Engaging through Social Media: Starting a Different Conversation

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Roundtable Goals
- Experience a conceptual framework for understanding use of social media in career services
- Introduce examples of social media competencies and platform use in practice, focusing on co-careering
- Explore the impact of social media use from different perspectives

Framework: Conceptions of Social Media in Career Services

Based on Kettunen, Sampson, & Vuorinen (2015) and Kettunen & Makela (in submission)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION</th>
<th>Information Orientation / Delivery</th>
<th>Networking Orientation / Marketing</th>
<th>Educational Orientation / Exploration</th>
<th>Development Orientation / Co-Careering</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach to Social Media</td>
<td>Technology focused</td>
<td>Content focused</td>
<td>Pedagogy / instructional focus</td>
<td>Interaction focused</td>
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<td>Function of Social Media</td>
<td>Delivering / disseminating information</td>
<td>Connecting with audiences</td>
<td>Educating audiences</td>
<td>Collaborating</td>
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<td>Online Skills</td>
<td>Media literacy</td>
<td>Online writing / writing for web</td>
<td>Online discourse</td>
<td>Online presence</td>
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<td>Ethical Principles</td>
<td>Accuracy, validity</td>
<td>Privacy, professional boundaries</td>
<td>Privacy, confidentiality</td>
<td>Professional proficiency</td>
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Many Social Media Tools / Intentional Strategies

There are many social media tools that career services professionals could choose to engage. Some of our considerations in selecting a tool include:
- What tools will help us reach our clients? Where are they spending time, and where do they want to engage with us?
- Who are we missing on each social media tool? If they are not in one space, where else might we look to engage them?
- What type of message or media is a particular social media tool designed to communicate?
- What is our goal in using this tool?

Each tool that we choose to engage speaks to a specific audience for a specific purpose. We keep our different social media channels separate and unique. The different ways of using these tools mirror the theoretical conceptions outlined above quite well. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Tools engaged by The Career Center at Illinois</th>
<th>Information Orientation / Delivery</th>
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<th>Development Orientation / Co-Careering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter</td>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>REDDIT</td>
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A Closer Look at Co-Careering

What is REDDIT? A message board made up of different communities based on a variety of interest areas – for example, politics, humor, birdwatching, or schools. Users can post questions or comments for others to respond. An interesting component of REDDIT is that users can choose to post anonymously using a pseudonym, adding an interesting dynamic to the conversations as compared to other resources where users are typically identified (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn).
How did The Career Center get involved? We recognized that Illinois has a very large REDDIT community (uiuc has nearly 23,000 members!), and that some campus services were actively engaging students on the platform (e.g., Campus Police).

Prep 1. We observed. Is there a need for us on this site?

![Image 1](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Prep 2. We engaged experts.
- Met with UIPolice communications to discuss their experience with hosting AMA (“Ask Me Anything”) events
- Contacted the subreddit moderator (uiuc alum) to get verified as The Career Center

Getting Started. We offered small responses to career-related questions to develop a presence within the subreddit.

![Image 2](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Gaining Momentum. We offered our first AMA. Over a 2 hour period, we received 19 questions from 10 members.

Starting Discussions. Now that we have gained a trusted presence, we have started to push out information to students in larger discussion board posts. Example topics include:

- No internship? No problem!
- What does the university do with the Outcomes Survey data being collected from graduates?
- Tell us about a time you messed up in an interview

This discussion board post received 217 “up-votes”, 11 direct replies expressing thanks for the post, and several links to the posts by other users.

And, then there is the relationship building... to show that we are a friendly, easygoing, and approachable place.

Some Lessons Learned

- If you choose to be present in a social media environment, you need to keep cultivating that relationship. You can’t disappear for long periods of time and expect the relationship to continue. However, the time commitment does not have to be overwhelming. Defining a specific and narrow purpose helps keep it manageable. Also, our students don’t seem to expect real-time interactions in this environment. Just a steady relationship.

- Many interactions on REDDIT happen in the late evening (8pm or later). The majority of interactions with our Website, however, occur Monday through Friday during business hours. Traffic is platform and audience specific.

- Our office writes longer posts collaboratively. A day and time are chosen for posting, targeting high traffic times.

- We do not use personal accounts to communicate from the office. Rather, we have accounts for The Career Center, and communicate for the team with one voice. Personal and professional are kept separate (in line with NCDA ethical standards).

- Sites that allow for anonymity can, at times, be beneficial. This feature of REDDIT has helped us reach students in distress who may not otherwise used our services. Together, with gentle support from the online community and invitations from The Career Center, students expressing distress online have come in to our office acknowledging the invitation from their REDDIT posts. Relationship building in cases such as this is, perhaps, one of our greatest impacts of engaging the site.

References

