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What Job Seekers Need to Know About Google

Can executive recruiters find you on the Web? Make sure you know these basic truths about today's colossal search engine.

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How do you currently show up on the World Wide Web? Eighty-seven percent of executive recruiters use Google searches to research candidates, according to an Execunet study. Furthermore, hiring managers at Fortune 500 companies are doing the same.

Managers google their employees.

Clients google salespeople.

Hopeful employees google their prospective managers.

Today, if you don't show up in Google, you don't exist. Understanding exactly how you show up right now, will help you build the ideal plan to showcase your value.

To start, assess your baseline with my company's complimentary tool — Online ID Calculator™ (www.onlineidcalculator.com) and make note of your current online ID. Then, you will be able to see the impact of your personal-branding efforts over time.

Inside tips to win on Google

In researching what criteria people use to form opinions about those they google, we learned that the following factors are critical:

Volume

If someone googles you and there is a lot of content about you, she assumes you must have accomplished something and have some info to share

Relevance

When the searcher looks more closely at the results Google reveals and sees that that content is relevant to and consistent with whom they believe you to be, they form a favorable opinion.

Your goal, therefore, needs to be to create as much relevant and compelling content as possible. In fact, you want the first three pages of results for a search on your name to feature you prominently.

Before you go online

You don't need to build your own Web site or launch a blog to have a powerful and authentic online brand. But before you start, you must prepare your branded career-marketing materials. This includes:

- A branded bio that describes you and only you. (Ensure you write it in a style that showcases brand attributes that engage readers emotionally)
- A professional headshot (not the one your partner took of you during a recent vacation)
- Your list of keywords (words that connect to your area of thought leadership or expertise).

Start with the basics

1. Buy your domain name (even if you aren't ready to have your own Web site).

It costs just about \$9 per year. When you're ready to build your own place on the World Wide Web, you'll have the "property" on which to build it. You can buy your domain name at www.godaddy.com. And search for "godaddy promo code" before purchasing to get the latest discount offer.

2. Establish yourself on LinkedIn.

You can use this as your pseudo-Web site until you're ready to build one. Include a branded summary, your headshot and experience. Also join all appropriate groups (professional associations, alumni, expertise areas and so on). Once you are happy with your profile, you can start to invite your professional contacts. Obtain recommendations if possible from contacts as well.

3. Establish a Google Alert for your name.

Stay on top of what is being said about you on the Web. This will help you as you continue to post new content and build your brand online. www.google.com/alerts

4. See what's out there.

Use technorati.com to find bloggers who write about your area of expertise. Follow them for a time, and choose one or two blogs to subscribe to and read regularly. Then provide comments when you have something relevant and valuable to add. Ensure you use your name and keywords in all your posts and link back to your Blog, Web site or LinkedIn profile so people can learn more about you.

Enhance and maintain

Once you have the basics and you're bolstering your real-world activities with corresponding virtual world visibility, it's time to take it up a notch.

Use other social-networking sites like Facebook, Ziggs, Naymz and Ziki to increase your visibility by posting versions of your bio and headshot. (Just be careful not to use the networking functions of all these sites, since that will take over your life.)

Create a focused blog about a topic that relates to your area of expertise. You can use blogging software like WordPress or TypePad to build a static Web site, too, if you feel you won't be able to post to your blog at least twice weekly. Not interested in hosting a platform yourself? Post articles, whitepapers and other materials to relevant third-party sites. To do so, research Web sites that share your target audience and are looking for content. Then, provide materials along with a brief bio and headshot and a link back to your Web site (or LinkedIn profile if you haven't built a site yet).

Even if you are currently virtually invisible, you can have a stellar online profile just by following these steps.

And remember to continue to monitor your online ID at www.onlineidcalculator.com and subscribe to Google Alerts for your name. Google results change more frequently than the weather in New England. So stay on top of what others are learning about you.

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