

# New Graduates Use Social Media to Look for Jobs

By Tim Post  
Minnesota Public Radio

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Sometimes it seems online social networks, like Facebook, are a place where people share all of life's little happenings, from what they had for lunch to minor aches and pains.

But for new college graduates, social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are playing an increasingly important role in their job search.

At the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus, many are turning to Judy Zimmer, a Twin Cities-based motivational speaker and career coach, to help them manage their online personas — and interviewing skills.

Zimmer's presentations could best be described as "Networking 101."

Career experts say online social networks are just one part of a good networking strategy. They say to find a job, new graduates also need to break away from their computer, shake hands and look people in the eye

"Typically what you want to do is give someone a handshake when you approach them," she told students during a recent session. "You want to make some type of eye contact."

Surrounded by more than 100 students in a classroom, Zimmer held an event called "You've graduated. What now?"

Her audience includes many who just graduated; others are headed into their senior year at the U. They all have one thing in common: they're looking for that first job to launch a career.

The room buzzes as new grads and soon-to-be-seniors practice their ice breaking and schmoozing.

Career experts say this person-to-person networking is the best way to get a job, especially in a fiercely competitive job mar-

ket.

But for these students, raised on the Internet and trailblazers of social networking, face-to-face interaction alone seems so 1990s.

Zimmer agrees. She said Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are great tools for new graduates to use in their job search.

"The introvert loves the researching aspect and they can look and dig and not have to interact with another human being," Zimmer said. "The extrovert finds someone and picks up the phone and tries to find a way to connect with them verbally."

The social networks give new graduates the chance to make far more connections than they could solely through in-person networking.

"Social networking allows you to immediately tap into all of your friends', former coworkers' (and) family members' Rolodexes," said Liz Hruska, the university's assistant director of career services.

Employers also use social networking sites, largely search for recruits.

Davy Degreef, a recruiter for the business software company Epicor, uses LinkedIn, a rapidly growing business social networking site, to find new college graduates with potential.

"I can look through groups of recent graduates," he said. "I can look through groups of college students, business students or management students that line up what we're looking for."

That means new graduates looking for work should be careful about what they put on social networking sites. Career experts say students shouldn't use a Facebook account to track down job leads if it's where they post their crazy party pictures.

The best bet for students is LinkedIn, they say.

That's where 23-year-old Carolyn Voight, of Bloomington, spends a lot of time these days.

"I'm probably on there everyday for at least 20 minutes," Voight said. "Some days I'm on their a little longer, depending on what I'm changing around or updating."

Voight, who just graduated from the U of M with a degree in communications, has yet to find a job. But she has some good leads.

She said networking, and going online to find connections, has helped her friends find work.

Alyssa Thull, another recent U of M graduate, has been using Facebook to track down job contacts.

"It's a really good way to get in contact



with friends of friends," said Thull, 21, of Minneapolis. "You find out you have connections you didn't even know about before."

For Thull, who majored in Asian languages and minored in business management, online social networking makes searching for a job less intimidating.

"It's way easier to talk to people that

way," she said. "It's less scary than cold calling people and saying 'I know you through this person.'"

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