

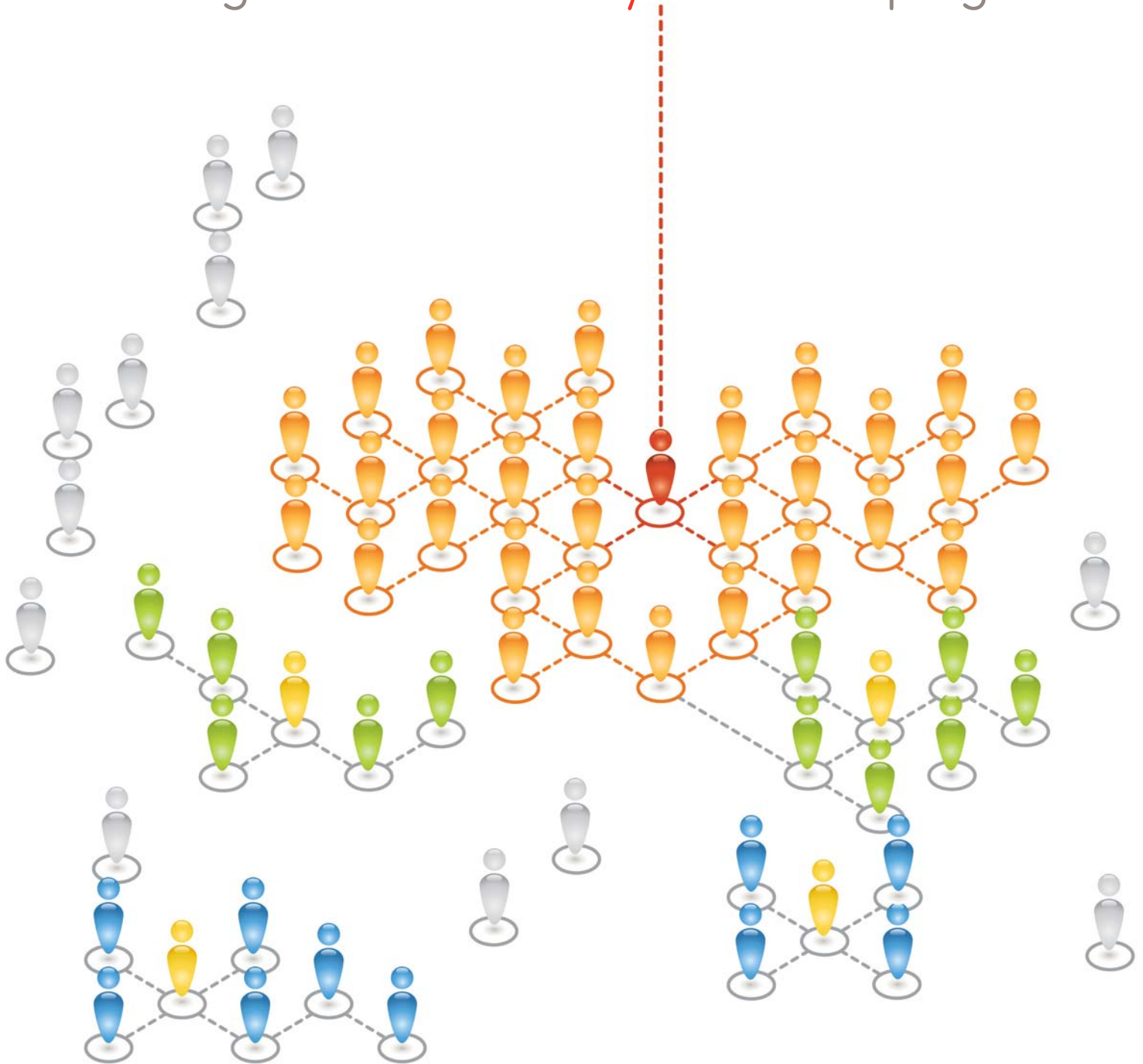


Building your personal online brand.

How social networking and your "e-reputation" affects your career in a Web 2.0 world.

**LEE HECHT
HARRISON**

How you use – or fail to use – social media has a significant effect on **your** career progress.



Managing your personal brand is becoming increasingly important to advancing your career. It is also increasingly an online endeavor — and one that presents significant challenges. LinkedIn and similar social networking web sites are useful and fast becoming a necessity. This paper explores the use of a wide range of social media tools for online identity management, job search, and career advancement and makes specific recommendations for their effective use.



Dozens of new Web 2.0 tools have been introduced in recent years and their use is exploding. According to Compete.com, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube together had 2.6 billion visits in one recent month!



Corporations are struggling to find the right place in the enterprise for Web 2.0 tools like blogs, wikis, and social networking sites. While they have the potential to become powerful productivity tools, Web 2.0 sites also present an enterprise with major technical, cultural, and security headaches. So far, few organizations have been able to successfully adopt these tools.

Individual use of Internet tools in career activities is a different story.

Top career professionals are way ahead of most organizations when it comes to using online resources in career management, including career transition. Career coaches also know that some of these new technologies have been embraced by recruiters and HR professionals.

Meanwhile, high unemployment has the media hawking high-tech job-hunting stories: “Blog Your Way to a New Career!” “Your Next Job is Just a Tweet Away!” “Find a Job Fast on Facebook!” “Meet Employers in Second Life!” Some of these stories are useful. Many are pure hype.

But here’s an indisputable fact: user-generated Web 2.0 content now plays a significant role in shaping the reputations and careers of managers, professionals, and executives — even in organizations that do not permit its use internally.

Content about you, posted by you and others, is easily accessible by anyone who knows how to use Google. Do you know what that content is? Where it is? What impression it conveys? If you are not managing it, no one is. And if nothing is posted, you virtually don’t exist.

In this paper, we cut through the tangle of information and conflicting advice and provide a clear picture of the Web 2.0 tools most useful to the careers of both employed and unemployed managers, professionals, and executives. We’ll start with some background on brand management and Internet authorship, then proceed to specific recommendations on which web tools might be worth your time and why.

Online management of your personal brand.

For a decade or two, a central focus of career management has been managing your reputation — or your personal brand — since how you are perceived by your peers is a major factor in where your career goes next.

In the 20th century, this kind of personal brand management was mostly about what you did and said at work every day. While that continues to be important, things are different in the 21st century — in the Web 2.0 world, it's also all about online identity management.

Executive recruiters, potential employers, past colleagues, current colleagues, and even your current boss can — and do — check you out on the Internet. Is the information they find consistent with the personal brand image you want to project? Will it help you make the next career step that you want to make? Or will it create problems and silently undermine your reputation?

You're a published author.

What kind of book are you writing now?

If you have ever posted anything on any website, congratulations — you're a published author. Things you published on the Internet years ago do not necessarily go away. Text and photos posted by you can easily be picked up by other sites. What you write today may still be coming up in searches five years from now.

Most of us have learned the art of writing emails that could be forwarded to dozens or hundreds of other people. But how careful are you about your Internet postings? With or without "privacy controls," they're even less private than email, and potentially available to millions of people.

Do you edit? Do you proofread? With everything you write do you consider the effect on your career? Do you include a revision date on resumes you post so people finding it years from now will know it's not current? How you handle authorship on the Internet today will have a significant effect on your career tomorrow.

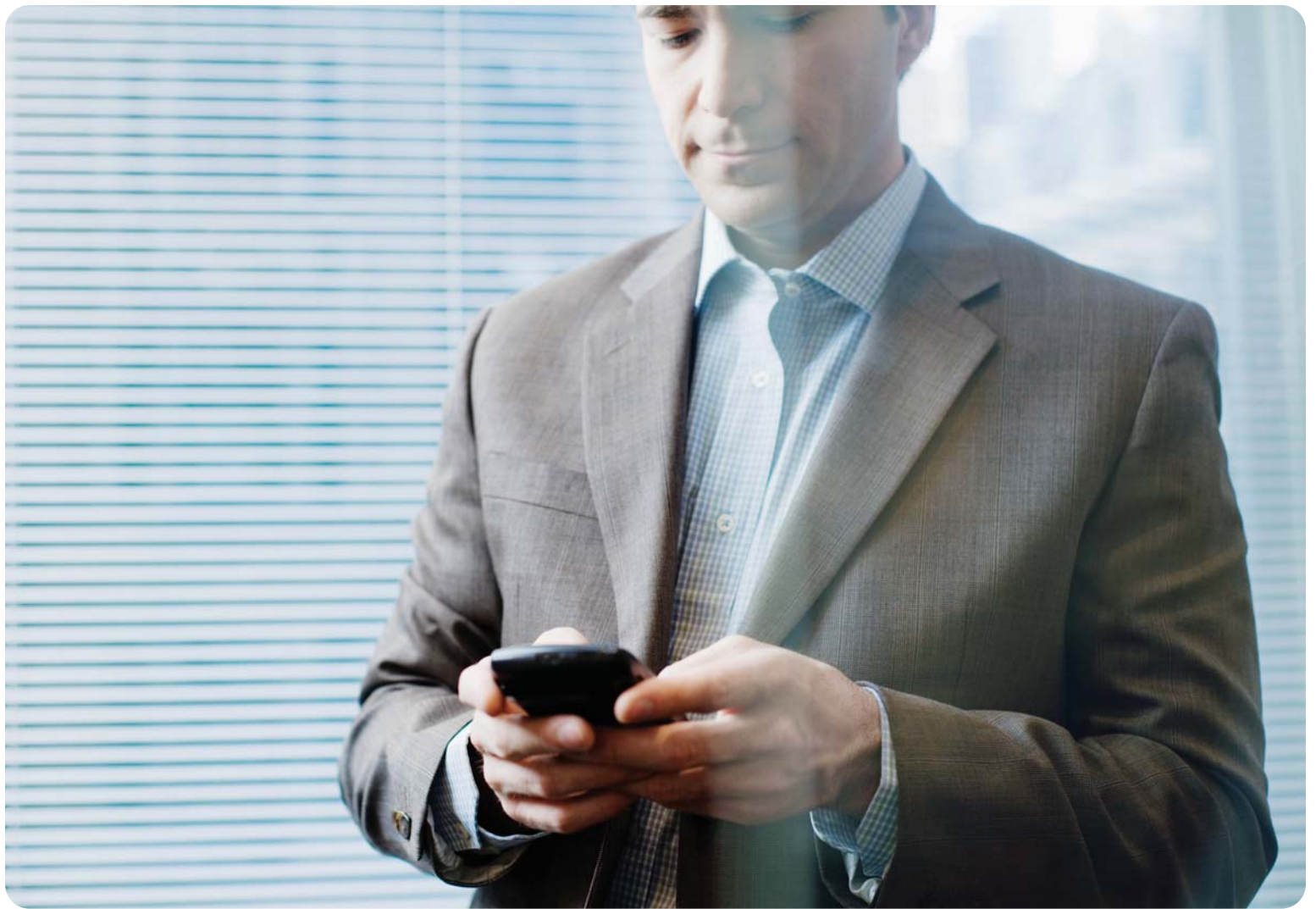
The next big thing in the Internet is already underway. Many believe that Web 3.0 will be the "Semantic Web," a place where a new generation of search engines could instantly know which Jane Doe you are and pull everything ever published about you into a single coherent document. Make sure that you are the principal author of that document. Make sure it's good.

What is social media?

In addition to publishing information, we all use the Internet to locate information. Most social media, of course, do both. You can see what others say and you can say a few things yourself.

According to Wikipedia, social media describes the online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other.

A few prominent examples of social media applications are Facebook (social networking), YouTube (video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), and Twitter (microblog). These sites use various technologies — message boards, podcasts, blogs, wikis, etc. — to allow users to interact.



According to a June 2009 CareerBuilder survey of 2,600 hiring managers:

45 percent use social networking sites to screen potential employees, compared to only 22 percent last year.

An additional 11 percent said they plan to use social networking sites to screen candidates in the future.

In addition, a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) member survey last year revealed that 34 percent planned to use social networking sites in recruiting.

Web tools and your career.

Social networking

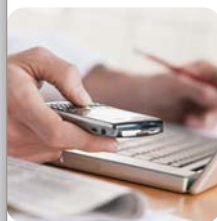
- LinkedIn** > Social networking sites allow users to post information that can be seen by a selected list of people — and possibly by anyone doing an Internet search.
- Facebook**
- Plaxo**
- MySpace** > LinkedIn is a career-related site frequently used by recruiters and employers. Because it contains resume-like information on all of your network contacts (and their contacts), it is particularly useful in a job search.
- > Facebook is more about social contacts and has less career value. Plaxo combines features of Facebook and LinkedIn. MySpace, another socially oriented site, is not recommended for managers and professionals.



Tip: Privacy controls may not keep the general public from seeing your postings. Be sure that all text and photos project an image consistent with your career aspirations. Be careful who you connect with since people may judge you by the company you keep.

Job boards and aggregators

- Monster** > Job boards provide searchable “help wanted” ads and put your resume in databases searched by recruiters and employers. There are over 50,000 job boards. The smaller specialty boards may be more useful than the three huge general boards listed at the left.
- Hotjobs**
- Career-Builder**
- TheLadders** > TheLadders focuses on jobs with six-figure salaries, but charges a fee to candidates.
- Indeed** > Aggregators like Indeed and SimplyHired are “job boards of job boards” sites that collect listings from wherever they can.
- SimplyHired**



Tip: Think keywords. Be careful — your personal information can be picked up by anyone. Job boards can be job search timewasters, so limit your time there.

Search engines

- Google** > You need to be well informed about the internal or external organization where you will work next, so go beyond their websites and search them.
- Bing**
- Yahoo**
- Dogpile** > Different search engines may produce different results on the same subject. Dogpile aggregates the results from several search engines into a single list.
- Wink**
- Spoke**
- ZoomInfo** > When networking, search for people using Wink, Spoke, and ZoomInfo as well as the general search engines.



Tip: Search your own name to see how effectively you are managing your personal brand on the Internet.

Blogs and micro-blogs

- Technorati** > Blogs are journal-like writings posted by anyone on any topic. There are over 100 million, all searchable at Technorati. Writing one may advance your career but it's time-consuming and hard to attract readership.
- Twitter** > Twitter is a popular micro-blogging site that can also be seen as a social networking site.



Tip: Read blogs, but don't do much writing. If you are in a job search, follow those relating to your targeted organizations. Following a few well-chosen blogs is a good career advancement tactic.

RSS

- Google Reader** > RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds automatically send you the latest information from websites where you subscribe.



Tip: Look for the orange icon and use RSS to stay up to date on targeted companies, network contacts, advances in your field, and relevant job openings.





There was a time when job search was something that people did occasionally. Between job searches, they did career management. Today, with the challenges of the recent economy, layoffs are prevalent and tenures shorter. Everyone needs to have a career transition marketing plan all the time. Properly done, this includes a professional objective or statement of what kind of work you want to do next, a target list of organizations you would like to work for, and the core message about yourself that you want your targeted audience to hear.

Job search is continuous.

For an unemployed job hunter, the target list should include at least 40 organizations. For someone who is employed, a list of 10 is sufficient. And, of course, the top three or four on that list should be departments or business units of your current employer, including possibilities within your current area.

Getting your core message out on the Internet is at the heart of personal brand management. The bulk of information posted about you should be consistent with that message. And, like any good advertising campaign, the message should also be consistent with your day-to-day verbal messaging at work, easy to locate on the Internet, and compelling to the intended audience defined by your target list.

For employed people, as always, the primary focus of career management is within their current organization. However, no one should wait for a layoff to think about where they might go next. Anyone who cannot name three or four realistic next career steps within their own organization and a half dozen more elsewhere is not effectively managing their career.

The business of tracking organizations where you might one day want to work also adds value for your current employer. Some of those are likely to be competing or related businesses. The more you know about them, the better you can do your current job.

Should you be laid off, having a marketing plan in place and a well-managed personal brand available on the Internet is a significant advantage.

Whether you are employed or not, appropriate use of the Internet — for information gathering as well as personal brand management — is an essential part of career management. And, once you understand it and get started, it's not difficult or time consuming.



Wink, Spoke, and Zoom yourself.

You can start by Googling or auditing yourself with any search engine, but websites like Wink, Spoke, and ZoomInfo are specifically designed for gathering information about people.

If you've been on Facebook for years, you — and others — may find text and photos that could be damaging to your career. Anyone researching you may also make judgments about you based on who you associate with online. You can control some of this by proper use of privacy controls. However, text and photos have a way of migrating from site to site, so removing any doubtful material is a good idea. For active Internet users, playing defense is a good place to start.

What if your name is John Smith and ZoomInfo comes up with 500 of them, each indistinguishable from the others? And what if one of them who also lives in your town or works where you do has a lousy reputation? That's also a brand management problem, isn't it?

You can differentiate yourself by routinely using a middle initial. But you may need to work harder than Ignatius Smith at getting your message out with enough identifiers routinely attached to your name.

Suppose you can't be found at all, by any search engine. That may not be a problem while you're employed, but if you're unemployed, you want the proper people to be able to find you. It can take a month or more to get connected with a solid core group on a social networking site. The time to start is today.

Social networking sites are essential tools.

Today, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Plaxo have become essential career management tools. LinkedIn is widely respected and used by recruiters and employers. There are signs that it could be on its way to replacing Monster and other job boards as the top job site. Plaxo is apparently attempting to combine the advantages of LinkedIn and Facebook, but so far with limited success in terms of site visits.

However, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social networking sites are not merely about finding your next job; they're about easy access to people who can help you do your current job better. They publicize you and your expertise to a broader audience. And they can help you quickly make the real life networking connections that will advance your career — inside and outside of your current employer.

These sites also allow you to more effectively manage your networking connections, so that you use your precious face-to-face time only with those connections that you already know to be the most interesting and productive.

Real networking is about shared interests. It goes beyond professional interests to personal interests of all kinds, so social networking sites can enrich your life as well as your career. And, of course, the two are not separate. Your golf, yoga, and parenting networks can and do help you make career progress and find a new employer when that becomes necessary. If you have the time, you may want to have a page on other social networking sites beyond LinkedIn. Some are designed for special purposes and may therefore be even more useful.

Should you also have a personal website linked from your social networking site?

If you're in a profession where a portfolio is expected — graphic design for example — the answer is yes. But for most managers and professionals, it's simply not worth the time and cost, since it's unlikely to get much traffic. Using existing free social networking sites is more effective and less time consuming.

Blogs: to tweet or not to tweet?

That is a question asked by many job hunters on their first day in career transition services. If you're in advertising or PR, you need to understand Twitter. If you're 25 years old and already using it, then you can certainly use it to get your core message out.

But for the vast majority of job hunters, the answer is "no, don't bother with tweeting." Writing even these micro-blogs is a time consuming process. And getting organizations on your target list — or anyone at all — to read them is even more problematic.

But for someone in job search, following the feeds of "tweeters" related to targeted companies can be useful. You can of course go to Twitter.com and sign up to receive whatever tweets you like. This can sometimes be useful for employed people as well.

The same is true of full-scale blogs. Following the blogs of industry or professional experts — and their podcasts as well — can be useful for job hunters, upwardly mobile managers, and professionals of all kinds. Technorati.com is an easy place to go shopping for useful blogs. But writing a blog is useful only for the few among us who are strong writers and willing to learn the game of competing for readership in a world with over 100 million blogs.



Finding jobs and letting them find you.

How useful are job boards in a jobless recovery?

Although social networking sites are providing serious competition, job boards will not go away any time soon. While no one has an accurate count, there are very likely over 50,000 commercial, public job boards in operation today.

For active managerial and professional hunters, the large boards — the ones that advertise on the Super Bowl — are not always the best. Often, it's a niche board specializing in a profession, industry, salary level, or location important to the job hunter that's most useful. Or a private specialty board like Lee Hecht Harrison's (LHH) LeadLink. Job hunters lucky enough to find boards that list appropriate jobs should certainly consider using them. But check them out first, since they're not all of equal quality.

For job hunters, the biggest negative of job boards is that they can take an inordinate amount of time — much more time than is justified by the likely results. It takes time to locate them, time to list on them, and time to track anything they come up with. And they sometimes generate a lot of spam, including offers of high-priced job search assistance services, some of which have proven to be of very little use.

But job hunters also can get caught in the "content" on job boards. Like any commercial website, job boards often seek advertising revenues, so they work hard to keep users on the site, reading job hunting advice and other content. Sometimes that advice is offered by bona fide experts. Sometimes not. It's usually produced by multiple authors, and therefore can lack coherence.

Should a job hunter use job boards? Yes.

Will those job boards produce results?

Yes, for some people, but probably a minority.

Especially in a recession, jobs tend to change hands by informal means. Networking, which is always important, becomes even more critical. Therefore, job hunters need to devote appropriate time to a range of job hunting techniques beyond job boards.

For career success, feed yourself with RSS.

We live in a digital information age. Gathering the best and most relevant information is key to the success of most undertakings, and career management is no exception. Whether you are in active job search or happy in your current employment, access to information about potential next employers is essential to your future success.

The problem is finding a way to easily locate the appropriate amount of information. Employed managers and professionals have limited time. They need to be selective. And they cannot afford the time to go hunting for career-related information every day.

RSS feeds are an excellent solution to this dilemma. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It is not a particularly new technology, but it's increasingly important in the world of career management and job search.

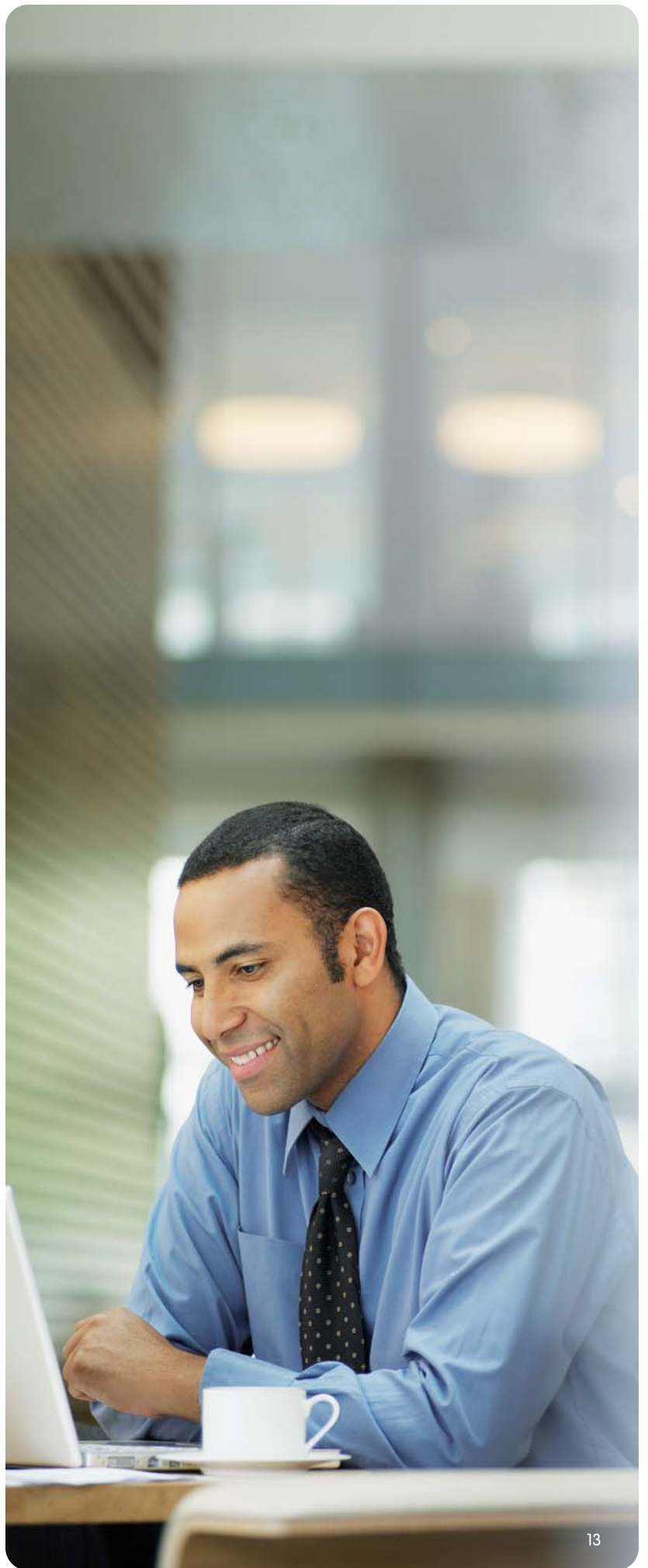
Basically, it's a way for websites to let you know when they've been updated, like LinkedIn's mini-feeds. When a website tells you about their feed or asks you to subscribe, they are typically talking about RSS.

Building your personal online brand

It's likely that your web browser or e-mail client can already do RSS for you. The newest versions of Safari, Firefox, and Internet Explorer all have RSS. Web-based services like Bloglines and Google Reader allow you to subscribe to RSS feeds and access them from any web browser on any computer.

Job Search Engines like Indeed and SimplyHired do what Google does, but only for job listings. They scour the Internet for relevant results and then allow you to search those results to find what you're looking for. You can search by company name, job title, location, or any other keyword. You can then subscribe to an RSS feed for the search, so that when new jobs are found that match your criteria, you'll be automatically notified.

You can also subscribe to an RSS feed of any search that you perform through Google Blog Search. Most blogs offer RSS feeds. Whether you're looking for career advice, specific jobs, or researching a company, subscribing to blogs' RSS feeds is a great way to get quality information fed to your desktop as it's published.



The web is important — but it isn't everything.

Websites to avoid.

Choosing the right websites is important. Knowing which ones to avoid is equally important. For example, virtual worlds, personal website builders, and inappropriate or excessive photo-sharing may not be good for your corporate career. MySpace might be good for advancing your career as a musician, but may not be so good for your day-job career in a major corporation. Video and other unusual resumes are sometimes sold on the Internet, but are not yet widely accepted.

It's generally not necessary to use for-fee sites or services in job hunting or career advancement. Many sites, LinkedIn for example, offer both free and paid services. The free services are generally all you need. And you should certainly be suspicious of any high-priced Internet career service package. While some may be useful, many are seriously overpriced. And some have even turned out to be scams, fraudulently promising results that are never delivered.

Putting social media in context.

As important as Web 2.0 tools are, they are not a complete solution for job search or career advancement. It's essential to combine them with traditional career advancement and job hunting activities. The most important of these continues to be networking.

Lee Hecht Harrison's Orville Pierson tells us in *The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search* (published by McGraw-Hill) that networking still accounts for the success of 50-75 percent of job hunters. And for managers and executives, headhunters continue to be important.

Web tools can map your contacts and the contacts of people you know. They can also enable you to identify the people you should meet and provide information on those people that will make meetings more successful. However, there is still no substitute for conversations on the telephone or over lunch.

Organizational users of career transition services are in clear agreement about the importance of integrating Internet and traditional tools in job search assistance programs. In a recent LHH survey of 968 companies, 86 percent expressed a preference for career transition programs using "a blend of technology and in-person resources," while only 1 percent favored "technology alone."



Seven steps to effective online personal brand management.

1. Google yourself and remove any content not consistent with the brand image you want to project. Remember that website privacy controls work only when they're turned on, and even then there are numerous ways that content can move to other unprotected sites.

2. Create a marketing plan for yourself, including a list of organizations where you'd next like to work. Adjust your brand image to appeal to decision makers in this market.

3. Use LinkedIn. If you're unemployed, complete the entire profile, including several recommendations. In any case, get "linked" with 100 or more reputable people that you actually know.

4. Select a blog to follow, preferably one written by an expert in your profession or industry. If unemployed, follow several.

5. Post your resume on job boards that specialize in (or at least include) your profession, industry, and salary level. Include a revision date as text, not in a footer, so readers will know whether it's current.

6. Set up RSS feeds. It's like having a journal subscription. If you're unemployed, set up enough to cover all segments of your target list.

7. Do not waste time with Web 2.0 sites that are not relevant to career progress — or, worse yet, could undermine your career progress. Remember, material you publish on the Internet — text and photos — can be viewed by any current or prospective future employer. If you're in job search, balance Internet use with proven traditional methods.

The use of Web 2.0 tools is having a profound effect on career management as well as job search.

Many managers and professionals who are otherwise very effective in managing their careers are struggling to keep up with Internet tools. Part of the problem is that many tools are new. The press gives heavy coverage to new tools and some become fads. Career management applications of these tools are often discussed, but usually on a piecemeal basis, not in a coherent, integrated way — and usually not by career experts with real world experience in using them.

Another part of the problem is that new Internet tools and their application evolve rapidly. The old original successes in social networking, for example — like Friendster and MySpace — were initially seen as novelties, things to be used by kids. Now, of course, the category has evolved to produce serious business and career management tools like LinkedIn. This evolution will continue and accelerate.

Using well-chosen Internet tools in career management and job search — and integrating them with traditional approaches — is now essential. These Internet tools are not a silver bullet, but, when they are properly selected and used in combination with proven career management and career transition methods, they can definitely improve effectiveness — and produce results.

To learn more on how you can build your personal online brand and use web 2.0 tools in your job search, please visit LHH.com or contact your local LHH representative.

About Lee Hecht Harrison

Lee Hecht Harrison offers talent management solutions throughout the entire employee life cycle to help companies and individuals maximize performance and achieve success. Established in 1974, Lee Hecht Harrison is a global talent management solutions company with over 270 offices worldwide providing expertise in Career Transition, Leadership Consulting and Workforce Solutions.

Lee Hecht Harrison is a part of Adecco Group, the world leader in workforce solutions with over 6,600 offices in over 70 countries and territories around the world. For more information, please visit LHH.com.