# Mastering the new job hunt

> The days of mailing out a résumé on cream paper are long over. In today's tight market, you need to stand out digitally. Here's how to create an online persona that will help you get hired  >> *by* KATE ASHFORD

IF, LIKE many midlife women, you've always changed jobs by using connections, you may not have conducted a ground search for a paycheck since the first time you dropped a fancy résumé into the corner mailbox. Well, it's time to step away from the Crane's: The rules of the job hunt have changed radically, even in the last year. To stand out today, you have to market yourself digitally—which involves not only posting your résumé online but also learning to polish your Internet reputation.

Developing this skill is not optional: Some 83 percent of executive recruiters now use search engines to dig up dirt on candidates—and 43 percent have dropped someone from the running based on information they found online. "You *will* be Googled in your job search," says Kirsten Dixson, coauthor of *Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand.* "Your online identity matters in a whole new way. It's a digital reference check."

Google your name (enclose it in quotation marks) and then spend some time taking a hard look at what pops up. News clips? An embarrassing video on YouTube? Nothing at all? How does your online profile make you look? Today, it's not enough if the results are neutral; to get a job, you need them to be good.

That isn't a threat, by the way. It's an opportunity. Think of the Internet as your own personal publicity machine. "This is

your chance to show that you know what's happening out there and you're not replaceable by some Gen Y person," says William Arruda, president of Reach, a career management company. Here's a crash course in getting your job search up to speed digitally and creating a compelling online presence.

## 1 \ BRING YOUR RESUME INTO THE FUTURE

At some point in your search, you'll likely have to paste your work history into an online application form. Web sites have replaced referrals as the best source of new jobs: One study found that 32 percent of external hires were found through online job boards, compared with 27 percent from referrals. To make sure you're ready with the right document, have your résumé available in three forms:

**›› PDF** First, create a formatted version, the kind you'd print out and mail if given the option. Then convert that résumé into a PDF: This will open easily on either a Mac or a PC, and the formatting won't change. You'll need access to a full version of Adobe Acrobat; if you'd have to pay for that, download CutePDF Writer (cutepdf.com) for free.

**›› WORD DOCUMENT** This should be designed as simply as possible. Use a universal font that will reproduce well on virtually any computer; good choices include Times New Roman and Arial. Send the résumé to a friend or two to make sure it opens properly on other people's machines.

**›› TEXT DOCUMENT** Save a third version of your résumé as unformatted text, which is a .txt file you'd open with an application such as Notepad. The various versions of Word handle the creation of this kind of file differently, but in general, click on "save as," then look for an option that allows you to save as "plain text" or "text only." Unformatted text is free of most everything— no boldface, no italics—so if you have to cut and paste your résumé into online forms, you'll avoid the invisible coding that exists in Word documents.

### WHAT BELONGS ON YOUR RESUME

**›› SCRAP THE "OBJECTIVE" LINE** in favor of an executive summary or summary of qualifications. This may take up to a third of your résumé. "Basically, it's how you're distinctive," Dixson says. "An objective focuses on what you want from the position; a summary focuses on what you can contribute." For instance, your objective may have said, "I am seeking an executive director position at a nonprofit, where I can push forward the mission of smart growth." An executive summary, however, could start out listing your years of experience in the field, go on to highlight strengths in "creative problem-solving," then elaborate with "Outstanding communication skills contribute to high effectiveness with staff and stakeholders." (For a detailed example, go to kirsten dixson.com/resumes.)

**›› THE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME** is still best if you've been consistently employed for years. But if you've taken any sizable breaks or you're trying to switch fields, consider a skills-based résumé that plays up your proficiencies ahead of your work history (Google "skills-based résumé" or "functional résumé" for examples). If you're concerned that your age will work against you, it is acceptable to leave off your college and grad-school graduation dates.

**›› MAKE SURE YOUR PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESS SEEMS PROFESSIONAL** What looks good: first.last@gmail.com. What looks bad: LisaPuppy2010@gmail.com. Include the URL for your Web site or professional blog and your LinkedIn profile (more on those below).

**›› EXPERTS ARE DIVIDED ON WHETHER TO INCLUDE A RESUME PHOTO** "If you're going for an upper management position, I find it to be unprofessional," says Deam Roys, head of a Los Angeles recruiting company. Instead, direct the reader to your Web site or LinkedIn page, where you should post one. A picture there can, in some cases, be very helpful—if you're worried that your age may make potential employers see you as behind the curve, a photo that communicates energy and with-it-ness can work in your favor.

## 2 \ ESTABLISH A PROFESSIONAL YOU.COM

Having your own Web site is like wearing a great wristwatch: Not strictly necessary, but it conveys a not-so-subtle message about your level of success. Putting up a site will also help you control some of the online content that's out there about you. (See "Manipulate Your Google Results," page 90.) But it's essential that your site has something to say. "If it's basically the same content that someone gets in your cover letter and résumé, then you shouldn't create one," Arruda says. Your Web site should provide some kind of demonstration of what you say in your résumé through customer testimonials, case studies or multimedia clips of your work. If you have that kind of content to contribute, here's how to do it:

**›› REGISTER A DOMAIN NAME** If possible, buy your own name (for example, KateAshford.com), since that's where many employers will look first. Search for unclaimed URLs at a site such as Go Daddy.com or Register.com, and expect to pay about $20 a year.

Once you have a domain name, find a Web hosting service, such as Home stead.com or GoDaddy.com, that will provide you with Web space for actual pages (fees range from $7 to over $20 a month). The simplest way to do this is to register your domain with the hosting service, but you don't have to; most hosting sites allow you to transfer your domain to their service. If you're truly clueless, contact their tech support and they will walk you through the process.

**›› BUILD IT YOURSELF** If you're OK with something simple, there is plenty of template software out there—such as Homestead.com's SiteBuilder—to help you create your site. Just choose a style you like and use the software to fill in the pertinent info (prices usually start at $30 to $50). If you go this route, though, you'd better have a good eye. Some sites' templates aren't particularly professional-looking, or they allow so much leeway that it's easy for

nondesigners to make ugly choices. "My first site looked like a dog designed it after a night on a tequila bender," says Penny Sansevieri, 43, who runs Author Marketing Experts. "It was really horrible."

**» HIRE SOMEONE** If you need a more complicated setup—with multimedia files or a large number of photos, for instance—hire someone to do it for you. When you see a site you love, find out who designed it; many sites provide a way to contact their administrators, or there may be a "designed by" tag on the page. If your budget is tight, call a local college with a Web design program and ask if there's a way to reach students about potential work; up-and-comers who need a portfolio will often charge less than established professionals. For a three- to five-page site, expect to pay $300 to $500 for an entry-level designer.

Once the site's up, however, you'll want to be able to update it without help from the designer, so ask about this before you sign on the dotted 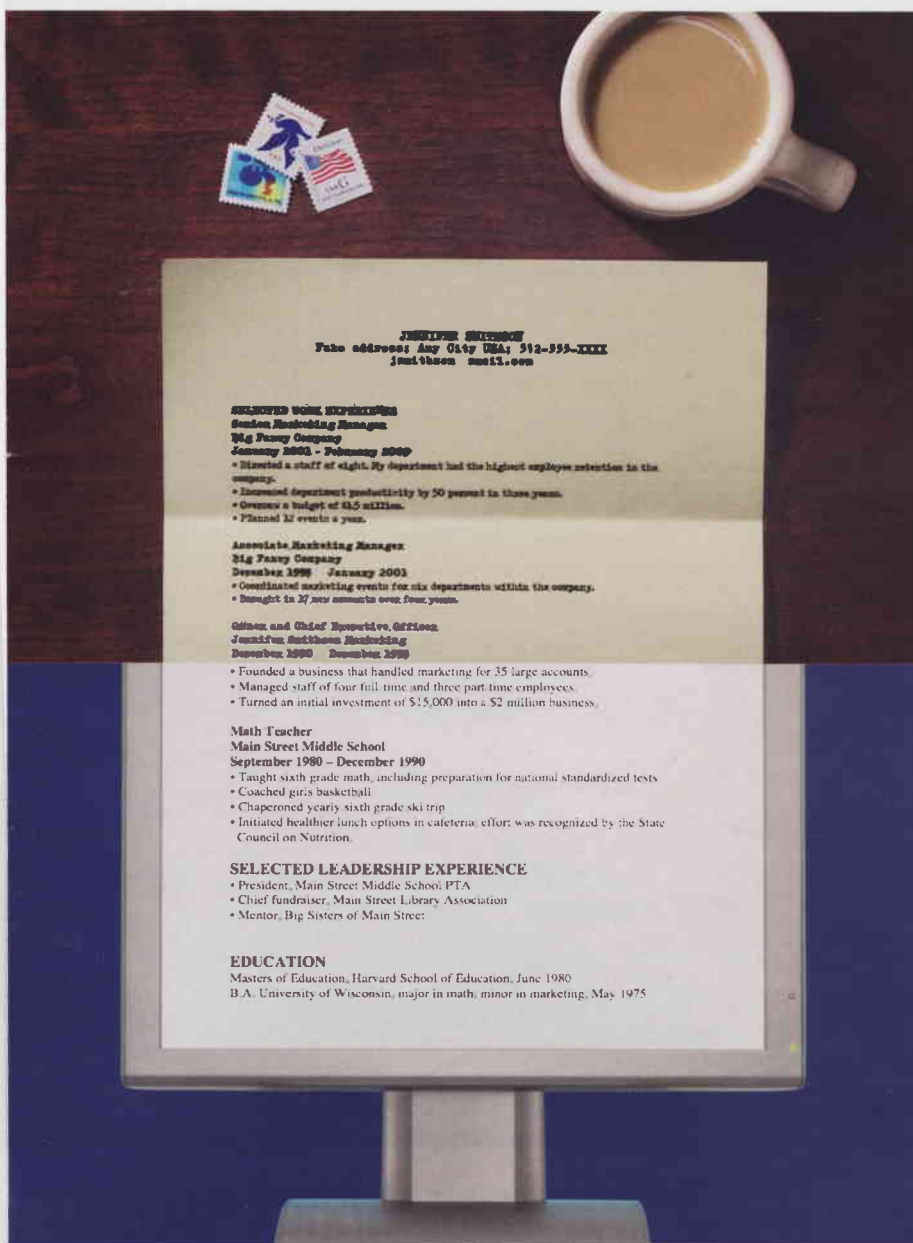line. "Web developers have been known to hold people hostage," says Aliza Sherman, a social media consultant at the marketing company Conversify. "You don't know how to program, and they do; if you want something changed, you'll have to pay them an hourly rate of $25 to $100 or more to do it." A good consultant will provide you with a tool to make the changes yourself, but you should be handy with HTML or Web design software if that is your plan.

**» ORGANIZE THE CONTENT** Your site should have at least three pages: an introduction, including a brief synopsis of your experience; a more detailed bio or résumé; and evidence of your performance (awards, testimonials, work samples). Include contact info, such as your e-mail address—style it as "name [at] site.com," with the brackets around "at," so that spamming software won't recognize it as an address—and a general idea of your geographic location. Last, include a professional photo. "A potential employer does not need to see you hugging your cats or kids," says Elaine Young, a professor of business at Vermont's Champlain College.

**» CONSIDER A BLOG** Whereas a Web site is useful to tout your accomplishments, a blog can demonstrate that you are involved in and up to date with your field. And blogs are easy to set up; you can create one yourself on sites such as WordPress.com or Blogger .com. "Blogging software is far more user friendly than Web editing tools," Sherman says, so you can (and should) regularly add content, commenting on recent news or business relevant to your industry.



# 3 \ MANIPULATE YOUR GOOGLE RESULTS

Having a Web site will help you with what is in many ways the most difficult piece of the new digital marketing: managing your search-engine results page, or SERP. "Dealing with search engines is similar to doing public relations," says Danny Sullivan of Search EngineLand.com. "There are things you can do to get good press, and there

are things that you can't control." For instance, you can't change what other people post on their sites, and you may not be able to bury negative press. But you can try to move the positive press into the spotlight. And keep in mind that Google results are fluid and will change over time. If you're actively managing your online image, check back at least once a month to make sure you still know what's out there. Here's how to manipulate your SERP:

> **Having your** own site is a great first step; now you need to get it to pop up to the top of your search results. Make sure you title each page with your name and throw some text on the main page to explain who you are.

>> **JOIN LINKEDIN** You may already have a profile with LinkedIn (linkedin .com), the large business social networking site that lets you "connect" with colleagues and experts in your field. But have you taken full advantage of it? The site allows you to easily promote yourself and your accomplishments without most of the potential embarrassment of other social networking sites. "It's difficult to get into trouble on LinkedIn, because you put up only professional information," Dixson says. One nice feature is that it gives you the opportunity to personalize your profile page link, so others can find your profile at linkedin.com /in/your name. (Click on "Profile," look

for your "Public Profile" Web address, and click "Edit.") Once you've done that customizing, you can easily list your LinkedIn page on your résumé and Web site or blog. Bonus: A Linked In profile will usually pop up on the first page of Google results.

To get the most out of the site, keep your profile updated and go to the Q&A section; you can use your expertise to answer other people's questions, which makes you more visible and lets you demonstrate your knowledge. Also take advantage of your connections' ability to recommend you on the site. A simple way to do this: Recommend others, and they'll automatically be prompted to reciprocate. And link away: There's no downside to accepting invitations from people you don't know well.

>> **CREATE YOUR OWN CONTENT** Having your own site or blog is a great first step; now you need to get it to pop up to the top of your search results. One thing that will help is using a domain name that has your name in it. "Google puts more weight on keywords if they're in the URL of the page," says Rhea Drysdale, cofounder of Out spokenMedia.com. So make sure you title each page with your name (instead of, say, "Home Page"), and throw some text on your main page that explains who you are and what you do. Google searches your site for text and HTML clues to its content, so the more targeted your clues, the higher in search results you'll appear. If you're a landscape photographer in Georgia, for instance, you want to mention the words *landscape*, *photography*, *nature* and *Georgia*, along with your name, on the intro page.

Text alone won't move you up the SERP list, however. "Google's algorithm is based on links," Drysdale says. "It wants to see relevant links to your site coming from other areas. If you create a Web site and no one ever

links to it, it will probably never show up on your SERP." Her suggestion: Use the profiles you've created on other sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook and ZoomInfo (see below), to link to your Web site.

**›› CONTRIBUTE TO OTHER SITES** Another smart move is to add to the comments sections of industry-related blogs. "It's almost as powerful as having your own blog," Arruda says. "When someone Googles you, those comments will show up." This won't move your personal site up in your

> **Even if** you've never been to ZoomInfo.com, chances are the site has created an aggregate profile for you, gleaned from bits and pieces of online data associated with your name—whether or not the information is accurate.

SERP, but it will give employers something positive to find when they search your name. Google the topic you're interested in, find the blogs that talk about it, subscribe to them and contribute your comments, using your real name. You can also access your contacts' blogs via LinkedIn's Blog Link tool—add the application to your LinkedIn account and it will search your contacts for blogs and Web sites. Additionally, try submitting articles to industry niche sites or more generic sites such as eHow.com, Google Knol and About.com.

**›› CHECK ZOOMINFO** Even if you've never visited this site, chances are it has created an aggregate profile for you, gleaned from bits and pieces of online data associated with your name—whether or not the information is accurate. More than 47 million people are listed on the site, so it's a good idea to visit and find out if you have a write-up. If you do, just click "claim profile," then follow the site's easy edit process to fill in your own professional history and other relevant information. Your own write-up will now replace their inaccurate one. (Other sites, like Spoke.com, also aggregate data; only worry about fixing the ones that show up in the first few pages of your Google results.)

**›› BE SMART ABOUT FACEBOOK** Many of us are already on Facebook, but the jury is still out on whether it has business advantages. If you work in an industry that thrives on social connections, you may find that a Facebook profile is an invaluable networking resource. "It's an incredible way to be connected to a lot of people, and for a lot of people to know what's going on with you," Arruda says.

But don't panic: You won't be penalized if you haven't joined the crowd yet. In fact, there are so many pitfalls associated with Facebook, you might be better off without a page, unless you become a master of its privacy settings. "You don't have control over what someone writes on your wall, and you can't manage every photo of you that gets tagged," Young says. You can, of course, delete wall posts and untag yourself in other people's photos, but you may tire of keeping a constant eye on your Facebook content. You also may not have time to react before someone else finds a photo, as was the case for a White House speechwriter who was tagged in a photo that showed him cupping the breast of a cardboard cutout of Hillary Clinton.

(For a lesson on privacy, search for "How to set your Facebook privacy settings" on CIO.com.)

If you have a Facebook page, decide if it's professional or personal—and stick with that. If you're using it for business relationships, don't "friend" every member of your college sorority or post photos of your kitchen renovation. If you're using it for social purposes (most experts agree that's its best use), use privacy settings to make your page unfindable on search engines. Tell business-only contacts that you value the connection but that you're using your Facebook account for very close friends and family. Then ask if you can connect with them via LinkedIn instead.

**›› TIE UP LOOSE ENDS** A couple of last notes: If you're thinking about using Twitter, the social messaging site, you can relax. While it can be used for professional gain (by following the feeds of well-respected people in your industry, for example), there may not be enough hours in the day for you to maintain a job hunt, a professional blog, a Facebook profile, a LinkedIn profile and a Twitter account. So unless you're fascinated by the concept, let it go.

And finally, be aware that search engines can also find content in your online file collections, such as YouTube videos and photos on Flickr. If you have content posted that you would rather a potential employer not see, now's the time to make those profiles private.

**›› THEN GET OUT THERE** While your online identity is important, don't forget about life offline—that is, your face-to-face networking. Just because you've posted to every job site, updated all your online profiles and e-mailed every contact you know, that doesn't mean you can stay home in your jammies. "You still need to go out to events and pound the pavement and have a cup of coffee," Dixson says. "The more virtual rapport you build up front, the more your time isn't going to be wasted. But nothing replaces in-person connections." ॐ