Social Networking Technologies, Career Professionals, and Ethics

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in cooperation with the NCDA Ethics Committee

Sample Social Networking Technologies Currently Used in Career Services

Technology Name	Description
Blogging	Blogs are web-based resources, maintained by an individual or organization, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and send messages to each other. This dynamic interactivity distinguishes them from static websites.
Facebook	Facebook is a social networking service that allows users to create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organized by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics.
LinkedIn[®]	LinkedIn is a business-related social networking site that is mainly used for professional networking. The site allows registered users to maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some level of relationship, called connections. This list of connections can then be used to: (a) gain an introduction to someone through a mutual contact, (b) find jobs, people and business opportunities, (c) research companies, and (d) make professional recommendations – among other things.
Twitter	Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service, which enables users to send and read messages called tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page.
You Tube	YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos.

Sample Issues Related to Social Networking and Professional Ethics

In addition to the many benefits offered by social networking technologies, these new tools raise some interesting ethical questions and dilemmas. Here are several issues to keep in mind:

- Clearly defining relationships between the career professional and client
- Honoring our primary responsibility of providing programs, services, and resources that benefit the client, above all other concerns
- Protecting client confidentiality and informing clients of the limitations of confidentiality
- Ensuring fair and equitable access for all clients
- Addressing the digital divide and digital literacy
- Ensuring career professionals have adequate technology literacy and skills to assist clients
- Making appropriate separations between personal and professional lives
- Considering the appropriateness of using information discovered about clients via social networking, particularly recognizing the, at times, questionable validity of such information

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Strategies for Ethical Use of Social Networking Technologies

While few clear statements and guidelines are available regarding the use of social networking technologies in career services, here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Begin with a clear, written policy for use of social networking technologies, and apply them consistently across professional staff and career services functions
- Educate clients about the benefits and drawbacks of social networking technologies; including the limits of confidentiality, "fishing" use by some recruiting agents, and strategies for accessing professional networking opportunities
- Provide periodic opportunities for reflection, both individually and with colleagues, regarding how social networking technologies have been used in practice
- Establish general career services office pages and groups for clients to link to, rather than linking to clients to individual career professionals
- Goggle yourself – know what is being said about you online, and recognize that it is likely that your clients are googling you too!

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