

Why Social Media Matters

For student veterans, social media can aid in professional development

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Regardless of where you are in your transition from a military to civilian career, you've likely heard the advice to build a presence on social media. Maybe, as you heard this advice, you thought:

*Social media is for young people to chat and "meetup."
I've missed the boat on building an online presence. It's too late for me.
I'm afraid to give out my personal information to just anyone!
I don't know where to start ...*

Social Media Today

When social media first came on the scene, it was mostly filled with young people sharing pictures, thoughts and opinions of their lives and surroundings. Job seekers also used social media to learn about companies who were hiring and how to apply.

For student veterans, social media can produce thoughtful content, interesting insight and deep understanding of areas of professional, career or personal development. As you navigate the university setting, for example, you can rely on the guidance and connections you form online to help understand your new environment and how to best take advantage of all you will be offered and exposed to.

The Right Way to Use Social Media

In my professional opinion, as an expert in personal branding and reputation management, you should use social media and social networking strategically. Here are my top tips for building your online brand:

1. **Be clear on how you want to be perceived online.** Do you want to build a

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- personal brand as someone who is fun, outgoing and social? Do you want to be seen as a visionary? What companies will be attracted to someone with your perspectives?
2. **Be clear on your target audience.** Who will you connect with and try to get the attention of? Your target audience might include hiring managers, recruiters, professors (if you're a student) or fellow veterans. Get as specific as you can about who you want to know online (and who you want to find you online!)
 3. **Commit to a schedule.** Will you post and/or comment every day to others' posts online? Or, will you share insight and information once a week? Pick a schedule you can commit to and then stick to it.
 4. **Reveal your goals.** Let your online audiences know where you're headed. Are you gaining a master's degree so you can positively impact a community? Are you building a career in cyber security because you care about data privacy? Let your online audiences know what you care about and work toward.
 5. **Carefully select your contacts.** I believe your online network should be more quality over quantity. That said, to know a lot of influencers and key contacts online gives you access to even more stakeholders.
 6. **Share information with others.** Be willing to share content, ideas, information and insight with your online audiences. Social networking means two-way conversations. Your goal will be to engage dialog.
 7. **Celebrate the success of your contacts.** When someone you're connected to gets a promotion, new client, or award, you should congratulate them, just as you would in person. This shows you are interested in the success of others, not just your own.
 8. **Ask for help.** When you need insight, contacts, information or advice, your online network can provide great help! Some people worry about asking for help online, for fear it shows weakness. The opposite is true! When someone asks for assistance, it lets others help and that makes your contacts feel great.
 9. **Stay consistent.** It is critical to be consistent online with who you are in person. It doesn't serve you well to represent yourself as someone more intelligent/polished/sophisticated, etc. online when you aren't that way in real life.
 10. **Measure what works.** As you work your online strategy to meet your career goals, see what's working for you – then repeat that behavior! Social media involves trial and error, and anyone who has built a successful online brand constantly refines their strategy.

Today, social media is truly a platform to amplify and build your personal brand and image. When used correctly, sites like LinkedIn provide tremendous positioning, research capabilities, and the ability to connect to like-minded individuals and influencers.

Developed through the VFW's collaboration with Lida Citroën of the international brand

strategy firm LIDA360, this article is part of the VFW's expanding education and transitioning services, resources and webinars designed to provide service members and veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce with an opportunity to learn about personal branding and strategies for navigating the job search process. To learn more about Lida's commitment to the veteran community, [check out her recent TEDX talk](#).

Join us for our free webinar with Lida on Jan. 9, 2018, at 2 p.m. CST. [Register today](#).

By Lida Citroën, CEO, LIDA360