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## Top Five Reasons You Need To Update Your Social Networking Sites

by Marie Herman

**W**hen is the last time you updated your social networking sites - specifically the professional development side like LinkedIn; not your latest Mafia Wars / Farmville updates on Facebook. How often do you publish updates on yourself and what is going on with your career? There are a number of reasons why it's a wise career development strategy to start right now. ▶▶

### **1. If you are not currently doing a job search, you will someday.**

It's highly likely that at some point during your 45 years in the working world you will be between jobs, regardless of the reason. When is the last time you touched base with your references? Do you wait until you are looking for a job to re-establish contact? Do they have any idea what skills or certifications you have added since you last saw or worked with them? They would if they were in your online network and you were providing regular updates.

If you heard about a job loss of two people that you have known for ten years, who would you rather help? The one you worked with for two years, ten years ago, who hasn't talked to you since that time or in any way contacted you other than now with a request to be a reference or the person who is on your LinkedIn list, who has notified you regularly of updates in their career (such as a new certification in Microsoft Office, holding an office in their professional association, etc.) and who has posted comments on your updates? Who would you feel "better" about recommending? Who would come to mind first if you heard about a new job posting that either individual would be qualified for? Most likely, the person who has kept in touch with you over the years and who has kept you updated on all the new skills they have added to their repertoire.

### **2. Online networks are really about the long term relationships that you are building.**

Each time you post a small update, people are learning more about you. They are not only adding more knowledge of you to their long term memory banks, but they are also getting regular reminders that you exist! Long term relationships need nurturing or they wither away. Another advantage of the regular updates is that you will also see your network's updates and can comment on and support them as well!

### **3. Acquaintances are feeling more and more like they "know" you even if they actually might not.**

Have you ever felt like you have gotten to be friends with someone strictly from online communication? If you are involved in forums, it's quite common to start to develop a feeling of family when people share their day to day experiences and let others get a glimpse into their lives. You can get a strong sense of their personality, their likes and dislikes, and their opinions.

### **4. It increases the chance of success of any new ventures – whatever they may be.**

Because you are announcing your goals and efforts publicly, there is accountability for actually accomplishing what you say you will do. Let's say you lose your job or decide to start a new business (or both!). If you tell your network, chances are someone may know someone





who can help you. If you tell no one, who is out there looking on your behalf? Posting regular updates also makes others feel like they are accompanying you along the journey and helps them to feel vested in your success.

**5. Never having any updates to share should be a big red flag to you about your professional development.**

Is there really NOTHING that you have to share about your professional life? You literally can't come up with even a once or twice a month update?

**Examples could include:**

- Attending a professional association meeting
- Sharing something you learned at that meeting
- Running for office in your chapter
- Going to a company training event

- Studying/Registering for a certification test
- Passing a certification test
- New knowledge you have gained about software features
- Writing an article for your company or association newsletter
- Preparing for your performance review
- Planning a meeting
- Reading articles of a professional nature
- Recommending a career related book you have recently read
- Presenting a lunch and learn program to your coworkers
- Celebrating the success of a meeting you planned for work
- Being nominated for or receiving an award
- Listing a goal you have set for yourself to achieve in a certain amount of time
- Announcing your excitement about an upcoming event that you are planning or participating in or attending

If it truly is the case that you have nothing to share on a regular basis, what are you saying about the priority you place on your career? It's one thing if you have made a conscious choice to focus on other priorities at this time, but it's something else entirely if you've simply not been paying attention to your career for no particular reason. Sometimes the real world intrudes on the best laid plans, but at some point in time, if your career is actually important to you, you need to carve out the time to keep your skills up to date and your network in touch.

As an example of how social networking increases your chances of success in a new business venture, Sandy Plarske of Elite Administrative Services (<http://www.eliteadminforyou.com/>) shares her experience with social networking. She posted a comment about a book she was reading called The Commonsense Virtual Assistant on her LinkedIn profile. One of the contacts in her network got in touch to ask if she was a Virtual Assistant. That began a series of conversations that eventually led to the contact retaining Sandy. As Sandy says, "I can't stress enough the importance of effective networking. Stay in contact with others, share successes, ask for help or just keep in touch. You never know when one of your conversations will result in future opportunities."

You do need to be wise in what you are publishing. Posting a note that you are sitting at your desk nursing a hangover from the wild

party last night is NOT the kind of update being encouraged. Nobody likes to read constant whining and complaining. Badmouthing your current (or past) employer is always a poor choice as well. Be cautious about revealing too much information from an identity theft/privacy perspective as well (but that's a general caution any time you are posting on the internet).

You want to post positive (or possibly neutral/factual) updates that will help others to think positively of you, support you, and want to continue seeing what is going on with your life. You also want to post things that future employers will want to see or know about (again, think long term, such as that future job search that you might be facing).

If necessary, put a recurring once a week or twice a month reminder on your calendar to post updates on your social networking site of choice.

Don't be the weakest link in your network! Put yourself out there and get posting! 📢

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