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Your DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

How can one accomplish this critical element of your Personal Marketing Plan, your 'digital footprint?' Use the time you spend on LinkedIn to address your two critical tasks:

1. **Task #1** is to keep your profile as a dynamic reflection of what you learn from your networking experience, tweaking your way to better search page results. This is worth more time in the beginning of your career transition, but regular time throughout.
2. **Task#2** is to be interactive by participating in appropriate Group discussions, 'like-ing' comments of your choice, private messaging the writers of those comments as potential new contacts, following targeted Companies, and regularly 'updating your network by 'share-ing' articles or posting brief 'white papers' than express your knowledge and expertise.

More and more business professionals are using social networks to build relationships, meet new contacts, and market themselves. For the uninitiated, however, diving into the virtual meet-and-greet can be daunting. Where to begin?

For first-time users, or the "technologically timid," or for anyone in career transition, the answer is LinkedIn. While Facebook may be #1, it is more analogous to a cocktail party.

LinkedIn, on the other hand, while it is a solid #2, is more like attending a chapter meeting of a professional association. Developed specifically for business, the site doesn't run the risk of blurring your professional life with your private one; and with its Membership base growing exponentially, it serves virtually every industry and profession.

Joining a network like LinkedIn is simple, but turning it into a powerful networking tool takes a bit of savvy, some consistent time, and a commitment to controlling your 'digital footprint.'

Set your job search habits to take full advantage of LinkedIn's ever-changing algorithm and functionality. LinkedIn can be your 'digital roadmap' to finding new contacts and being found!

TASK#1: Your Profile

Your LinkedIn Profile can be your optimal DIGITAL aid to networking. You can 'design' your Profile to draw interested parties TO YOU... this is called a 'pull marketing' effort and is heavily dependent on your search engine optimization (SEO) score. This is an over-simplification, but the name of that game is to find creative ways to stack your keywords, using every allowable boundary of LinkedIn.

The challenge is to create this heavy barrage of keywords in a less than obvious manner, so that your Profile is still reader-friendly to those potential contacts, recruiters, or hiring authorities.

On the other hand, you may elect to use your Profile to get your story out to potential interested contacts, recruiters, or hiring authorities. This would be utilizing a 'push marketing' design and would integrate a more narrative approach, with all due grammar in place...making it much more reader-friendly.

The challenge is to create such a narrative 'storyline' which has sufficiently high SEO score to rank you in the first several pages of a keyword search, AND...

...AND narrative enough to be appealing to the actual reader of your profile.

I encourage the Candidates that I serve to get the best of BOTH marketing approaches—both push and pull marketing strategies. Remember, the LinkedIn search algorithm looks for your activity level FIRST and your SEO score SECOND (a close second)... so let your desired results be your guide.

While your page will detail your work history, don't assume you can copy and paste your resume and be done with it. Your profile page should reflect your professional interests, passions, and ambitions at this point in your career.

It's not a mistake to start with cutting and pasting from your resume. It becomes the core of this high tech, written 'personal marketing' collateral. But then edit your storyline and personality back in to it.

The site will walk you through filling in the blanks, or you can simply use the "edit profile" area... but you'll want to think ahead about two areas:

Defining Yourself

Directly underneath your name will be a short headline of four or five words. More than anything else in your profile, these words are how people find and define you. Are you seeking to connect mainly with others in your field and industry?

Then a simple, explanatory headline like "Senior Project Manager at McDonnell-Douglas" is best.

This is also where to start when you are employed, as many employers prefer to "find" employed professionals with their sourcing effort.

Are you seeking to branch out into other areas? “Leader of High-Performing Aeronautical Engineering Projects” alerts others quickly to the value you would bring to an organization. Regardless of how you phrase your headline, make sure to use keywords that will help others find you.

‘Professional Experience:’ What you’ve already accomplished, and your potential, your value proposition... or what you want to do, looking forward. When listing your past job experiences, use verbs as much as possible. Show what you’re passionate about, and what you’ve learned from each job.

Consider listing “non-jobs” you’ve done, like chairing a conference or leading a panel. You shouldn’t just think of this as a resume tool, however.

It can be a way to show color and breadth.

Checklist

Make Sure You Include:

1. A solid headline with keywords relevant to your industry.
2. A picture. “People do business with people.”
3. How you prefer to be contacted. At the bottom of your profile, you can let people know how you want to be contacted — through LinkedIn, by e-mail, or over the phone.
4. What you want to be contacted about. At the bottom of your profile, you can select interests like reference requests, consulting offers, or career opportunities.

As you proceed, keep your goal in mind...

- Do you want to have that fully optimized, SEO-centric magnet that attracts interested parties TO you? -OR-
- Do you want that terrific, user-friendly home page and profile that is easy for a reader to navigate? -OR-
- Do you want your profile and homepage to be appealing to both?



TASK#2: Developing YOUR Network

Goal: Continue to gain benefits from your social network — without making it your full-time job. Don’t expect that you can post something (TASK#1) one time and get ongoing benefits. Rather, you’ll need to continually update and refine your profile and your network. The most obvious way to do this is to add new contacts.

When I come home from a conference, for example, I go through the business cards I’ve collected to see who’s on LinkedIn.

Adding new contacts, sometimes from outside your immediate field or industry, is also a subtly persuasive way to sell yourself by letting others see how far your professional sphere extends.

I encourage job seekers to reach out to contacts even when you don't have a business concern. I try to touch base with a few contacts every week for no other reason than to check in and see how things are going.

"The thing I think people do a little wrong in social networking is they reach out only when they have an issue — when they've lost their job, or they need you out of the blue."

Danger! Danger! Danger!

Five things you should never do on a social network...

1. **Leave negative feedback.** "It stays around for a very long time, so even if you have a change of heart, it can be very difficult to retract it." See "Digital Dirt."
2. **Lie.** "Give a truthful account of where you've worked and what you've done. Be real. Be honest."
3. **Spam.** "It's not a push marketing strategy. Avoid drowning others in your promotional material."
4. **Gossip.** "Don't send forth news that may not be yours to share."
5. **Oversell yourself.** "Stay away from arrogance or over-hyping what you do."



It would seem to make sense that writing negative or inappropriate comments is the most common social media mistake that takes job seekers out of the running for a position. One of the most damaging mistakes is posting or being tagged in questionable photos. Reality in today's digital world is that, because of data warehousing, it is virtually impossible to sweep away past "digital indiscretions."

But don't avoid social media altogether... You would be missing out on one of the best assists that technology has to offer the job seeking public! Not posting regularly and having incomplete, dated or no social media profiles were also red flags when it comes to hiring.

Keep It Clean

FACT: Over 80% of medium to large employers use LinkedIn in their recruitment efforts. Further, much has been written about employees who have been fired for social media mistakes, and these stories provide lessons for workers and job seekers alike.

- All too often we believe posting on social media is just harmless fun, but, in reality, employers frequently look online to learn about prospective hires...
- Job seekers, therefore, should think beyond attempts to delete unflattering content from their 'digital footprint...' rather they should focus on how they can wow hiring managers by showcasing career highlights and accomplishment, and industry involvement.

Bottom line? To protect themselves, job seekers should think twice before sharing certain content on any social platform, regardless of their privacy settings. Once downloaded (data warehousing) one's digital dirt cannot be deleted... the only "solution" is to chronologically bury it under more positive, and more current, information. More than ever, people have to own not just what they want the public to see, but what could inadvertently be made public by other people.



ABOUT DFWCareerpilot... A FREE, WEEKLY WORKSHOP event with a regular rotation of topical material covering a 12-Step Process **M.A.P. (MAHER Associates Process)** that will accelerate your job search success. Bob's presentation style is highly engaging and interactive, so never be shy with questions and/or supportive anecdotes.

BE PREPARED for Bob's two philosophies: Learn to Embrace The OTHER Job Market... and, fully optimize your efforts with a high tech/high touch approach!

1. His public Group on LinkedIn: **DFWCareerpilot**
2. **GO TO:** www.dfwcareerpilot.com and **FOLLOW** (register for) it to receive regular updates
3. Follow **DFWCareerpilot** on Twitter!



Bob Maher created his online presence, www.careerpilot.com, in 1994. He has over thirty years of successful experience in Corporate Recruitment, performance management and Career Management Services. He is an entrepreneur and innovator in the use of information technology in the recruitment and employment process.

On the Founder's Council of the Association of Career Professionals - International and quite active in their Professional Development, Technology and Chapter Growth initiatives--a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. The Institute of Career Certification-International has him reviewing the portfolios of incoming applicants. Bob was presented with the prestigious LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT award by The Association in 2006.