

PARADIGM SHIFT IN JOB SEARCH

■ Jobseeking in this 21st century recession may just have gone viral and mobile.

By SUE ZEIDLER

SINCE the start of the US recession in December 2007, about 6.7 million workers have been laid off in the country, according to latest statistics at a time the popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter have exploded, drawing millions of users per day.

As these sites continue to alter social and cultural landscapes, they are also transforming the job search process, enabling more and more people to connect with potential employers, promote their own skills, set up support groups and search for job leads and contacts.

"Mobile technology and social networking has shifted the whole job search paradigm," said Susan Joyce, editor of *JobHunt.Org*, a site offering online job search tips. "You don't need to stay glued to your phone or computer at home anymore."

With mobile devices playing a bigger role in the social networking phenomenon, any job hopeful with an Internet connection or smartphone can now compose resumes, view job listings and contact prospective employers on the go. Joyce suggests creating a resume



REVOLUTIONARY: Jobseekers now use their phones and networking sites to connect with potential employers, market their skills, form support groups and search for job leads. — AP

through popular networking site LinkedIn — a business networking site that lets users create a profile, list skills, work history, employment goals and contact details is among the more secure ways to compile a resume online.

It can be done via Research in Motion Ltd's Blackberry device or Apple Inc's iPhone, she added.

"The LinkedIn Profile is really the resume of the future," Joyce said. "The 'resume' on LinkedIn is really the standard LinkedIn Profile, but it's very popular with recruiters

looking for good candidates.

"You could build your whole LinkedIn presence from any Internet-enabled phone."

Getting creative

With jobs still scarce, many hopefuls are getting creative about getting noticed. Many have begun using Twitter — a microblogging service that allows users to send 140-character messages at a time — to get the word out.

A career is unlikely to be launched on Twitter alone, but candidates are

increasingly "tweeting" or posting messages to outline their skills, experiences and career goals. They are pasting links to their resumes on the microblogging service.

People can also use Twitter to follow recruiters or companies of interest and learn of networking events.

Job seekers have gotten job leads and tips on networking events that they otherwise would have missed, had it not been for their Twitter or Facebook account.

"It is really helped in these hard times. You have a much easier time finding job and networking events. And every time I go to one of these events, I add at least one connection," said Nilo Sarraf, who was laid off from Yahoo! Inc recently and formed a Silicon Valley online networking group called Layoffs Cafe at www.meetup.com/LayoffsCafe/.

Layoffs Cafe is one of several online support groups that have sprung up during the downturn, tipping off job seekers where physical networking events are taking place.

Chris Hutchins, a former management and business strategy consultant in Silicon Valley,

launched LaidOffCamp as the online component to offline events.

"We focus on organising events for people who are unemployed," said Hutchins, noting there have been about 11 "LaidOff Camps" set up around the country, drawing anywhere from 100 to 600 participants who attend panels on topics such as how to live on a budget, how to develop a personal brand and how

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CHRIS HUTCHINS, A FORMER MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS STRATEGY CONSULTANT

to find a job in the current market.

"We spent no dollars on marketing. If it weren't for social media and blogs, Laidoff Camp wouldn't exist," he said.

Call for caution

While candidates these days are taking advantage of social media to easily access job information, one of the downsides, according to job seekers and employment experts, is managing the data.

"It can be overwhelming. It's hard to weed out all the information and manage your time," Sarraf said.

Privacy issues and falling prey to the many recruiting, work-at-home, make-a-million and resume creation software scams are also risks for the unwary.

"When someone is job hunting, they need to be careful. I know a lot of people who have been hurt by bogus resume companies," said Sarraf.

"People tend to think if it's online, it's legitimate and when you're doing a resume, people are being asked to provide a lot of personal information, such as where you live and your social security number." — Reuters