

# GET CONNECTED

## More job seekers are using social avenues to expand their professional networks

**S**Ocial networking sites have been a hot topic of conversation in recent times. Such sites started emerging on the Web only a few years ago, but have quickly grown in scope and number of users.

It is estimated that there are now over 200 sites available, many of which are intended purely for social interaction. In the current market, however, it appears such sites are helping to bridge the gap between our personal and professional lives at a rapid pace.

The question is, do we want to cross this bridge?

Specialist recruitment agency Hays conducted an online survey recently that posed the question, "Do you think social networking sites help career development?"

Over 1,000 job seekers across Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong and China responded and the results suggest that people in Singapore are more connected with their professional contacts in their country than their Australasian neighbours.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Job seekers throughout Asia have been quick to realise the potential of social media and are using it to their advantage when looking for a new job.

More than 46 per cent of Singaporeans said they use social networking sites to keep up with contacts while 21 per cent said they help to find out about new jobs.



As an IT-literate and Internet savvy population, these results are not surprising. The use of technology in Singapore is pervasive and part of all people's daily lives.

According to the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, more than 90 per cent of households are estimated to have some form of high-speed broadband Internet access. There are also more mobile Internet users in the Asia-Pacific region than anywhere else in the world.

This level of IT penetration to the masses is unmatched and is

proving to be a catalyst for social networking sites in Singapore.

While one in three of respondents still prefer to keep their social media sites for just that — social interaction — it is evident many job seekers in Singapore utilise such sites to expand their professional networks by connecting with new contacts and keeping in touch with past colleagues.

Job seekers in Australia and New Zealand on the other hand are not so willing to mix business with pleasure. Almost half of those currently job seeking still

prefer to use these sites for personal connections rather than as a tool to assist in their professional job search.

In an increasingly competitive market, the reality is most job seekers won't make it through to the first round of interviews.

Contrary to the last few years, we are now witnessing candidates competing for the same role in far higher numbers. One job advertisement, for example, can attract hundreds of applications.

While networking sites provide the possibility for job seekers to market themselves to a wide

audience, what lets many down are their resumés. It is the first impression an employer has and as such, it is a vital sales tool that can immediately move a candidate to the top, or leave them among the pile "to be filed".

To have the best possible chance of finding employment, job seekers need to explore a range of options.

### STAND OUT

For example, a recruitment consultant helps job seekers to stand out from the crowd by providing professional advice regarding resumés and interview techniques. They identify the best opportunities according to skills and experience and connect the right candidate with the right job.

Whether by choice or not, it is a fact many employers across the world are now trawling the Internet and social networking sites as they consider potential job candidates. Everything that is posted online serves to represent who you are and employers often judge this information.

Like an online job board or e-mailing a resumé to a recruiter, communications should focus on skills and experience. Ensure that your communications remains professional because you don't know who could be reading your status updates. - Source: ST/ANN

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■ Article by Chris Mead, general manager of Hays in Singapore.