

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

We just released our 17th annual *Executive Job Market Intelligence Report (EJMIR)*, and as always, it's full of insightful information to help us all navigate our careers. As the cover story in this issue illustrates, networking holds a prominent place in career development. Data outlined in *EJMIR* reveals that survey participants definitely understand this.



Just how are executives using their networks? The top five ways, according to *EJMIR* data, are:

1. Identify job opportunities.
2. Reconnect with former colleagues.
3. Identify and develop new business leads and referrals.
4. Help others.
5. Find advice for business problems.

Networking has proven to be one of the most effective tools an executive can utilize in his or her job search campaign. But it can do so much more. Your network contains valuable contacts that can help make you successful once you land that new job. Who better to help identify new business opportunities than your trusted network? When you need guidance regarding a business issue, you should be able to turn to your network for expert advice.

How do you use your network? If you don't have a list that resembles the one above, you're missing out on a great resource. The individuals in your network want to be that resource. Let them; and be sure to return the favor.

Sincerely,

Dave

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Using Social Networks to Your Job Search Advantage

By Marji McClure

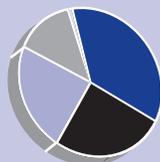
Growing at an amazing rate and attracting a wide range of users, there's no denying the strength of online social networks today. The potential to reach incredibly large groups of people beyond close friends and colleagues is certainly increasing in appeal to individuals seeking new career opportunities. However, just like any job search method, you have to know what you want to accomplish before you begin.

"One of the traps many of us fall into when we're starting a job search is that we tend to jump into it with a ready-aim-fire behavior before being really ready," says Dave Opton, founder and CEO of ExecuNet. "By doing that, one of the first things they blow is the chance of making a good first impression."

"The Internet is a strength and a weakness," adds Opton. "It's a strength because it gives me tremendous ability to communicate, research and access information. But the weakness is it can seduce me into being more proactive in those areas before I'm ready. It can seduce me into spending hours a day sending résumés to job boards, as opposed to strategically trying to identify what I'm going after and developing a strategy to do that."

Opton says that of the members ExecuNet speaks with daily, at least 70 percent say networking helped create a change they made in their careers. "It did not happen because they answered an ad," he says. "You've got to have a strategy in balance with what the data tells you; the

How Executives Make Networking Contacts



Getting referrals from networking contacts	36%
Using business/industry online networks	26%
Attending face-to-face meetings	23%
Using personal online social networks	14%
Other	1%

Source: ExecuNet's 17th annual Executive Job Market Intelligence Report

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data is networking.”

Data also points to the strong role social networking currently plays in our Web 2.0 world. “Member Communities” are more popular than personal email, according to The Nielsen Company’s *Global Faces and Networked Places* report. That popularity is not just attributable to the younger generation. According to the Nielsen report, the 35 to 49 year-old age group showed the largest increase in visitors to “member community” web-sites worldwide.

As executives navigate social networking media, employers and recruiters are taking notice of how these executives conduct themselves in the social media world. Creating a successful online social media presence can help job candidates differentiate themselves from the competition if done correctly.

Meghan Biro, principal of Massachusetts-based TalentCulture LLC, says she is currently working with a C-level executive who is seeking a position in the high-tech industry. He hadn’t focused on social media tools, such as VisualCV (an

Internet-based résumé) and the various features of the LinkedIn social networking site. “I coached him on social media tools and have empowered him to get in touch with, and take more ownership of, his personal brand,” says Biro.

Find Yourself First

If you’ve started creating your online presence, take a closer look at your current profile to determine if it provides an accurate and complete picture of your skills and qualifications and what unique value you can bring to potential employers.

Michael Sherman, a senior product manager at ExecuNet overseeing the company’s Executive Suite group on LinkedIn, regularly reviews the profiles executives submit for display on the site when they register as new ExecuNet members or apply to the LinkedIn Executive Suite.

Sherman says he has viewed many profiles in which executives don’t clearly communicate who they are and what they are looking for. Oftentimes, they use generic phrases such as “seasoned executive” or “employable executive.” Sherman says, “That tells me nothing about who they are.”

Because you don’t know exactly who will view your online profile, it needs to be more comprehensive than a standard résumé, answering enough questions about your capabilities and skills to make readers want to contact you.

“The online profile is more than a traditional résumé,” says Sherman. “It’s a combination of the résumé, a custom cover letter and elevator pitch. The listing of jobs backs up who you are, what you’re good at and what you’re looking for.”

Help a Recruiter Find You

Recruiters are increasing their reliance on online social networking sites to find appropriate candidates. “The more complete your online profile is, and the more you optimize it, the higher you will turn up in search rankings,” says Pamela Claughton, president of Massachusetts-based Custom Search Group Inc. Claughton stresses the profile needs to be written to attract recruiters looking for individuals with very specific qualifications.

Recruiters typically enter a few keywords when they begin a search, such as a job title and geographic location. When that generates hundreds of results, Claughton says she adds industry terms and technologies relevant to a specific search.

Just as résumé-writing services have been a popular option for many job seekers, a similar offering is emerging in the social networking arena. “Many résumé writers and career coaches (myself included) now write corresponding online profiles and help clients with social networking services,” says Chandlee Bryan of New York City-based Best Fit Forward.

Being Found: Beyond the Profile

While more and more recruiters are using online profiles to identify top talent, they are also using other facets of social media to find the best possible candidates. Glenn Gutmacher, founder of Recruiting-Online.com and vice president of Aribita ACES/JobMachine, says recruiters sometimes join online groups to search their directories and find candidates with expertise in a particular industry or topic.

Jennifer Scott, founder of Connecticut-

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Making the Most of Your Online Profile Space

Just as it’s important to include the most relevant and impactful information on your résumé, the same strategy should apply when you’re crafting your online profile. Ensuring that recruiters and hiring managers can easily see what you offer is crucial. Meg Guiseppi, a New Jersey-based personal branding strategist and master résumé writer, suggests looking at what appears on the screen when you access your profile. “Are you taking advantage of what you do with the initial screen view to promote and evidence your personal brand?” she asks.

Guiseppi offers these suggestions to bolster your profile:

- Add a relevant keyword-rich tagline directly below your name, indicating your brand value. Hiring managers and recruiters searching these terms will be led to you.
- Keep building your number of contacts and brand-reinforcing recommendations.
- Add links to three websites or web pages, such as your VisualCV or blog. Add a link to a published article or white paper that you created.
- Regularly refresh the status updates that are available on some online networks. Stay top-of-mind with your connections because they are notified whenever you refresh.
- Personalize your LinkedIn public profile URL. Replace the characters at the end with “your name.”
- Build chemistry by leading the “Summary” section with your personal brand statement.
- Follow your brand statement with two or three standout contributions you made that indicate the value you bring to your next employer.
- It’s okay to bring forward critical information that would otherwise land further down in your profile. If you have an MBA or relevant certifications or training, don’t hide them at the bottom.

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based HireEffect LLC, says that in addition to using services such as LinkedIn and Facebook, she is also involved in social networking communities such as RecruitingBlogs and MyWorkButterfly. Scott uses keywords to search for candidates, and she relies “on referrals and responses to messages through status updates and group discussions.”

Recruiters and career coaches alike suggest executives use the social media platform to position themselves as thought leaders. ExecuNet provides several ways in which members can accomplish this. Members set themselves apart by regularly updating their profiles with skills, keywords, names of companies they are well associated with and cordial introductions of themselves.

By joining an ExecuNet Executive Roundtable, members regularly view and participate in business discussions with peers who share similar interests. The Roundtables are categorized into eight different industry-specific segments, from finance and consulting to general management and human resources.

The Roundtable conversations create visibility for participants as they become well-known to other members for the quality of their comments and may even be quoted in ExecuNet publications, enjoying wide circulation inside and outside the membership. Plus, guest participants use the Roundtables as a sounding board. Former Medtronic CEO and renowned business author Bill George recently challenged Roundtable members to share their insights on a key

leadership topic, sparking a lively discussion that continued for several weeks.

LinkedIn provides a similar venue with its LinkedIn Answers feature. “LinkedIn Answers is a way to see who is posting relevant, intelligent answers to questions,” says Gutmacher. “The ‘Advanced Answers’ search lets recruiters quickly identify people with subject matter expertise. Many recruiters also post open-ended questions that are likely to attract answers from the kinds of candidates they want to know.”

Taking Advantage of the Newest Social Technologies

Alexandra Levit, author of *Success for Hire*, a syndicated columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* and a blogger for *Huffington Post.com*, suggests following people within your industry who you admire through Twitter, a micro-blogging application. “Post intriguing, expert information on a regular basis, and if someone has a question, don’t be shy: jump in and answer it,” advises Levit. She also recommends following recruiters and HR professionals.

Executives often wonder if they should focus their efforts on just one or two networks. Expert opinions suggest selecting only a few networks, ones you find useful and enjoyable. Levit advises, “Set your own rules. For instance, some people use Facebook to keep up with personal contacts, and LinkedIn to keep up with business contacts.”

Open Networks vs. Closed Networks

There are also some differences between open networks (LinkedIn) and closed networks (ExecuNet), although both can

help you connect with valuable contacts. “Open networks allow you to meet people from various walks of life who you might never have the chance to connect with otherwise, and they are invaluable for breaking into a new industry. But closed networks offer much more intimacy,” explains Levit. “I also think networking ties are much stronger among individuals in a closed network.”

Networking is Networking

One of the key things to remember about social networking is that assistance must be reciprocal. You need to be willing to help others with their career endeavors for them to want to help you. “You’ve now got these social networking opportunities...but you should get involved in those things because you want to, not because you’re interested in using it as a means to an end,” says Opton.

However, connections are worthless unless you maintain them. “You’ve got to keep up with people to the point where you won’t be embarrassed to pick up the phone and the person will take your call because they know you would do (and have done) the same for them,” advises Stephanie Fierman, chief marketing officer at Revolution Money.

Fierman has used social networking for job search many times in her career, and still monitors Twitter to share job leads with others. “My experience is that, when a person is in the midst of a job search, social networking done well can deliver two key things: knowledge and access,” says Fierman. “To find a great job, first you need the knowledge that there is one — or could be one — and a way in. And this is where social networking can really shine.”

“Network often and use all the tools for networking to your advantage,” adds an ExecuNet member who utilized such tools to recently accept a position as a director of IT. “Don’t underestimate the power of your family, friends and old co-workers in helping you gain entry to a company or to learn more about companies.” If you know what you want and can communicate that to your social network, it will increase your chances of reaching your career goals. ■

Expert Resources:

- Meghan Biro, TalentCulture LLC (TalentCulture.com)
- Chandlee Bryan, Best Fit Forward (BestFitForward.com)
- Pamela Claughton, Custom Search Group Inc. (CustomSearchGroup.com)
- Stephanie Fierman, chief marketing officer at Revolution Money (RevolutionMoney.com)
- Meg Guiseppi, Executive Résumé Branding (ExecutiveResumeBranding.com)
- Glenn Gutmacher, Recruiting-Online.com and Aribita ACES/JobMachine (Recruiting-Online.com)
- Alexandra Levit (AlexandraLevit.com)
- Dave Opton, ExecuNet (ExecuNet.com)
- Jennifer Scott, HireEffect LLC (HireEffect.com)
- Michael Sherman, ExecuNet (ExecuNet.com)