

## Social Media & Career Services

Developing a strategy to support graduate employment goals

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Social media has become a game changer for how career services departments interact with and reach their constituent groups yet many career services representatives may not know how to develop and implement an effective social media strategy.

In fact, some career services departments continue to focus on the number of cold-calls made to employers. The basic premise with this strategy is that increased volume of cold-calls results in increased leads, resulting in more job orders converting into placements.

Relying on volume alone though is not an effective career services strategy because it is dependent upon external, uncontrolled variables over which career centers have little influence. The volume approach does not address the variable of which career services departments have the most influence – the breadth and strength of their relationships with constituents.

The use of social media, on the other hand, allows for an effective way to build improved relationships with students, employers and alumni, ultimately resulting in improved graduate employment outcomes.

### Student Engagement

Research conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has shown a clear correlation between increased student usage of career services departments and success in gaining employment. In our current economy, the average length of time to find employment has significantly increased. This means career advisors must intervene by partnering with students earlier and increasing the time they spend with students to prepare them for the job market. Social media allows career advisors to stay connected with today's students. Career advisors must also be able to teach students how to use social media effectively in their job search.

### Employer Engagement

Career services professionals know how important building effective employer relationships are but they also know how difficult it can be. Connecting with industry professionals via social media is a great way to engage the employment community as well as maintain updated industry contact information, thus resulting in the multiple benefits from developing employer partnerships.

### Alumni Engagement

Career services representatives in the private sector know that a huge part of what makes them successful is having good relationships with graduates. Social media helps with communicating to, and building positive relationships with, alumni. This allows career advisors to collect and verify necessary graduate employment data as well as document success stories. Additionally, alumni may find themselves in positions where they can recommend future graduates for employment – a best case scenario!

Today's career education environment is changing the way career services professionals work. For example, gainful employment legislation has added increased pressure for private sector colleges and universities to improve their employment outcomes. This has resulted in further assessments of the effectiveness of both educational programs and graduate employment strategies.

That being said, without harnessing a social media strategy that supports an institution's graduate employment goals, career centers risk losing relevance with their audience. And as career services professionals learn to develop an effective social media strategy for their departments, they must become practitioners of social media platforms – not only to engage their constituents, but to teach students how to use the various platforms in their personal branding and job search process. Additionally, social media has become important for career advisors as a means to maintain knowledge of their own profession.

An online course on **Developing a Social Media Strategy for Career Services** is now available on all training sites powered by MaxKnowledge. Authored and facilitated by social media strategist and career services expert, Robert Starks Jr., the course describes the phases of planning and implementing a comprehensive and measurable social media strategy to achieve the goals of your career services department.

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