

Social media for students, professional profile management key

The online space and social media especially has become a valuable and integral part of learning, and an important tool in any job seeker's arsenal.



"During their time in tertiary education, as well as moving into the world of work and looking for that first job or internship, social media can now arguably be considered as one of the most important tools for young people," says Dr Felicity Coughlan, Director of The Independent Institute of Education.

"Social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others, are an extremely important part of the young person's professional world," she says. "It is where most students are interacting with the world and it is a logical place for them to find advice and even look for work opportunities."

Coughlan says that information on social media portals is generally the most up-to-date, which helps students keep abreast of available opportunities, their networks, and information on how to land positions and get ahead in the workplace.

Professional profile management

By maintaining their own profiles and information on social media sites they are also more accessible to employers.

"This brings with it the responsibility to professionally manage your profile online, as most employers are on social media sites too, trying to understand the people they want to employ and interview." Professional profile management is essential in ensuring that one gets the best out of the online experience without inadvertently alienating prospective employers.

Coughlan says that many employers now use online interview tools and conferencing before inviting candidates for face-to-face meetings, and that it was important for students to become au fait with these kinds of technologies as part of their post-

school learning.

Additionally, reputation management is something that should not be left for until after college or university.

"Students who have a liberal approach to their presence online while they are still studying, often find that this haunts them when they are looking for work. Managing your profile online is one of the best investments you can make to your brand and reputation. It's almost like financial investing - what you put in now will pay off well into the future, when you need it most."

Coughlan says there is also a wealth of information available on social media sites that help prepare students for the job interview process, and their first positions. This is especially important, as often students are not prepared for the 'real world' - with the adjustment painful not only for themselves, but also for employers who expect the right attitude and aptitude from the word go.

A site such as www.theworldofwork.co.za, for instance, is practical, easy to follow and provides the kind of common sense advice that isn't always covered in formal learning programmes.

"Social media has come a long way since the days when it was considered mere fun and games. It is a crucial tool for young people and, if used correctly, can make the hard path from classroom to lecture hall to office significantly easier to navigate."

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