

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
Berkeley Law

Social Media, Your Job Search and Your Legal Career

Social media can and should play an important part in your job search, and throughout your legal career.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn, a social media site focused on career and business networking, is a uniquely powerful tool. A LinkedIn profile is often one of the first results an employer will see when conducting a Google search on a job candidate. Even if LinkedIn is not the channel by which you make initial contact with an employer, it is likely to be used to cross-check your resume. Here is [an article about LinkedIn specifically for law students](#).

Profile

The CDO recommends that you have a LinkedIn profile, which should be professional, up to date, and entirely consistent with your resume. It need not, however, be identical with your resume; for example, resumes in the U.S. don't have photographs, but it is standard practice for your LinkedIn profile to include one (professional and appropriate, of course). Here is [an article](#) about other ways your resume may differ from your LinkedIn profile.) Your headline is automatically populated with your most recent position, but you may customize it, for example by mentioning the fields you are interested in (especially important for active job seekers). At a minimum, include your education and your professional work experience.

Colleagues can comment on your skills and expertise via Endorsements and Recommendations on your profile. You may ask a colleague personally for an endorsement or recommendation, or you may make a request directly through LinkedIn. Make sure the endorsements are appropriate and helpful (well-meaning acquaintances sometimes endorse for skills you don't have or need), and avoid reciprocal endorsements ("I'll write one for you if you write one for me").

There are numerous resources on composing a strong, fresh LinkedIn profile; take the time to make yours compelling as well as accurate.

Build your network

Connect with people you know and people you meet. For example, if you chatted with a local attorney at an event at the law school, a LinkedIn invitation within a day or so

(while the conversation is still fresh) is very appropriate. As with any social media tool, only agree to connect with people you actually know and would like to be associated with.

Follow people, schools, organizations and companies that you are associated with or that interest you. You can also follow issues via hashtags (e.g., #privacylaw) to see postings with relevant content. This helps keep you informed and allows you to showcase your skills and enthusiasms. It's also a way for you to connect with people who have similar interests.

You can also join LinkedIn groups. Members can see each other's profiles, exchange messages and share information easily. Berkeley Law has an [Alumni Group](#) for all graduates of the school, whereas LinkedIn's [Berkeley Law Mentor Directory](#) may be helpful for general student career development (rather than job-searching). This group has been established to support Berkeley law students seeking to benefit from alumni assistance with regard to career-related advice. (Students are strongly encouraged to read and adhere to [the CDO's guidelines](#) for how best to leverage this forum. For example, students may use it to obtain informational interviews, ask advice on choosing a practice area, and seek information on legal trends in specific geographic locations. Students are advised *not* to contact mentors for employment or business purposes.)

A strong network will be important throughout your career. Among many other reasons, having a preexisting relationship makes a later request-- for an introduction, for example, or an informational interview-- far more likely to be favorably received. Be generous, when you can, in responding to similar requests yourself.

Job Seeking

The "Jobs" page on LinkedIn lets you search for open positions which meet criteria you specify. You can also arrange to be alerted in the future when similar jobs are posted. Beyond these active steps, you can improve your chances of hearing about opportunities and being found by employers by having a polished profile that shows your areas of interest, and a strong network of professional connections. You can also raise your profile by commenting and reposting, and by publishing original content (see below for more information).

FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Facebook is not primarily a professional tool, but employers may encounter your presence there as they vet you for a job. Stories abound about Facebook blunders which cause loss of jobs, job offers and reputations. As a law student entering the legal profession, now is the time to rethink and/or make some modifications to your online behavior. Similarly, individual Instagram accounts are primarily social, but yours may tell the world more than it needs to know.

Err on the side of privacy in your settings, and check them periodically, but do not count on privacy settings to limit your posts' audience; someone may learn of a questionable post through word of mouth or a screenshot. Always err on the side of caution when posting anything to Facebook or Instagram, either in words or images. Best practice is not to post anything on these platforms you would not want an employer to see.

TWITTER

Twitter, if used properly, can be an effective tool to stay informed, increase your network and brand yourself as an online expert in a particular field. Reading tweets as an observer before opening a Twitter account may be a good place to start. Hashtags can help you hone in on topics of interest.

Many legal professionals have Twitter accounts to follow. It can also be beneficial to follow companies and organizations in order to keep up with their news and see job openings if they are posted; you can also use Twitter to reach out to them. The Career Development Office is on Twitter as **@BerkeleyLawCDO**.

If you are active and engaged in a professional arena, of course Twitter is a great way to make yourself heard. Again, use caution and consider what your tweets may reveal about you to the world, including employers.

SPECIALIZED CHANNELS

Communities of all kinds have their own platforms for connecting online. One you should definitely be aware of is the [Berkeley Law Alumni Network](#), a closed-network platform organized by the law school's Alumni Office. It enables alumni across the globe to reconnect with classmates and find other alumni by practice area, geographic region, affinity group, or shared interest. The same etiquette applies to these online forums as to all other social media. If you are currently a law student, you can look forward to joining the group when you graduate.

YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

For employers, googling candidates prior to extending offers is becoming standard practice. Google yourself to preview what they might see. Some tips and strategies for protecting and maintaining your online presence are below.

Once something is posted it can't really disappear, even if it is taken down. Negative material can be diluted, however, by adding new, positive content that will appear higher in an online search of your name. If you are aware of misleading online information about you, you might want to alert potential employers in order to preempt their findings in a background check. If you have significant issues, there are also companies which help you repair your online reputation.

Restrict others' abilities to post information on your social media site(s), and delete inappropriate content that others post. Delete any questionable pictures of you in your and others' accounts, and "untag" any photos of yourself which are questionable or unflattering. Do not post disparaging remarks about your job or any individual.

Remember that nothing is ever really anonymous online, and if you feel any information is questionable, don't post. Check out your own online presence periodically, and see a CDO counselor if you have any issues or questions.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA AFFIRMATIVELY

Beyond keeping your online presence clean, you can use social media to enhance your professional identity and brand.

You might already have a personal web page or be blogging, tweeting or using other social media to weigh in on legal or non-legal topics. These affirmative efforts are part of your online brand and can be a terrific way to establish or enhance your professional reputation. Just make sure that what you post is up to date and consistent with the profile you wish to project.

Even if you are not a major social media personality, you can raise your profile by joining online groups and adding appropriate, thoughtful comments to their discussions. LinkedIn makes it easy to post content, by commenting on posts by others, reposting relevant articles and materials, or by publishing original articles. LinkedIn makes it easy to create professional connections, and doing so early can clear a path to subsequent interactions you might want to initiate (such as asking for an informational interview).

Lawyers are expected to have an online presence, and you are already a member of the legal community. Like it or not, you have an online brand, so manage it thoughtfully.