

# #CareerGoals or #CareerFails

Navigating the risks and rewards of social media



## Social media for career success

Social media doesn't have to be all about endless scrolling and timewasting. Used thoughtfully and intentionally, social media can be a career-building tool that helps you learn, connect and get noticed.

### Shaping your professional identity

Social media gives you the chance to shape how future employers, industry professionals and your peers see you. By engaging thoughtfully with content, creating portfolios of your work and sharing your achievements, interests, and insights, you're building a digital footprint. Done well, your online presence can add credibility and showcase your skills and experience more thoroughly than a resume and cover letter alone.



A well-curated online presence helps employers see not just what you've learned, but who you are - your interests, values, and your potential. Whether you're posting about a career milestone, sharing an update about a group project, writing a blog about a field trip or reflecting on your current research task, social media allows you to tell your professional story in a way that's authentic and accessible.

### Developing your employability

Employability refers to your ability to gain and maintain meaningful work. It's not just about having a degree - it's about having the right mix of skills, knowledge, personal attributes and professional behaviours that make you a valuable candidate to employers.

Using social media strategically can help you develop and demonstrate key employability skills. For example, demonstrate initiative, curiosity and a growth mindset by engaging with industry content, connecting with professionals, participating in online discussions, and following industry leaders. Build on your industry-relevant skills and transferable skills by participating in quality learning opportunities on platforms such as LinkedIn Learning.



### Opening doors and employment opportunities

Social media platforms are increasingly used by employers to advertise roles, scout talent, and connect with potential candidates. By following companies, joining career-focused groups, and interacting with recruiters, you can discover internships, graduate programs, and job openings that may not appear on mainstream online job boards. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn are spaces where employment opportunities are shared and connections are made.

## Social media fails

The majority of employers scope out applicants on social media during the shortlisting process to assess candidates' professionalism, culture-fit and potential red flags such as offensive content or inconsistencies with their application. Do your social media accounts project an image that could be detrimental to your job prospects? Google yourself and see what comes up! Consider the following:

- Keep privacy settings tight.
- Don't use questionable profile pictures or cover photos.
- Review your own posts and those that you are tagged in. Remove anything you're not comfortable with.

Did you know that you can be fired for making offensive comments on social media, even if it is in your own time, on your own device and from a personal account? The Fair Work Ombudsman has upheld several dismissals where employees were found to be bringing their employer's name into disrepute, threatening staff, or damaging their brand in some way. Think twice before engaging in behaviour that could be deemed to bully, threaten, marginalise or deliberately offend, and under no circumstances criticise your workplace or colleagues online.

## Popular platforms



**LinkedIn:** With over a billion members, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network. LinkedIn profiles rate highly in general search engines, increasing the visibility of your professional image. Connect with industry professionals and JCU alumni (graduates). Follow professional associations, organisations, companies and industry leaders, and join groups of interest. Engage in training through LinkedIn Learning. See [Launch your LinkedIn](#) for tips to develop your profile.



**X:** (previously Twitter) Follow specific topics, industry leaders, recruiters, and professional bodies. Engage in conversations within your field. Share articles, opinions and updates to demonstrate interest and expertise. X is often used by academics to discuss their work. This platform emphasises short text posts and thread-style interactions.



**Facebook:** Follow employers to understand their products and work culture. See job openings and other opportunities either through company profiles or professional and local job-seeking Facebook groups. Discover local events that provide opportunities to build your professional network. Be mindful of your privacy settings and personal content (e.g. profile picture).



**Instagram:** This platform is particularly good for visual storytelling and personal branding. Create highlights and reels to showcase your projects or achievements. Follow relevant profiles for insights into your chosen industry and company culture. Be sure to check your privacy settings and that your public profile reflects the professional image you want recruiters to see.



**TikTok:** Popular for advice on careers, job hunting, job applications, interview strategies and skills such as salary negotiations. Learn transferable skills such as communication and time management, or industry-specific skills such as marketing through quick tutorials. This is a useful platform for creating your personal brand and increasing visibility through its short, engaging format.



**YouTube:** Watch tutorials to develop new skills. Learn from people already working in your field through interviews, panel discussions and "day in the life" videos. Following career-focused channels helps you stay informed, inspired and ready for the job market. Engage with thought-provoking videos such as TED talks.



**WordPress:** Create a professional online presence by building a personal site or portfolio that showcases your skills, achievements and career goals. Share your own blog posts and projects. Develop valuable digital skills like content creation, SEO and basic web design. Ideal for students studying business and marketing, creative arts and design, IT, education and humanities.



**GitHub:** Build a professional portfolio to show off your tech skills. Share projects, collaborate with others, and even get noticed by employers by contributing to open-source work. Follow developers and star projects. Ideal for students studying computer science, software engineering, data science and other fields involving programming.



**ResearchGate:** ResearchGate is a professional networking platform used by researchers and academics to share articles, theses and conference papers, and to collaborate and connect globally. While it's primarily used by postgraduate researchers, university students, especially those involved in research or planning academic careers, can benefit from engaging with it.

Learn how to define your professional brand, communicate professionally, and develop a professional network through the [Develop Your Professional Identity](#) module in JCU Employability Edge.