



Linda Coles runs regular workshops around the country on social media tools. [www.bluebanana.co.nz](http://www.bluebanana.co.nz)

# using social networking sites

**Social networking is becoming more and more popular and is here to stay. But will it benefit the HR and recruitment industry; or is it just a time drain?**

Two sites in particular, LinkedIn and Twitter, in my view are the best for business to business networking. Other sites such as Facebook really are for socialising although it is becoming more business oriented with use of its business pages.

But first, what is social networking and why would you bother?

Social networking is simply a new and extra way of doing business online, it is available 24/7, so there are no time restraints, but it will never replace good old fashioned face-to-face networking. Just like when TV came along, it wasn't the death of radio, the two work side by side quite happily.

By starting a conversation online and arranging a business coffee appointment, you have already started to build a rapport with your prospect, which makes doing business a whole lot easier.

Tall poppy syndrome is now a thing of the past in my book, if we don't know you exist, how can we find you? Someone has got to put your brand out there, but don't wait for others to do it, you need to see the value in it and do it yourself. Social media and the conversations that are already on the go, make great use of the best way of generating new business through word of mouth.

Did you know that approximately 78 percent of people trust WOM advertising and only 14 percent trust conventional advertising? Hold that thought for when I mention recommendations and LinkedIn later on.

So what exactly is LinkedIn? It is a business to business networking site that is growing at nearly one new user



every second. Over 50 million people are now connected all over the world, with about one million in Australasia, of whom 143,000 are in New Zealand. What you may not know is that over 65,000 of those would be open to a new job offer, presenting an untapped network to start working with for HR and recruitment.

I use it for various activities apart from generating business for my company. It is an online CV with various applications that can be added to fill your profile out, such as Slide Share for adding PowerPoint presentations, or BOX to add files of interest such as the first chapter of your book you are writing. Your blog can also be fed in so others can read it and see what sort of person you are by the way you write. Try these other areas:

- Use it as a resource for asking questions with like-minded people in your industry

- A place to promote an event you may be organising
- Keep in contact with people when they move jobs
- Promote yourself

Remember when I mentioned recommendations? This is probably the most powerful part of LinkedIn. There is an art in getting recommendations, but they are well worth it. Craig Rispin told me recently that he put his many speaking engagements down to his more than 370 recommendations from previous clients that had been thrilled with his content and delivery. The more recommendations he gets, the more impressive it becomes, the more he is in demand.

The same goes for your business. Here are a couple of quick wins so that you can make use of LinkedIn right away:

First, make sure you have a public profile name that is your name and not the default numbers. You can change this by clicking the edit button at the side of your profile link. Change it to your name, and if your name has already been taken by someone else with the same name, add your middle initial or middle name.

Second, use the box under your photograph to say what you are working on and change this at least weekly. Be creative, you can add a link, advertise an event, promote a job vacancy, or ask a question. This is an important area as it will show up next to your picture whenever you take part in a discussion or answer a question, and also shows up on the weekly network update that goes out to all of your connections. Be visible!

Another great recruiting tool is to create a virtual bench of say 10 people. These people are people who you would either like to do business with or place into a position. Nurture them regularly with relevant information, and develop a strong relationship. As they move off the virtual bench to where you want them to be, add another. Why not even incentivise your team to do the same, and when someone leaves the bench to go 'on to the field'

## Social media makes great use of generating new business through word of mouth.

they get a monetary reward?

If your company hasn't already started a group, consider doing so, but it needs to be well managed to be successful. Someone needs to start discussions when the group is still small, and self promoters need to be monitored and managed if necessary, but owning a group can have its rewards. Jobs can be listed in that group for free! The trick is to encourage the right people into the group and have some meaningful, helpful discussions along the way.

Companies are having success in recruiting from LinkedIn here in New Zealand. In a recent story a company looking for a new BDM had success simply by putting the announcement in the box under their profile picture I mentioned earlier. Whilst taking part in

a discussion, another person saw it, an interview process was set up, and the job was filled. Done.

Job seekers are also using social networking sites, in particular Twitter. Look out for hash tags (#) such as #career, #jobseeker, #jobsearch etc in the Twitter stream or manually search for them in Twitter Search. They usually include their LinkedIn profile too!

For recruitment LinkedIn, in particular, is a magnificent tool. If you have not already registered, make it your mission to get your profile up by the end of the week. Don't just sit back and expect it all to happen for you, stick your toe in a group or two, start some meaningful discussions, and work hard on your own profile. You never know when you might be the one who is head hunted.... ■

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