

When it comes to looking for jobs, it's not how many you know, but how well you know them

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While online networking sites enable individuals to increase their professional connections, to what extent do these ties actually lead to job opportunities? A new study in the INFORMS journal *Management Science* finds that, despite the ability to significantly increase the number of professional connections and identify more job leads with limited effort on these sites, unless the connection is a strong one, they typically will not lead to job offers.

The study, "To Be or Not to Be Linked: Online Social Networks and Job Search by Unemployed Workforce," was conducted by Rajiv Garg of the University of Texas and Rahul Telang of Carnegie Mellon University.

The authors surveyed 424 LinkedIn users (all of whom were college graduates and either current or recent job seekers) regarding five major job search avenues: Internet sites (e.g., Monster.com), online social networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn), offline friends and family, newspapers and other print media, and recruiting agencies and career centers.

The study showed that the highest number of job leads were generated by the Internet job boards, followed by LinkedIn. And while on LinkedIn, weaker ties provided marginally more job leads than [strong connections](#), actual interviews and job offers resulted primarily from strong connections. On average, a 10 percent increase in the number of strong connections on [social networking sites](#) resulted in a .7 percent

increase in the number of job offers, while a 10 percent increase in the number of weaker connections actually caused a 1.3 percent decrease in the number of job offers.

"We found that strong ties have a significant and positive effect on job interviews," said Telang. "Weak ties, on the other hand, while they had a greater impact on job leads, have a statistically insignificant impact on job interviews.

"One possible interpretation is that, for leads to convert into interviews, your connections will most likely be required to conduct follow up on their end, such as make phone calls or provide recommendations," added Telang. "If the connection is weak, these individuals may be less likely to undertake these efforts."

More information: Rajiv Garg et al. To Be or Not to Be Linked: Online Social Networks and Job Search by Unemployed Workforce, *Management Science* (2017). [DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.2017.2784](https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2017.2784)

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