Defining yourself online in a competitive job market

In an increasingly digital world where transacting, communicating and access to information is literally a click away, organisations continue to prioritise investment in maintaining a strong online presence as a key driver of market awareness and brand differentiation.

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Kay Vittee, CEO of Kelly, believes the same dedicated approach to creating and maintaining an individual online presence should be applied by job seekers, who similarly are looking to market and differentiate themselves in the highly competitive and oversubscribed job market.

"More than ever before, job candidates have the means to move beyond the traditional CV approach, which is quite limiting when it comes to scope and reach, and have complete control over how they choose to portray themselves online to potential employers.

"Considering that majority of recruiters today are opting for the speed, ease and convenience of going online to search for talent and conduct employment background searches, it's therefore essential to ensure you make a positive and lasting online impression," she comments.

Quality vs quantity

When it comes to marketing yourself on LinkedIn, Vittee says that while a comprehensive LinkedIn profile looks good on paper, in the end it really comes down to relevance.

"Many job candidates make the mistake of thinking that having a large contact network or masses of endorsements increases their visibility and hence employability. However if these contacts or skills aren't relevant to the job or career path you are aiming for, it doesn't really hold much weight - it's really about quality and not quantity," she adds.

And because recruiters don't base employment and character checks on LinkedIn profiles alone, Vittee says it is therefore important to ensure you keep other social media activity in check.

"There has been a recent surge of individuals hauled over the coals due to the controversial nature of their public rants or comments. It needs to be remembered that once something reaches the public domain it's very difficult to take back, with your reputation left to suffer the negative and often long-lasting consequences.

"So while social media certainly empowers individuals to market themselves easily and effectively, people need to make careful and informed choices about whom they choose to connect with and how they engage online," she emphasises.

Pro tips

When it comes to creating an impressive online presence, here are Vittee's top tips:

- Be consistent when it comes to name use. Decide which version of your name to use i.e. full vs. nickname and stick to it. This will create a clear identity and make it easier for potential employers to identify you.
- Choose an appropriate photo. Remember this creates the first impression people will have of you so make sure you dress in professional attire and choose a high-quality image. Define yourself.
- Write a memorable profile headline. Make sure it is clear, concise, and catchy.
- Regularly update your status. Add value by tweeting interesting articles or posting current updates of news in your field of interest.
- Connect and network with fellow professionals. This is a great way to keep abreast of job openings, opportunities for development, and general career advice.
- Share your expertise. Post pictures of projects you have been involved in or completed or your own blogs that include a link to your professional website.

"Ultimately a strong online presence can certainly prove a key differentiator when it comes to getting your foot in the door and landing an interview or sealing the deal for the job of your dreams," concludes Vittee.