

Using Pinterest as a Job-Search and Branding Tool

Spotlight for Career Services Professionals, April 25, 2012

Pinterest—a content-sharing social media website on which account holders “pin” images, videos, and more to their virtual pinboards—is gaining popularity for its broad spectrum of uses.

Thom Rakes, career center director at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, sees two ways students can use Pinterest to enhance their job-search efforts—as a tool to research potential employers and as means for students to market themselves.

“Some large and cutting-edge companies have created Pinterest pages, providing a different view of the employer than more traditional web pages,” Rakes says. “And since the focus of Pinterest is on graphics and images, it is of most use to students pursuing visually related careers, such as graphic or digital design and marketing. It may help more visually orientated job seekers stand out.”

Brie Weiler Reynolds, the content and social media manager at FlexJobs and a former career counselor at Emmanuel College, agrees, saying it’s much easier for students in creative majors to use Pinterest because of the visual component.

“The arts, graphic design, marketing, and other heavily visual majors will probably find using Pinterest for their job search to be easy and straightforward,” Reynolds says. “Students in more traditional majors—business, social and life sciences, and others—will need to be more creative in their use of Pinterest.”

Why is Pinterest attractive to job seekers? First, it’s easy to get started. Unlike setting up a website or professional blog, it takes just a few seconds to create an account and start pinning, Reynolds says.

“It shouldn’t necessarily replace those other two options for personal branding, but it’s a good way to get started,” she adds. “And, it’s a strictly visual medium in a world of text-based job-search tools, so it’s very different from other options.”

With that in mind, Reynolds touts the importance of students thinking about how they can represent their majors and career interests visually—whether it’s by using pictures of organizations with which they’ve interned, or pins of student organizations and activities with which they’ve been involved.

Reynolds offers some other tips for career services practitioners to share with college students using or interested in using Pinterest as a personal branding or job-search tool. To use Pinterest as a personal branding tool, college students should:

- Create resume boards on which they pin pictures related to their schooling and experiences.
- Create portfolio boards with examples of their work, which is especially good for creative fields.
- Pin a copy of their resume with text that says “please share me.”
- Create boards related to their interests to give more insight into them.
- Place their Pinterest URLs on their job-search materials, including resumes, cover letters, e-mail signatures, profiles on LinkedIn, and more. Make sure they use their actual name as their Pinterest page name so people can easily find them through a search.

For using Pinterest as a job-search tool, students should:

- Follow employers they want to work for on Pinterest to learn about the employers' marketing efforts and corporate culture.
- Follow career services offices and experts to learn the best job-search strategies, trends, and advice.
- Get ideas for places to work by seeing what organizations their employers of interest follow.
- Create boards for "Places I'd Like to Work" and "Jobs I'd Like to Have."
- Use keywords like "hiring," "human resources," "recruiting," and more to find employers that are using Pinterest to recruit.

Reynolds says that one of the biggest mistakes college students make is thinking they can use Pinterest for both personal and professional purposes.

"Students will want to keep their Pinterest pages clean and professional, because they never know who might be looking at [the pages]," she explains.

Reynolds also strongly suggests that students make use of the text box available for each picture.

"[Students should] say something about each picture they pin—what it is, how they were involved, when and where it occurred," she says. "That text is the student's only chance to tell viewers what they're looking at, and how it relates to the student as a professional."