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## Social Media and Networking: The Ins and Outs

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### ABSTRACT

With companies being bought, sold, and the nature of the career track being redefined as job tenure is tending to be shorter, it's critical to build a name and a reputation for what specific skills you bring to your SAS® community. Social media is a powerful way to present your contributions to employers as follows: getting your name and skills out there for potential employers and recruiters, controlling the presentation of your experience, recommending others and having them recommend you, understanding the relationships among employees within an industry, and networking and getting back in touch with programmers. This paper discusses these and other topics related to social media, with the intent being on using social media methods that can help you find the right candidate (from a manager's perspective) or a job (from a candidate's perspective).

### INTRODUCTION

I recently attended a Management Session by Paul Hellman, who writes, among other things, a daily tip to CNBC. He, along with many others, have identified that today's workers, particularly the Generation X'ers and Y'ers, tend to think differently about a career compared to the generations who preceded us. Specifically he postulates that older workers, particularly baby boomers, tend to have started their careers thinking they would stay with the same company perhaps their entire careers, whereas Generations X'ers and Y'ers tend to think of themselves as increasing the skills they have in terms of 'portability', or being able to learn and grow from their cumulative experiences across perhaps several jobs which leads many to be prepared or even proactively change jobs every 3-6 years in order to keep themselves upwardly mobile.

So, in some ways, social media is catered to the individuals that change jobs as it allows a worker to have a 'permanent' identify/resume online. The advent of social media can be used in many ways, and many ways effectively. The purpose of this paper is to identify some social media related specifically to occupations, and to identify some of the more important features of this media in terms of attracting the right kind of employers and recruiters. Specifically, it will present ideas on how to present yourself as an 'employee', identify the programmers you want to be connected to, how to clearly present your experience and profile, stress your strengths and express what your interests are and even the ability to select a photo of us at our best to present on a social media site!

This paper will also present social media sites that are not recommended to be shared with colleagues, or potential employers. It's recognized that we all have personal lives, and that those personal lives with our friends, relatives, significant others, as well as colleagues - are an essential piece of our lives, but it's generally advisable to not share those with potential colleagues and/or employers.

Let's take one example of a social media website, LinkedIn. For example, when I first started working on this abstract I had 339 LinkedIn connections and by the time I sat down to load the paper March 14, I had 412 (some of whom are presenters or session chairs at SAS Global Forum). LinkedIn allows me to clearly describe my qualifications, education, experience, connections (optional), picture as well as the groups and associations I am involved in. Note: while many of us as programmers may not 'care' about the flow of our resume, or our online resume (e.g., LinkedIn), many potential employers (and colleagues) are first appealed to our resume by exactly how we lay it out. For example, it's nice to see chronological order (from exact dates to exact dates) of your work experience, as well as clearly what your education and associated groups are. It's probably not a great idea to associate yourself with too many groups, however for someone that's been in the industry 10 or more years it would not be uncommon to be in 10 or more groups (e.g., 3 or more employers, university affiliations, SAS Users Groups', etc.). My online resume on LinkedIn also allows me to decide how I want people to contact me (e.g., whether all people can include, whether people need my specific email address to include me) as well as how we are connected (e.g., were we colleagues, classmates, done business together, friends, Other, or simply don't know the person but want to become connected [although this is not generally recommended]). It also has a feature that sends email updates indicating whether someone has an updated status (e.g., promotion, education, recommendation, etc.) and that has advantages in that you can congratulate people, motivate people, if you are a manager potentially recruit people that have worked with you and their positions have been eliminated or they are looking for work, etc.

The possibilities are endless in terms of who you want to be connected to, how you want to be connected, and who you want to let see who you are connected to. It will also show you in the last seven days how many times your profile has been viewed (for me most recently it was five times in the last seven days), as well as how many times I have shown up in search results in the past seven days (again most recently I've shown up in search results thirty six times in the past fifteen days). So of the thirty-six times my profile has shown up in search results, five people have actually stopped to view it. In addition, it also shows who else's profiles were viewed by the same person who viewed your profile, which is interesting to see because it may give you insight into whether someone is looking at programmers from a certain company, skillset, experience, etc. Another nice feature is that it gives you statistics for 'three degrees of separation', kind of like the Kevin Bacon version except with real employees. As an example, with 412 direct connections, there are an amazing 34,188 new people in my network in the *last six days*, and an almost unfathomable (and most probably not so useful) 3,857,377+ employees who are connected to me through a connection and one of their connections. This is a lot of networking!

Having said this, with the abundant number of potential connections as well as ways of connecting with people, it's critical to have a focused, methodical presence in order to best prepare yourself for either an employee search (if you are a manager) or a job search (if you are a candidate). In this vein, I turned to

an old friend, which happens to be a book we most likely all know and love: “The Little SAS Book, a Primer”. The first quote of this book belongs to William Shakespeare’s King Richard III, and should resonate well with both job-seekers and managers alike, “An honest tale speeds best being plainly told”. This simply means that you want to express your education, experience, groups and connections in a very focused way. There are two very important aspects of this: (1) simply put the facts into your social media account, and present them in a way that is easy to follow and clear what you want to present, and (2) don’t include anything that is not true or that could potentially cast doubt on your abilities (e.g., don’t add connections that you may not have worked well within the past, despite their job function, because social media being what it is, you never really know what kind of impression you leave on people. Which leads to another point, as an employee, ensure that you treat everyone with respect and that respect should carry over to the kind of employees you want to be associated with on social media. For example, if you worked with an employee was a fantastic SAS programmer, but who didn’t have the patience to indulge anyone else in their brilliance, you may not want to be associated with them (as good as their technical skills may be).

Lastly, while it may seem obvious, it’s best not to mingle personal relationships with professional social media sites. This is not to say that all employers are looking at your Facebook accounts, but they may particularly be interested in finding out more information about younger candidates who may not have that much experience (e.g., where social media sites like LinkedIn may not be all the helpful) and may look at Facebook or other sites where, when items are posted, they may not always be posted with the thought that a potential employer may eventually view them.

## **CONCLUSION**

In sum, social media sites can be a great tool for managers who are looking for qualified candidates, a great place to keep in touch with colleagues that you have worked with in the past (e.g., congratulate them on promotions, keep in touch via your current work situation, etc.) as well as a place for qualified candidates to get exposure to both employers and recruiters who may be helpful in matching the right candidate with the right job. Social media – it’s all what you make (or don’t) make of it!

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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