

Ten Ways to Use LinkedIn to Find a Job

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Searching for a job can suck if you constrain yourself to the typical tools such as online jobs boards, trade publications, Craigslist, and networking with only your close friends. In these kinds of times, you need to use all the weapons that you can, and one that many people don't-or at least don't use to the fullest extent, is LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has over thirty-five million members in over 140 industries. Most of them are adults, employed, and not looking to post something on your Wall or date you. Executives from all the Fortune 500 companies are on LinkedIn. Most have disclosed what they do, where they work now, and where they've worked in the past. Talk about a target-rich environment, and the service is free.

Here are ten tips to help use LinkedIn to find a job. If you know someone who's looking for a job, forward them these tips along with an invitation to connect on LinkedIn. Before trying these tips, make sure you've filled out your profile and added at least twenty connections

1. Get the word out. Tell your network that you're looking for a new position because a job search these days requires the "law of big numbers" There is no stigma that you're looking right now, so the more people who know you're looking, the more likely you'll find a job. Recently, LinkedIn added "status updates" which you can use to let your network know about your newly emancipated status.
2. Get LinkedIn recommendations from your colleagues. A strong recommendation from your manager highlights your strengths and shows that you were a valued employee. This is especially helpful if you were recently laid off, and there is no better time to ask for this than when your manager is feeling bad because she laid you off. If you were a manager yourself, recommendations from your employees can also highlight leadership qualities.
3. Find out where people with your backgrounds are working. Find companies that employ people like you by doing an advanced search for people in your area who have your skills. For example, if you're a web developer in Seattle, search profiles in your zip code using keywords with your skills (for example, JavaScript, XHTML, Ruby on Rails) to see which companies employ people like you.
4. Find out where people at a company came from. LinkedIn "Company Profiles" show the career path of people before they began work there. This is very useful data to figure out what a company is looking for in new hires. For example, Microsoft employees worked at Hewlett-Packard and Oracle.
5. Find out where people from a company go next. LinkedIn's "Company Profiles" also tell you where people go after leaving the company. You can use this to track where people go after leaving your company as well as employees of other companies in your sector. (You could make the case that this feature also enables to figure out which companies to avoid, but I digress.)
6. Check if a company is still hiring. Company pages on LinkedIn include a section called "New Hires" that lists people who have recently joined the company. If you have real chutzpah, you can ask these new hires how they got their new job. At the very least you can examine their backgrounds to surmise what made them attractive to the new employer.
7. Get to the hiring manager. LinkedIn's job search engine allows you to search for any kind of job you want. However, when you view the results, pay close attention to the ones that you're no more than two degrees away from. This means that you know someone who knows the person that posted the job-it can't get much better than that. (Power tip: two degrees is about the limit for getting to hiring managers. I never help friends of friends of friends.) Another way to find companies that you have ties to is by looking at the "Companies in Your Network" section on LinkedIn's Job Search page.
8. Get to the right HR person. The best case is getting to the hiring manager via someone who knows him, but if that isn't possible you can still use LinkedIn to find someone inside the company to walk your resume to the hiring manager or HR department. When someone receives a resume from a coworker even if she doesn't know the coworker, she almost always pays attention to it.
9. Find out the secret job requirements. Job listings rarely spell out entirely or exactly what a hiring manager is seeking. Find a connection at the company who can get the inside scoop on what really matters for the job. You can do this by searching for the company name; the results will show you who in your network connects you to the company. If you don't have an inside connection, look at profiles of the people who work at the company to get an

idea of their backgrounds and important skills.

10. Find startups to join. Maybe this recession is God telling you it's time to try a startup. But great startups are hard to find. Play around with LinkedIn's advanced search engine using "startup" or "stealth" in the keyword or company field. You can also narrow by industry (for example, startups in the Web 2.0, wireless, or biotech sectors). If large companies can't offer "job security," open up your search to include startups.

11. Build your network before you need it. As a last tip, no matter how the economy or your career is doing, having a strong network is a good form of job security. Don't wait until times are tough to nurture your network. The key to networking (or "schmozing"), however, is filled with counter-intuitiveness. First, it's not who you know-it's who knows of you. Second, Great schmoozers are not thinking "What can this person do for me?" To the contrary, they are thinking, "What can I do for this person?" For more on schmoozing, read "The Art of Schmoozing."