

**WRITE & SPEAK
LIKE A
PROFESSIONAL**
In 20 Minutes
A Day

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About the Author



Miriam Salpeter is a social media strategist, job search coach, speaker, author, and founder of Keppie Careers (www.keppiecareers.com), a consultancy serving businesses and job seekers. Forbes named Miriam’s blog a “best career resource” and CNN called her a “top 10 job tweeter you should be following.” Top media outlets, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Business Insider*, and others recognize Miriam as an expert resource for job seekers and entrepreneurs.

Author of *Social Networking for Career Success* (in its second edition) and *Manage Your Time & Life in 20 Minutes a Day*, and co-author of *100 Conversations for Career Success* and *Social Networking for Business Success*, Miriam is well known as a go-to expert and consultant regarding job search and social media strategies.

“In addition to coaching job seekers and small business owners, Miriam is an in-demand writer, speaker, and trainer for groups and organizations. She authors articles for company blogs and teaches job seekers and employees how to use social media. Miriam also runs “The Smart Business Owner’s Social Media Help Desk,” an online program to teach business owners how to leverage social media marketing tools. She authors online bios and job search materials for clients at every level of their careers.

With a BA in Honors English from the University of Michigan,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Miriam launched her career with a Wall Street firm. She left as a vice president to earn a master's degree from Columbia University with a focus on career guidance. Miriam headed the Career Action Center at the Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University before launching Keppie Careers. She has been empowering job seekers and small business owners since 2003.

Miriam lives in Atlanta with her husband, Mike, their three boys, two cats, and two rescue dogs. She invites you to connect with her on Twitter @Keppie_Careers and to touch base via her blog.

Introduction



Everyone you meet will form opinions about you based on what you say and write. Strong written and spoken communication skills are crucial to opening doors. Research by Millennial Branding has showed that soft skills top the list of “must have” skills that employers want, with 98 percent of employers saying communication skills are essential.

It’s up to you to make the most of every opportunity to prove you’re capable and confident. It’s no secret that first impressions matter—that’s been the case since the beginning of time. What’s new in our increasingly fast-paced, digitally connected world, is how a simple stroke of a keyboard, or an email gone awry, can quickly damage a professional reputation. On the other hand, a stream of consistent, well-written social media updates can just as easily raise your profile and impress people you’ve never met, who may positively influence your career.

As a job search coach and social media strategist experienced at helping job seekers and business owners market themselves online and in person, it’s clear to me that the most successful professionals make an effort to improve their communication skills at every opportunity. Whether your focus is networking, job searching, or excelling at work, it’s more important now than ever to know how

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to present yourself in person and in writing in this hyper-competitive work environment.

Write & Speak Like a Professional in 20 Minutes a Day provides instructions and exercises to improve your communication abilities and offers insights and ideas to help refine your skills in every aspect of your job or career. It includes guidance on everything from networking to resume writing and interviewing. Communication skills are just as important in the workplace as they are when looking for a job, so you'll also find details about how to impress people at work and how to write clear, concise professional emails that will get the best results. With attention spans growing shorter, it's never been more important to learn how to hone in on your message and eliminate non-crucial details. Use this book to recognize if you're missing opportunities to communicate succinctly and learn how to remedy any problems.

Whether you're attending a meeting or writing a memo, it's up to you to put your best foot forward. This book provides resources to help you identify any deficiencies or problems you may not have considered. For example, are you using words in your emails that call your professionalism into question? Does the tone or inflection of your voice make people think you aren't confident? Could you be doing more via social media to expand your reach and extend your influence in your professional community? How are your listening skills? Does your body language send the message you want people to receive?

Read on to learn how to improve your ability to make a strong first impression, and how to extend and enhance that impression so your colleagues and supervisors will listen carefully when you speak, and appreciate what you write.

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Communicate Using Social Media: Part I

It's important to learn how to communicate via social media, as many professional interactions occur online. When used well, social media tools provide access to new opportunities and information. Both can result in you becoming more competitive in your field. Research from the Society for Human Resource Management shows that employers are not only looking at LinkedIn—they are likely to also use Facebook and Twitter to connect with potential job applicants. Social networks make it easy for you to follow companies and brands, as well as to connect with people who might be great networking contacts.

Why Use Social Media to Network?

These networks allow you to meet people you'd never otherwise encounter from all over the world. Even if you attended every in-person networking event in your area, you could never meet the

number of people you can meet networking online. Social media provides an outlet to easily share and showcase what you know with other people who may have the wherewithal to help you. You're not just networking for networking's sake. Your goal is to impress other people with your skills, experiences, and accomplishments so they will refer you for opportunities.

Learn new things

One under-considered reason for tapping into social media tools is to take advantage of the wealth of resources and streams of information and content that helps you keep your finger on the pulse of your industry. You may find yourself receiving data and information that makes you the go-to resource in your office or among your colleagues. Use this to your advantage.

Push, not pull job-search strategy

Ideally, you'd like jobs to find you instead of needing to apply for jobs. When you use social media well, you have an opportunity to magnetically attract positions to you by demonstrating expertise to people who invite you to apply for or to consider various jobs. It's the best-case scenario for anyone open to a new work experience.

Employers use it

Jobvite's research shows that 93% of employers use social networks to help make hiring decisions. They note that 73% of employers plan to increase the amount they spend pursuing employees via social networks.

Don't limit your professional social media networks to LinkedIn only. You can leverage any social network—for example, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, and others—for professional use. Your goal should be to choose the networks best suited to you and your audience and use them extensively to accomplish your networking goals.

How to Choose Networks to Use

To pick the best networks, first identify how you'd like to share your information. You have several options when it comes to sharing information online. Updates or posts will be written, spoken (as in a radio show, podcast, or video), or visual (as in video, pictures, and other images).

Think about the answers to the following questions to assess your own interests and skills.

My best skills include:

- Writing
- Speaking
- Taking pictures or sharing images
- Give me a video camera and I'll knock your socks off
- All of the above
- None of the above

When I write:

- I wax eloquent and enjoy long-form writing.
- I use as few words as possible. Who wants to read anything lengthy?
- Writing? Can't we just talk about it?

When I think about sharing information online, I envision it being:

- Words
- Pictures
- Speaking
- Video
- All of the above
- Do I really have to share information online?

I can easily think about sharing something on social media that is:

- A sentence or two
- At least 500 words—if not more
- Don't ask me to write, but I can talk up a storm
- I thrive on film. Lights! Camera! Action!
- Photography and visuals—I can share my own images!

Hopefully, this gives you a strong sense of what you enjoy and what medium works best for you. If you love the online medium you choose, you'll use it more and use it to showcase your expertise.

Look over your answers. Are you a writer, a speaker, a movie star, a photographer, or a graphic designer? Consider the following networks to correlate with each skill:

Writing skills

- *Short-form writing* (you can easily communicate something in 140 characters or less): Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn updates
- *Long-form writing* (you enjoy writing and you're good at it): Blogging (Wordpress, LinkedIn, or another platform), Facebook, or Tumblr

Visual

- SlideShare, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook

Speaking/video

- YouTube, Vine, BlogTalkRadio, Podcasting

Determine Your Audience

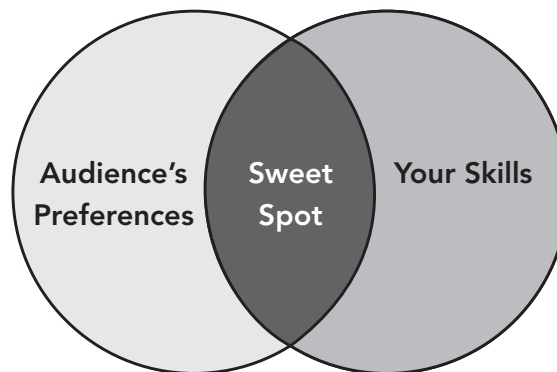
Once you know your skills and the networks that will let you take advantage of what you offer and what you enjoy, it's time to consider your audience. After all, if you love creating videos, but your

intended targets don't have any time to view them, you would be wasting your efforts.

Conduct research to determine what networks most appeal to your audience. You can start by reviewing data from two key sources: Pew Internet and ComScore. These track demographics and trends related to who uses what network. However, that's just a start for those who like data. Your more important research will come from some in-depth searches to identify where your audience spends the most time.

Choose Your Networks

Once you narrow down the networks that suit your skills and see which of these overlap with your target audience, you'll know your social media sweet spot. Move forward with those networks and use them to build your professional reputation.



Each network has its own, unique qualities and you'll want to be sure to match your skills to what's required to be successful on each network you use. For example, if you're not capable of sending out short messages, you probably shouldn't tweet. If you are a talented writer, blog on LinkedIn's platform or start your own blog. Are you in a visual field? Did you know you can create photo

collages on Twitter when you use the mobile application? Or, upload your photos on Facebook and be sure to make those posts public and searchable. If you're capable of posting great content on all of the major social media networks, by all means, do so. However, only participate where you're showing off your best professional content.

Identify your target audience and engage with them. Social networks are no longer just about connecting with friends. They offer an ecosystem of individuals, brands, and employers. Companies invest in their social media presence to give job seekers plenty of options for interesting content to like and follow.

Use these resources to get started:

LinkedIn: Groups and pulse

This is an easy choice, as professionals from every industry use LinkedIn. Determine if your audience is active in groups online. Via LinkedIn's search bar, click on the dropdown to search Groups and include keywords to find groups related to your professional interests. For example, if you're an accountant, you could search *financial experts*, *accountants*, *accounting* or *managing money*. Spend some time investigating the groups and decide if your colleagues are active enough there to warrant your time.

Pulse is LinkedIn's news and information source. It's a great way to access useful information to share on your networks (we'll explore this more later in the chapter), but it can also help you identify how involved your target audience is on LinkedIn. Follow the topics of interest and read the comments on the various posts. If there are active conversations, you'll know you've found a good resource.

Exercise: Visit LinkedIn. If you don't already have a profile, create one at LinkedIn.com. (Review my book, *Social Networking for Career Success*, for tips to prepare a terrific profile, as well as the tips later in this chapter.) Search for groups and spend time selecting

topics or thought leaders in Pulse that appeal to you and would interest your target audience.

Be sure to visit the groups and review your Pulse selections frequently.

Twitter

To start, look for company names or names of people of interest via Twitter's own search toolbar.

FollowerWonk.com

This tool makes it easy to search Twitter bios. Since many people include something professional in their Twitter bios (such as keywords or company names), you can use this tool to hone in on people in your industry using Twitter.

Hashtags (#)

One of the best ways to determine if people in your field use Twitter is to search hashtags. Use the # symbol and affix it to any word related to your field. For example: #healthcare or #marketing. People use these hashtags to help attract attention for their topics from people they don't already know online, so it's a great way to find out if your potential contacts use Twitter.

Twitter Chats

Similar to hashtags, finding Twitter chats can help you hone in on the most prominent people in your professional community using the network. A Twitter chat is used when people who have similar interests hop on Twitter and tweet using a hashtag to help everyone interested get in on the conversation. There are active chats about every topic imaginable—for example, advertisers (#AdChat) or architecture (#AIChat). You can also find chats about personal interest topics, such as a chat for foodies (#SOSfood) and one to discuss fashion and style (#styletalk). The list goes on and on. Of course, there are a lot of chats having to do with social media, and

there are several other career oriented chats—#internchat and #job-huntchat, for example.

Chats give you opportunities to find people in your profession who use Twitter. Just as it is a good idea for job seekers to join a biking club if they enjoy biking, or an art class if they're artistically talented, Twitter provides an unprecedented way to reach out to new people and to extend your "loose" network—people you would otherwise never meet.

To find a link to several lists of Twitter chats, Google {Twitter chat, Keppie Careers} and you'll see an article I wrote about this topic with links to these lists.

Exercise: Visit Twitter. If you don't already have a profile, create one at Twitter.com. (Review *Social Networking for Career Success* for tips to prepare a terrific profile.)

Decide on topics that will interest you. For example, if your field is healthcare, perhaps you'll want to find people who tweet about health, or even wellness. Make a list of potential topics:

Once you have your topics, visit FollowerWonk.com and search their network for the words you selected. Remember, you can include company names, too.

Go to Twitter.com and use their toolbar to search for hashtags

of your topics. For example, #Healthcare or #Health. Follow and make a note of people who are using the hashtags that interest you.

As suggested, identify Twitter chats by Googling {Twitter chat, Keppie Careers}. Make a note to participate in any chats that look promising.

Facebook

Search Facebook's toolbar for groups that share your interests. Similar to groups in other networks, you may find some active, industry-related groups to access useful contacts. And, just as Twitter allows you to search hashtags online, you can also use them in Facebook, even though they are less prominent in this network.

Exercise: Follow the same advice provided about Twitter to find interesting content in Facebook. Make a note of any groups or communities that seem very useful and be sure to visit and participate often.

Instagram

You can find people you might like to follow in "Search & Explore." As Instagram's site explains, "Tap Photos to see photos and videos that people you follow have liked or that a large number of people have liked. Tap People to see accounts you might like, based on a variety of things, including who you follow, who you're connected to, and what photos and videos you like on Instagram."

Pinterest

Use the Pinterest search toolbar to conduct interest searches. Once you find people with common interests, you can see what pins they share and who follows them.

Create a Great Profile

Perhaps the most important items you write as a professional are your online bios or profiles. These have the power to connect you directly with people you need to know. Even though most of your most forward-facing bios are extremely short (such as your LinkedIn headline and Twitter bio), you should put a lot of energy into ensuring they perfectly represent you and your professional brand, so you attract attention from your target audience.

How to write your LinkedIn headline

The headline appears directly under your name in LinkedIn and shows up whenever your profile comes up in search. It is your opportunity to pitch your unique value proposition—what is special about you—to anyone who comes across your profile. Does it say something that will make someone want to click through to learn more about you?

Many people include their job titles in the headline section, but that's not likely to be very compelling. Instead, include keywords that people will use when they search for someone like you as well as a promise of something you will do for them.

You have a head start on writing the perfect headline if you've already figured out how to introduce yourself in person. (See Chapter 1). Your headline will be even more succinct than the 35 or so words you chose to use when you meet people.

Use this formula:

- Identify your expertise.
- Use keywords people would naturally choose when searching for someone with your skills.
- Explain how you help.

Explain How You Help

In Chapter 1, we covered how to introduce yourself in person at a networking event. You will want to:

- Identify who you work with [*target audience*].
- Explain what you do for them [*situation/solve what problem*].
- Outline how you're effective [*results/impact*].

You'll rely on this information again for your LinkedIn headline. What is the very best thing you offer by way of professional results? If someone hires you, what can that person expect to see regarding your impact to the organization? Are you known for forming and managing well-run teams? Do you bring in top sales results? What do people say about you? Do your evaluations typically refer to a particular, marketable skill?

LinkedIn provides 120 characters for your headline—use it well. For example:

Leadership Development Management Consultant: Build effective work culture and accelerate employee performance

Researcher experienced in chemical & biological sensor / New product / Business development

Device Engineer: embedded systems architecture, analyze software & hardware; secure mobile and/or embedded devices

Monitor EEO/Affirmative Action programs, oversee training & development, create strong workplaces

Business Analyst: Develop and implement systems to bridge gaps between HR and IT organizations

Create your other social media bios

Luckily, once you've done all of that work to write your LinkedIn headline, you can simply “lather, rinse, and repeat” and use the content again for Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and other places with short bios. Twitter allows 160 characters, so you have a little

In Summary: Action Tips

- Don't ignore opportunities to communicate via social networking tools. These networks provide terrific chances to meet new people and connect with job opportunities when necessary, since employers turn to these networks to connect with applicants.
- Social networking tools offer opportunities to learn new things and to reverse the job search process from a push (apply) to a pull (attract interest) process.
- Before you dive into social media, assess the best networks to use by determining your own skills and deciding where people you want to reach spend their time online.
- Create profiles for yourself on the networks you choose to pursue. Be sure to target your social networking bios so it's easy to find you and know about your professional specialties. Use the suggestions in this chapter to hone in on your keywords and to explain how you help.