In our interconnected age, social media use is a fact of life. Everywhere you look, people have their eyes glued to their smartphones, eager to check their social media feeds. Much of this is likely for personal use, but many people also use social media for business. Two of the most common social media sites for business are LinkedIn and Twitter. Twitter famously limits users to 140 characters, while LinkedIn caps off regular posts at 600 characters. If used effectively, these brief social media posts can serve as a rapid delivery system to get content to the eyes of your target audience.
This can be a promising concept for the young professional. You likely have some solid work experience, interesting ideas on a certain topic, and are looking for ways to get your voice heard. Social media is a tool in your toolkit that can help your career progress.

Companies often use marketing campaigns to present themselves as experts in the field and partners in the community. This can often include posting regulatory alerts, progress reports on impressive projects, employment vacancies, and company-related human-interest pieces. Individual users can follow a similar pattern, posting for a few common reasons, including seeking a job, promoting activity in a related cause, hunting for contacts, individual brand management, and engaging in business development.

I have used social media effectively for a while now, and it has led to my company getting jobs; but it is only a first step in the process. No one is going to give you work to bring to your company through social media. At best, effective social media use can get you a face-to-face meeting or phone call. As your level of interaction with a contact increases, so do your chances of potentially getting work from that person.

It can be challenging to stand out from the crowd amid seemingly endless competition and untold numbers of memes and political diatribes. Lately, social media has become an outlet for personal opinions, memes, political arguments, and non-sequitur posts. While I like a good dog meme as much as the next guy, I have come to use social media only for business. Over the past year, social media has helped increase our website views each month. You can have some fun with it, but each post should follow basic criteria and ultimately support whatever overall message that you are trying to establish. In the end, the hope is that the readers will want to hear more of what you have to say.

**Getting Noticed: Dos and Don’ts**

There are a few simple dos and don’ts that you can follow to help build your brand and expand your network.

**Do…**
- Remain professional at all times. If you wouldn’t say it to your boss, or to a client, do not post it online.
- Take a moment to review your post. Make sure that it includes all of your desired content. Proofread posts. A post with spelling or syntax errors will look rushed and uninformed.
- Detail any uncommon acronyms. Just because you know what NIOSH means does not mean that everyone will. *(Note: NIOSH stands for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)*
- Find a creative topic or angle that has not received much attention. If you are the 59th person to just share a story from a popular source, your post will be white-washed.
- If you are trying to gain clients, always find a way to highlight the related services that your company offers. Always end such posts with a direction. “Contact us at______.”
- Build up a history of resourceful posts. If you post a few months on a certain aspect of environmental regulation, eventually readers may come to look at you as an expert on that topic.
- Stay on top of regulatory changes and current initiatives. There is a good chance that this will lead to you being the first source for readers on that topic.

**Don’t…**
- Post anything about politics. In our current polarized environment, such discussions will only lead to division and distraction from your real goals. Taking a stance against a candidate can alienate “the other side”. Why eliminate possible business contacts?
- Overstate or exaggerate. If you are trying to present yourself as an expert on a topic, be an expert on that topic. If not, the real experts will be able to sniff out your inconsistencies.
- Try to “friend” everyone. If you have not worked together in the past or hope to in the near future, do not send a friend request. Gaining contacts will only help if you are willing to follow up with them. Please refrain from late night “friend requests”. It does not look good.
- Plagiarize. If you are posting from another’s work, you must give them credit. Simple allusions can suffice, but it is always better to over-cite, than under-cite.
- Slam a former employer or client. No good can come of it and such a post will only make you look petty.
- Post a partial services list. This too will likely be white-washed. You have to first get the reader’s interest and then end with directions for contact.
- If you have even a moment’s pause as to whether or not something is safe to post, chances are your instinct is correct.
- Never treat a work account like a personal account. You are representing a company or organization, and so do so professionally. If you list yourself as presently employed by a company, whatever you post may be viewed as coming from that company.
- Be too hard on yourself. If you follow these simple guidelines, you’ll be just fine. *em*