

Twitter's becoming an important tool for job seekers and employers

October 9 2009, By Patrick May

As the Internet's microblogging superhero Twitter continues to balloon with 40 million users worldwide and countless apps like Twhirl and TweetDeck, the Twittersphere has been overrun lately with refugees from the real world's recession:

Twousands and twousands of job seekers.

"Twitter's going to become more and more valuable as a job-hunting tool because you can build up a job-search network in an afternoon and effectively create a whole self-presentation in the Twittersphere," says Rodney Rumford, author of "[Twitter](#) as a Business Tool."

"And anywhere there's a place for lots of people to network and talk and share interests, the opportunities will follow."

Accessible by computer or cell phones, Twitter can be used to post a job, poke around for one, bone up on a potential boss, or simply keep your friends updated on your job hunt. It's free and it's fast. And while [social networking sites](#) such as [Facebook](#) and LinkedIn focus on connecting you with people you know, Twitter makes it easier to broadcast messages widely and to form groups of common interest. By "following" others and having them follow you, the conversations quickly multiply.

"Twitter's a fabulous tool to help people expand what I call their 'loose network,'" says Miriam Salpeter, a [job-search](#) coach who writes about the service on her Keppie Careers site. "These are the people you're not

really close to, but it's actually the network responsible for most jobs found."

It's difficult to know how many people are actually finding work this way. But it's obvious from interviews with job-seekers, employers, coaches and entrepreneurs that the Twitter phenomenon is fundamentally changing the way people search for jobs _ and job candidates _ in this brutal [recession](#).

"A lot of companies aren't advertising jobs in traditional ways," says Jason Rivera, a graphic artist who teamed up with other San Francisco Twitterers "to lead the pink slip-party movement" for the networking masses. Rivera says Twitter allows companies to target easily recruitment ads and "follow" potential candidates online, while giving job hunters a backdoor peek at companies where they may be interested in applying.

"It's a great way to get up-to-the-minute information about a company and its latest products," Rivera says, "as well as give you a shot at actually talking to a hiring manager on Twitter, as opposed to having your e-mailed resume end up the 500th in his in-box. At the same time, Twitter gives managers faster, more efficient ways to get through the clutter, and that saves them money."

Paul Mabray knows that firsthand. As chief strategy officer for Napa, Calif.-based VinTank, a wine industry think tank, he used Twitter to spot and then practically stalk 23-year-old job candidate and gifted Twitterer Ashley Bellview.

"We got to learn about her persona, her work ethic and her thought process by the information she'd link to in her tweets and by how she communicated with other people on Twitter," Mabray says. "The gestalt of the whole thing was her ability to engage with the audience, and to

create meaningful content within a short construct of 140 characters."

As one of Vintank's seven employees, says Mabray, Bellview now is "leveraging Twitter for our brand."

As employment rates across the country continue to scrape the ceiling, the diversity and sheer number of Twitter users and applications available to help navigate the blur of tweets is mind-boggling. Entrepreneurs behind applications such as twitterjobcast, created by laid-off Web designer David Pew, are tweaking Twitter to bust through the clutter.

Yet the "clutter" that so many Twitter app writers are claiming to be clearing up also happens to be one of Twitter's biggest weaknesses, say frustrated users.

Brett Ashton, a San Jose father of two who was laid off in January from Hewlett-Packard, has mixed feelings about Twitter. Yes, it was helpful in making him more intimately knowledgeable about companies he had staked out for jobs. But Ashton says those benefits were largely erased by Twitter's near-gridlock traffic.

"The information overload gets to be too much at times," he says. "I sort of just scan it now. I see Twitter as a huge asset as an informational tool. But I just haven't been able to use it yet to find a specific job."

DOS AND DON'TS WHEN JOB-HUNTING ON TWITTER

1. DO follow potential employers to learn more about their products and service.
2. DON'T get sucked in; get the information you're looking for, then get

out.

3. DO use multiple Twitter profiles _ a personal one, for instance, as well as those created specifically to follow certain employers.

4. DON'T use a silly or cartoonish icon on your profile _ it could turn off a potential employer.

5. DO use directories like Twellow or Mr. Tweet to help you locate other professionals and trendsetters in your field.

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Citation: Twitter's becoming an important tool for job seekers and employers (2009, October 9) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2009-10-twitter-important-tool-job-seekers.html>

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