

Your New Job Security Starts Here

A stable work future isn't about finding a lifelong employer. It's about being able to land the next professional opportunity—which means mastering the digital job hunt

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Here's a stat that will stop you in your tracks: Almost 40 percent of human resources managers believe that résumés will eventually be replaced by user profiles on social-networking sites. “When this transition happens, it’s going to be overnight,” says Christopher Bilotta, president of the executive-search firm Resource Development Company. “Soon you’ll just send a link to your website, where a hiring manager will find everything she wants to know.”

For now, you do still need a traditionally formatted PDF résumé, because many HR people are accustomed to seeing them. But you also need to pay attention to what comes up when your name is Googled—and you want to be happy with what a potential employer will see. For many people, establishing a sophisticated online presence will mean pushing well out of their comfort zone. But doing so, particularly if you’re in the job market at the moment—or preparing to be in the near future—is not optional. Here’s how to step up your digital game.

START MAKING VIDEOS

A few years ago, when someone Googled your name, all she saw was text-based results. Today search engines pull video and images, too—which means you need to add some audio-visual elements to your digital résumé to round out the presentation of yourself as a job candidate.

“If you’re the type of person who gets sweaty palms before a big meeting, video can work in your favor because it’s a chance to manage how a potential employer first sees you,” says Catharine Fennell, CEO of VideoBIO. Though you may worry about looking old, a video can put to rest an employer’s fears that you also act old or aren’t in touch with the way business is conducted today. “Filming a video shows that you’re confident, innovative and an early adopter,” Fennell says. “A great video is about making a personal connection with your audience, sharing experience and establishing credibility.”

1. Put a video bio on your website

What it is

A two-minute clip—essentially, your elevator pitch. “This is where you introduce yourself,” says William Arruda, president of Reach Personal Branding, Inc. “It’s an opportunity to go beyond the one-dimensional résumé and give recruiters a sense of your personality and the skills that make you exceptional.” (Find an example at videobio.com/Kdixon.)

How to do it

If you’re very tech savvy and good with iMovie, you can go the DIY route. Shoot inside with a white background for a crisp, modern look and do some lighting checks to make sure you aren’t

creating unflattering shadows. “Avoid natural daylight and fluorescent bulbs because they show every line,” says Fennell. “Indirect soft lightbulbs, like a lamp with a paper shade, will create the most flattering glow.” Otherwise hire a video-production company like VideoBIO, Fennell’s firm. For \$299, these professionals will set you up with a videographer and offer script advice; they will also light, shoot and edit the video (videobio.com).

Whichever route you take, aim to rehearse for a minimum of 30 hours beforehand, suggests Ken Sundheim, CEO of KAS Placement, a recruitment firm in New York City. And spring for professional hair and makeup—you’ll look and feel more polished, which will improve your performance.

2. Prepare for a video interview

Gone are the days of flying across the country to meet with a prospective employer. “Companies need to cut costs while still finding great talent, so we’re seeing them turn to video,” says Arruda. You may even find that local firms are interviewing this way, since video avoids any scheduling hassle. Your video interview may be a two-way conversation via a conferencing program like Skype. Or employers may send you a list of questions and ask that you post video responses using a site like HireVue. Either way, you’ll need to do all your usual prep work—and then some.

Role-play the interview

Skype with a friend or mentor until you feel comfortable on camera. “Practice looking directly into the Web camera so you’re making eye contact with your interviewer,” says Fennell. “And don’t fix your hair just because you can see yourself onscreen. Skype is not a mirror!”

Frame the shot

Once you choose the room in which you’ll sit, check the lighting: Is it bright and clear or dim and unflattering? Get rid of any background clutter and shut the cat in another room to prevent distractions.

BECOME A BLOGGER

A blog, in which you offer a tightly focused take on what’s happening in your industry, lets you stack your Google results with another positive contribution every time you publish a post. This is helpful even if you have a website showcasing your professional achievements: Blogging ensures a steady stream of fresh, new content associated with your name. A blog also helps make it easier for people to find you online, says Arruda. If you have a common name or share a name with a celebrity, add your middle name to your professional moniker to make it more distinctive.

Blog under your full name at Yourname.com

Or give your blog a domain name like virginiasolesmithWRITER.com, which announces your profession. Then use your full name in the blog’s header, work it into the body text and consistently publish content. Over time, this approach will likely push your blog onto your name’s first page of Google results. And include your blog’s URL on your Facebook and LinkedIn profiles, as external links move a site’s search rankings even higher.

Make yourself an expert in your field

Wendy Terwelp, a career coach and author of *Rock Your Network for Job Seekers*, reports that several of her clients have nabbed job interviews thanks to interesting content they posted about

their area of expertise. One marketing executive wrote a series of posts on how to start a corporate blog, which caught the eye of a manufacturer looking to hire someone to do just that.

Use a professional layout

Terwelp's favorite blogging platform is WordPress.com, because it's easy to use and offers the most design options. (The format called "Pilcrow" is a good minimalist choice.) Other platforms are Blogger and TypePad. Whichever you use, place key content in the top left corner of the screen. "That's the most expensive spot to advertise on the Web because it's where our eye goes first," says Sundheim. "Only around 30 percent of people ever make it over to the right side of the screen—but you can draw them over by placing your head shot in the bottom right corner."

Choose your own keywords

Since the odds are good that you're not the only Jane Doe online, most people searching for you will add qualifier words ("Jane Doe real estate broker") to narrow their results. Decide which words people are most likely to use, then tag them on every video and blog post.

Consider vlogging (video blogging)

If you're skilled with a webcam, start interspersing written posts with the occasional video. Set up a YouTube page and upload your videos there as well. It's great exposure; there are three billion views of YouTube videos every day. Plus, Google owns YouTube, so these videos should show up on page one of the results when someone searches for your name.

Join conversations

Increase traffic to your blog (and positive results in your Google search) by commenting, using your full name, on other relevant sites. "Blog comments show up near the top of your Google results, so it's very useful to participate in well-written, meaningful discussions to establish your online reputation," says Michael Fertik, CEO of Reputation.com. You should also pitch guest post ideas to larger industry blogs; publishing on key sites is a good way to stay visible.

STEP IT UP WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Companies want to know that you can use social media because it indicates you'll have less of a learning curve on the job. So start yesterday. "A primary mistake that I see job seekers making is diving into online networking only after they've started to job-hunt and want something from people," says Charles Purdy, a career expert at Monster.com.

Get a great profile picture

Even if you keep your privacy settings as restrictive as possible, chances are your profile picture pops up when someone searches for you. "Having a professional head shot is more important than ever, because that picture might be the first thing a prospective employer sees," says Kirsten Dixon, coauthor of *Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand*. She advises hiring a photographer, getting your hair and makeup done and shooting two or three looks (all of which should work in any season) against a white background.

Make the most of LinkedIn

Bring your profile to 100 percent complete and use the keywords that employers might search for to increase the chances that you'll pop up on the first page of their results. Focus on writing a great summary section. "You only get 2,000 characters, so you're forced to tell your story in a way that's really concise and relevant," says Dixon. Also write recommendations for

connections in your network—which should inspire them to do the same for you—and personalize the default e-mail invitation that LinkedIn sends to potential contacts.

Tweet with a purpose

Stick to tweeting relevant information from a conference or your opinion on a hot topic. And keep it short. “The new rule of thumb for tweet length is 120 characters,” Terwelp says. “This leaves room for your followers to retweet and add their own commentary.” Check your Twitter influence by entering your username at [Klout.com](http://klout.com), a service that analyzes your tweets and followers.

Create a Facebook brand page

Thirty billion links, photos and other pieces of content are shared on Facebook every month; you’d be crazy not to get in on that for your job search. But keep your personal and professional profiles separate. Set up your personal profile so it’s available to friends and family only. Then click on “Create a Page” (on Facebook’s footer menu) to set up a “brand” or “public figure” fan page for your professional identity. (Facebook lets you choose which friends or networks to share it with.) You can also use an application like BranchOut or BeKnown, which lets you network with people on Facebook without having to make them friends. For extra security, consider downloading Reputation.com’s free uProtect.it tool, which encrypts everything you post to Facebook so your data won’t get leaked the next time privacy settings change.

Cover your bases

“I advise clients to pick one or two social media platforms and work them,” says Dixon. “You want to use whichever are popular in your industry.” A service like KnowEm (knowem.com) can reserve your name on popular social networks before anyone else does (prices range from \$99 to \$599, depending on how many sites you want covered and how detailed you want your profiles to be on each one). Also, if you haven’t already, register yourname.com with a reputable registrar like Hover. “While you’re at it, register your kids’ names, too. They’ll thank you later!” says Dixon. “I do this as baby gifts for friends.” If you do want to participate actively on more than one site, register with HootSuite or Hellotxt. These services link your platforms together so you can update multiple platforms at once.

GET CURRENT

If you’ve been away from the workplace for a while, you may have missed key technological developments in your industry—and run the risk of outing yourself with small tech mistakes.

Follow the top blogs in your industry

Pick no more than five industry blogs (find them at alltop.com) and three LinkedIn groups to check in on every day. “It will take you maybe an hour a day, and within a month you’ll be an expert in your field,” says J.T. O’Donnell, CEO of CareerHMO.com.

Ditch your AOL email address

Ditto Hotmail. And Yahoo. “These are an instant giveaway that you are out of touch,” warns Sundheim. “It’s so easy to switch to Gmail that I tell every job seeker to do it.” Having a Gmail account also enables you to take advantage of useful tools such as Google Documents (great for sharing business proposals without any worry about disappearing attachments), Google Reader (which allows you to track all your blog subscriptions and news feeds in one spot) and Google Video Chat.

Get up to speed with technology

Learn the new Microsoft Office or any other software that's standard in your industry. "It's worth downloading a free trial of any new products so you can get comfortable with them," says Rhea Drysdale, CEO of Outspoken Media. If you aren't sure what technology a firm is using, check out its profile on Glassdoor.com, a site where users anonymously post information about company culture and salaries.

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APPS ARE THE NEW JOB BOARDS

Experts agree that planting yourself on generic job boards is no way to conduct a search. "People fill out all these online applications and never hear anything back," says J.T. O'Donnell. "It's very de-motivating." Spend no more than 10 percent of your job-search time on job boards—and focus that effort by taking advantage of mobile apps. Most are designed to buzz you as soon as an opening in your field is posted. "The key is to set up strong filters so you only get notified about jobs that are the right fit for you," says O'Donnell. Here are some good free apps to try: **-LinkUp Job Search Engine (linkup.com)** is an iPhone app that trawls company websites to find postings that aren't listed on major job boards.

-Indeed (indeed.com) gives you access to millions of postings from job boards and company websites and sends personalized search results to your iPhone.
Snapdat.com creates digital business cards and e-mails them from your iPhone to new contacts.

-Bump (<http://bu.mp>) lets you exchange contact information electronically.
TweetAJob.com will tweet you job openings in your field and geographical area.
Monster.com's apps for the iPad and iPhone notify you of the latest job postings wherever you are.

-CareerBuilder.com's "Jobs" app enables you to apply for jobs directly from your iPhone.
LinkedIn's app lets you reach anyone in your network on the go. It also delivers the headlines, prioritized so you know which stories your peers are talking about.