

Lose your job? Tell your Facebook, Twitter friends

April 28 2009, By Etan Horowitz

Just minutes after she was laid off from her job earlier this month, Brittany Ward pulled out her cell phone and typed a short message. "Needs a job."

Ward, a 23-year-old account manager at an Altamonte Springs, Fla., marketing firm, hadn't even told her family.

But when she hit enter, more than 2,000 friends, family members and strangers learned of her plight via [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

In the past, victims of layoffs used to share the news with a close circle of family and friends. You might only learn of a co-worker's job loss if you saw him packing up his desk.

But today, thanks to social-networking tools, the newly unemployed are coming out of the dark.

For those accustomed to sharing news of breakups, car accidents and other major life changes, revealing a layoff online comes naturally.

Those who have used online tools to tell the world they're out of work say it's a more effective way to communicate news that might be too difficult to verbalize, and doing so instantly brings a stream of supportive and helpful messages.

It can also be a good way to jump-start a job search.

Ward, a 2006 graduate of the University of Central Florida, said posting online saved her the unpleasant task of having to repeatedly tell friends and family she was laid off.

"You end up feeling worse after retelling the story many times in a row," said Ward. "With Twitter, all of a sudden they hear the story, and you don't have to keep repeating it."

Recently, Sarah Bryant was too upset to call anybody after she was fired from her call-center job of three years. Instead, she sat down at her computer and posted "I got fired" on her Twitter and Facebook profiles.

Within minutes, friends responded to her with messages of support and surprise. Her mother saw her post and called to check in. A few friends skipped the phone altogether and drove to Bryant's house that night to take her out to dinner.

"I just wanted to let people know, because otherwise, I would have spent the whole day freaking out," said Bryant, 24. "It's like a great big support group, basically."

Michael Mantell, a corporate psychologist in San Diego, said writing about a job loss on Twitter or Facebook is healthy, positive and useful.

"When someone posts about a layoff, they are looking for either social support -- (such as) 'Gee, I'm sorry to hear that' -- or they are looking for a job, or they are saying, 'I guess I am part of the community, and I feel the same pain that everyone else feels,'" Mantell said.

Zack Hiwiler, 26, said he wasn't seeking support when he posted about losing his job as a game designer at Electronic Arts Tiburon earlier this year. He just thought he owed it to those who follow his life on his blog, Facebook and Twitter.

So a few hours after leaving the office, he got out his iPhone and wrote on his Twitter and Facebook pages, "Was terminated today. Anyone looking for a gently used game designer willing to learn new tricks?" He wrote about it more on his blog that night.

He was surprised at the response, which included messages from college friends he hadn't talked to in a while who also lost their jobs.

"Since we know what is going on in each other's lives, we're able to connect on a deeper level," he said.

But just because people write about their layoffs on Facebook or Twitter, it doesn't mean they are OK with it or ready to joke about it, Mantell said.

"They are saying, 'I need to talk about this. It's a trauma in my life, so I am sharing it with all my 287 friends,'" Mantell said.

Within minutes of Ward's online post, people started responded with words of support, questions and an offer to circulate her resume. One person responded he had also been laid off.

Since that initial post, she has continued to chronicle her job search on Twitter, Facebook and her blog.

And it's paying off.

It has only been about two weeks since she was laid off, but she already has two job offers and about 13 solid leads, all from people who read that initial message online.

"I have spent no time proactively applying for [jobs](#)."

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