

This column addresses job hunting and career advancement, focusing on various aspects of career growth from starting your tech comm career to finding a new job to taking your career to the next level. It's written from the perspective of someone who has been a technical writer, technical communication manager, and recruiter, and who worked as a captive (full-time) employee and an independent contractor before finally starting my own company. If you have questions or suggestions for a future column, email them to [jack@prospringstaffing.com](mailto:jack@prospringstaffing.com) with "Career Question" in the Subject line.

## 2010: The Year of Reinvention

By JACK MOLISANI, Associate Fellow

Let me start with a confession: Scott Abel was right and I ignored his advice.

I am referring to the explosion of social media and networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and so on. I should have started riding the wave of social media more than a year ago when Scott advised me to, but I resisted, thinking it was nothing but a passing fad.

Why am I airing my confession in such a public forum? Because I bet that many of you have a similar resistance to jumping on the social media bandwagon.

Let me share a few epiphanies that led to my newfound enthusiasm for social media.

I had just started using Twitter but didn't know much about the third-party tools that expand Twitter's capabilities, so I made a point to attend Scott's hands-on Twitter workshop at the recent LavaCon Conference in New Orleans. During the workshop, Scott explained how Twitter is more than just a vehicle to tell your friends, "I'm going for coffee!"—it is also a valuable tool for developing your personal online brand,

for promoting your business, and more.



For example, he mentioned certain tools that search for keywords in Twitter posts and aggregate them into a news feed that websites can integrate into their content. I'd

never seen that personally, so I acknowledged that as interesting, but didn't take any action as a result.

The next morning, I was listening to Scott speak on the future of eBooks, but slipped out mid-session to check my email. When I did, I found an email from Google alerting me that a page with the word "lavacon" had been indexed, so I clicked on the link to view the page. (I have a Google Alert for "lavacon" to monitor what people are saying about the professional development conference that I organize.)

The page that displayed was a "Breaking News 24/7" website, and on the right side of the page was a concatenation of Twitter posts. Someone (Alan Houser) had just tweeted something from Scott's eBooks session at LavaCon, and it was posted in a real-time news feed.



I could hardly believe my eyes. Scott had just explained this functionality the previous afternoon, and here it was in play!

And what was truly remarkable was the fact that I was just *in* the room where Scott was speaking on the future of eBooks! So between the time I walked from the session to the registration table:

1) Someone tweeted Scott's

- prediction,
- 2) a third-party Twitter application captured the tweet and aggregated it into a news feed,
  - 3) the news feed was displayed on a breaking news website,
  - 4) Google indexed the web page, and
  - 5) Google sent me an email alerting me that a web page containing "lavacon" was just indexed.

## “Don’t resist change. Change happens. Embrace it.”

All in less than five minutes? *This* is what Scott meant by the power of social media!

Another epiphany from the conference: You attract Twitter followers in direct proportion to the *content* of your tweets.

I’ve been using Twitter for months, but the content I post usually consists of tips and advice on how to land a job or advance your career. Thus, many of my followers are people looking for new jobs. However, being a recruiter, I have two distinct customers: the clients from whom I get jobs to fill, and the candidates I find to fill those jobs.

So my second “ah ha!” moment was when I realized that I’ve been looking for jobs to fill, yet I’m only tweeting about subjects of interest to *candidates*. In other words, I’ve been neglecting a major percentage of my target audience: HR recruiters or hiring managers who have jobs to fill and who can use agencies to fill them.

So to attract people with jobs to fill, I need to tweet about subjects of *interest to people with jobs to fill*.

This seems like a pretty obvious datum now, but sometimes you are so focused handling day-to-day problems that you forget to add tasks to your to-do list that move you forward toward achieving your long-term goals. (Thanks to Andrea Ames’ keynote presentation at LavaCon for that reminder.)

My third epiphany came the next morning while I was eating breakfast with professional career coach Emma Hamer. We were discussing the job market and mistakes professionals make when interviewing for jobs, and she added that many seasoned professionals find it difficult to state what skills they bring to a potential employer.

“Difficult?” I said, “Shoot, I can rattle off 10 skills I have without even blinking!” and proceeded to do so. She listened attentively, nodded, and said, “That’s great, Jack. But you’re listing *attributes* (something about you) and *activities* (things you do), not *skills*. Which skills make you good at what you do? So you are great at business development. Wonderful. Which *skills* make you great at business development?” (Hint: interviewing, active listening, establishing trust, building rapport, etc.)

“If you can’t articulate what skills you bring to the job, then why would anyone hire you? Be prepared to show people, with concrete examples, what skills you have and how you’ve used those skills to great effect and how you can do the same for them.”

Oops. I keep forgetting that while I’m a professional in *my* field, other people are professionals in *theirs*. Maybe I should spend less time thinking I can do it all and more time asking for help from other professionals. (Which in my case would

be listening to social media experts and my career coach who can help me reach my career goals.)


Wow, three life- and career-changing epiphanies in less than 48 hours! And the last occurred over breakfast in a hole-in-the-wall dive bar in the New Orleans French Quarter—not a place known for being an incubator for personal and professional development!

To recap, here are my recent lessons learned, and thus my advice to you:

- Don’t resist change. Change happens. *Embrace it.*
- When change happens, actively look for how you can use the change to advance your career.
- Harness the potential of social media. You have a point of view, so figure out what you want to say and then say it. (Or, at least, start retweeting other people’s points of view with which you agree until you feel comfortable publishing your own.)
- Identify your target audiences, and address each of those audiences with customized personal and business communications.
- Have a plan. Your “Internet footprint” shouldn’t happen by accident (Rahel Bailie, *Managing Your Online Brand*).
- Don’t tweet about what you think others might find interesting—tweet about what you find

interesting. “Your people” will find you (Chellie Campbell, *The Wealthy Spirit*).

Not happy with your current boss, job, situation, or salary?

2010 may be the year to reinvent yourself! 

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To follow Jack Molisani on Twitter: *JackMolisani*

To follow Scott Abel, The Content Wrangler: *scottabel*

To follow Andrea Ames, IBM: *aames*

To follow Rahel Baile, Intentional Design: *rahelab*

To follow Chellie Campbell, author of *The Wealthy Spirit*: *chelliecampbell*

To follow Emma Hamer, Professional Career Coach: *EmmaHamer*

To follow Alan Houser, Group Wellesley: *arh*

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