

Case study #1: Undecided student

John R. Student is an undecided sophomore who wants to explore careers more thoroughly. He is utilizing other UCS resources like the eXplore system and attending networking nights and industry panels. But, as a busy student with a part-time job he knows if he uses social media as part of exploration, he'll have more flexibility with when his exploration takes place.

John first creates a profile on linkedin.com. He just completed his first resume and found that linkedin.com allows him to upload his resume to "pre-load" his profile so he doesn't have to type it all in again. He makes sure he has a complete profile and decides to join several of the UNC Alumni groups that exist on the site.

Once his group membership is accepted, John starts browsing the membership of the groups, which allows him to see a wide variety of job titles and organizations. When he sees a job title or organization that sounds interesting to him, he clicks on that person's profile to take a closer look at where the person has worked and what the person studied in college. He makes notes about particular job titles that sound interesting to him and sends direct messages to a few professionals to ask if they would be willing to talk to him more about their current position.

John also begins reading a blog called One Job, One Day, which focuses on a new career each day. He finds that there are other career blogs of interest to him and he visits them regularly to learn. When he reads about a career of interest, he searches to explore whether there are other blogs focused solely on that career. From one of these blogs he reads about ning.com groups, where he can continue to learn, but also interact with professionals in different career fields.

Case study #2: International Studies Major

Jean A. Smith is a senior international studies major. She doesn't have a particularly focused career goal. But, she knows that she wants to travel and would love to have a job that involved international trips, or even working overseas. She knows that social media gives her the opportunity to interact with professionals from across the globe.

She first creates a profile a linkedin.com. She knows that having a robust profile, including a photograph, is important on linkedin.com. So, she completes her profile as fully as possible. Jean then joins several groups. She joins one of the large UNC Alumni group, as well as a few groups focused on international issues and careers.

Jean uses the "answers" section to explore the conversations that have taken place in the *international* and *business travel* sections of linkedin. After reading these conversations, she posts a question of her own and is even able to give an answer to a question posed by another user. Jean also spends some time looking at the "companies" section of linkedin to explore which companies have the most employees in her targeted region.

Jean also creates an account with Skype because she wants to have some "face to face" conversations with some UNC alums that she has connected with through the UCS Carolina Connection system and through her activity on linkedin.

Jean experimented with twitter.com, but decided it was not a good fit for her. However, she did enjoy reading many of the articles she found there. So, instead of staying on twitter.com, she begins to read recommended articles on dig.com and reddit.com, using a few keywords like "international affairs" and "economic development." Jean creates her own account and begins to share articles she reads in her courses and through her own research.

Case Study #3: Journalism and Mass Communications Major/Public Relations Sequence

Jane Q. Student is a rising junior majoring in public relations and hopes to work in a corporate setting after graduation. She wants to dedicate a lot of energy to networking and making connections during her junior year to help with her internship search. She is utilizing all the traditional networking tools, but also wants to establish an online presence and make connections through new online tools.

Jane first creates a profile a linkedin.com. She knows that having a robust profile, including a photograph, is important on linkedin.com. So, she fills out all information completely and uploads a tightly-cropped headshot photo. She makes connections with people she already knows and even asks a former supervisor to provide a linkedin.com reference for her profile. Jane then sets out to join several groups. She joins one of the large UNC Alumni group, as well as two groups focused on corporate public relations.

Jane pays close attention to the activity on these groups. She participates in conversations and asks questions in the discussion area. She then decides to reach out to a few group members. She sends a connection request to a few members of the UNC Alumni group. But, she doesn't rely only on the default text that linkedin.com provides. Instead, she personalizes each note to include information that is pertinent to that individual (mentions that they share a major at UNC or a conversation they had on the alumni group discussion page). She does the same for a few members of the corporate public relations group.

Simultaneously to creating her linkedin.com profile, Jane created a twitter.com account (and she was sure to use the same profile name on each – linkedin.com/in/janeqstudent and twitter.com/janeqstudent). Once on twitter, she began by doing a search on #publicrelations and #pr. By locating professionals who are using these hashtags, she begins to find others who are sharing information and having conversations about her intended career path. She also begins following the accounts of several companies where she would like to intern the following summer.

Jane continues to seek out twitter.com users who are working in public relations or who share information related to her industry of interest. She “re-tweets” some of their postings (a “retweet” is a re-posting of another user’s tweet. The original poster is given credit in this manner: RT @prnews [original post]) and begins to share news that she has found in online journals and newspapers, as well. She sends direct and public messages to other twitter users, asking questions and sharing opinions.

Her use of twitter.com and linkedin.com results in contacts and connections across the country and across the globe. In addition to adding to her network, she also discovers several internship opportunities through both resources. She is able to articulate her social media activities on her resume as relevant experience demonstrating both her communication skills and comfort with Web 2.0 technologies.