

Choose a Career First, Tweet Later

By Juliet Wehr Jones, Vice President, Career Key

With all the buzz around them, you may wonder whether Twitter and other online Social Networking sites could be helpful in deciding whether or not to choose a particular career. Other bloggers post excellent tips for using these sites for job search, business development (take note would-be entrepreneurs), and on the job. But what if you're choosing a career or making a career change? Recently I did some research, trying to see if I could learn anything practical or valuable about careers and came up with very little – certainly not worth the time and effort.

While social networking site memberships can be helpful if not necessary later after you decide on a career, your time now is better spent on learning about your career options. Because how can you market your “personal brand” when you don't know what it is yet? The answer is, you shouldn't, especially when information on the web has the shelf-life of a rubber tire dumped in the ocean. You don't want to present yourself in a certain way or say things you might regret later. Professionalism is highly valued but easily lost.

If your goal is to get more information about career options, career specific networking is a better use of your time. In this type of networking, you use the Internet to meet in person new people to gather information about a career (informational interviews). Once you are in a career that satisfies you, social networking with peers through sites like LinkedIn for future job leads and mentoring is practically a “must.”

One of bestselling author Steven Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is “Begin with the End in Mind.” This fits perfectly with using online social networking to choose a career. Decide what career you're aiming for and then present yourself accordingly.

Web resources:

Job Search and Twitter

http://jobsearch.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=jobsearch&cdn=careers&tm=44&f=00&su=p554.2.150.ip_p560.3.150.ip_&tt=17&bt=1&bts=1&z=http%3A//a.lisondoyle.typepad.com/

Business Development and Twitter

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/50-ideas-on-using-twitter-for-business/>

Twitter on the Job

<http://shiftingcareers.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/07/how-twitter-can-help-at-work/#more-236>

Wikipedia definition of “social web”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_web

Career Specific Networking

<http://careerkey.blogspot.com/2008/08/getting-best-career-information-meet.html>

Information Interviewing

http://www.careerkey.org/asp/career_development/information_interviewing.asp

Learning about Occupations

http://www.careerkey.org/asp/career_options/learn_occupations.asp

“Begin with the End in Mind”

<http://www.stephencovey.com/7habits/7habits-habit2.php>