frequently in search results.

Consistency between profiles also helps employers notice you above others. One company that

contacted me said they called because every time they searched for a certain term, a different profile of mine showed up in the results.

Be searchable by trade.

The companies that contacted me probably didn't search me by name but rather by specific keywords.

Do your homework in your industry and know what the keywords that surround your dream job are. Once you have determined what industry-specific keywords are used, use them in your profiles.

I'm not suggesting that you change your title to "Digital and Social Media Marketing Web 2.0 Internet Networker and Consultant" if you're aiming for a job in the digital space but using similar words interchangeably (within common use boundaries) for the sake of upping your chances of showing up in search results more frequently.

Before you run off and start creating or strengthening your online profiles, however, there are two things to you should know:

1. It's important to remember that although fancy images, a bit of clever branding and search-engine optimization work will almost certainly help employers navigate their way directly to your profiles, you should always be honest about your skills and experience. With so much information available on the web, lies can be easily exposed.

2. Although I wasn't necessarily looking for a job when companies started contacting me, this doesn't mean you should set up your profiles and leave them to work for you. If you are actively searching for employment, your digital footprint should complement your job hunt, rather than replace it.