

## Professional Social Networks

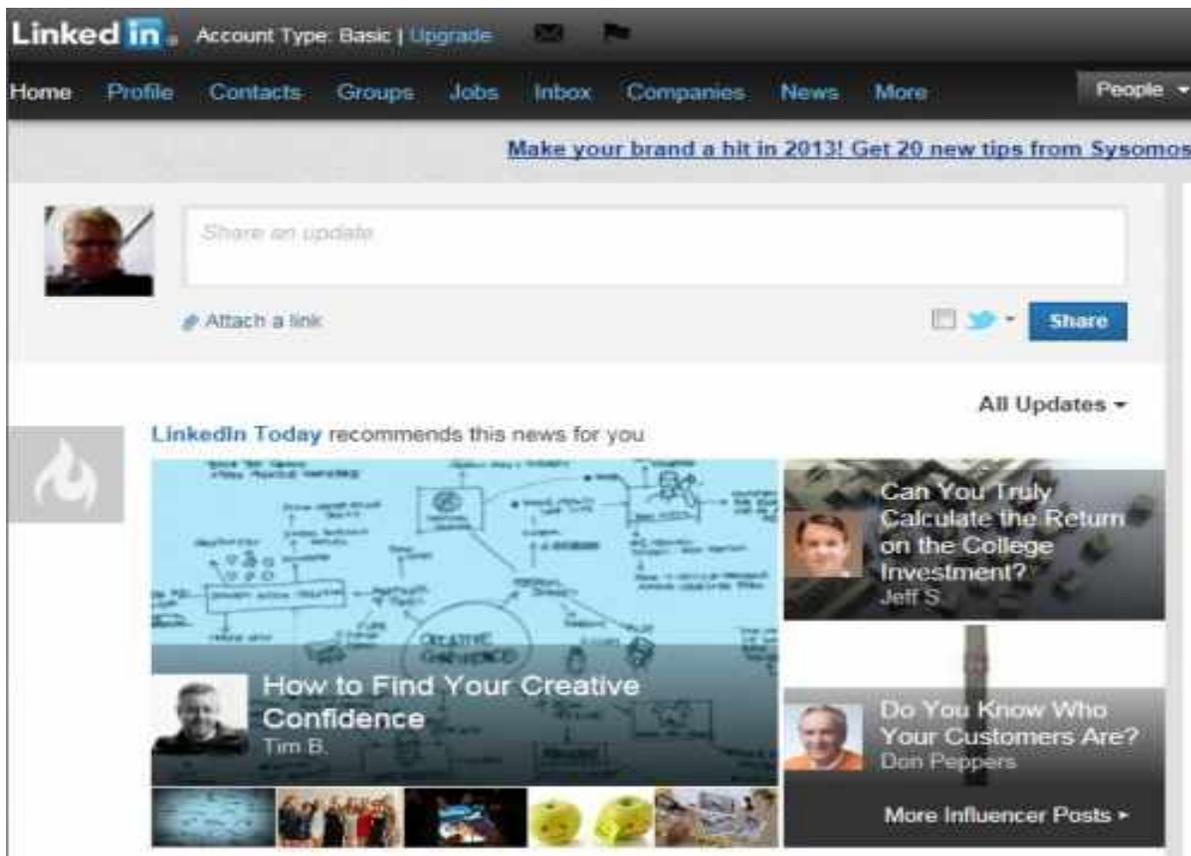
Steven R. Van Hook, PhD

### *Customer Service Job Networking and Professional Development*

The business world can be challenging to break into, highly competitive, and frequently unforgiving. Fortunately, there are many support systems in place, including social networks that provide a means to share tips, job leads, case studies, and mutual support for colleagues facing common problems. Successful professionals will make use of these resources as well as share their own employment leads, tips, and best practices.

By business networking and postings on social networks, you may also help employers to find and recruit you! Check out the following annotated resources that you may find useful as part of your career development in customer service and related occupations. Please spend some time giving a brief visit to each of these websites, join up if you haven't already, and put their networking power to work on your behalf.

### LinkedIn



**LinkedIn:** <http://www.linkedin.com>

Saylor URL: [www.saylor.org/cust105#4.3](http://www.saylor.org/cust105#4.3)



The Saylor Foundation

Linked is a free social-networking resource with a primarily business bent. You can connect with other professionals; track your friends and colleagues as they progress in their careers; network for employment opportunities; post a resume in order to help employers to find you; join professional groups in fields such as retailing, technical support, , and other customer service fields; or start a group of your own. You are also able to research company listings, follow their postings for company news and job openings, and gain inside insights into a company's activities and developments. If you only join one social network for your career growth, this should well be it.

## Facebook



**Facebook:** <http://facebook.com>

Facebook is more personal in nature, but it provides many opportunities beyond simply staying in touch with loved ones and posting pictures of your pets. Many companies have Facebook pages which you can *like* and follow their in-house news. You may also develop select circles of friends and colleagues who share employment leads, career tips, training opportunities, and the like.

## Twitter

A screenshot of the Best Buy Twitter profile page. The page features a blue header with navigation icons for Home, Connect, Discover, and Me. The profile header includes the Best Buy logo, the name "Best Buy" with a verified badge, the handle "@BestBuy", and the bio: "When the technology is right, anything can happen. Need support? Tweet @BestBuySupport Richfield, MN · BestBuy.com". Below the header, there are statistics: 9,044 Tweets, 1,553 Following, and 338,755 Followers. A "Follow" button is visible. The main content area shows a tweet from Best Buy (@BestBuy) dated 30 Jan, which reads: "Amy Poehler visited us & had A LOT of questions. Get a sneak peek & see more during #SB47!youtu.be/PcmW8HCuLo8 #infiniteanswers". The tweet is promoted by Best Buy and includes options for Hide media, Reply, Retweet, Favorite, and More. On the left side of the page, there is a sidebar with navigation options: Tweets, Following, Followers, Favorites, and Lists. Below these is a "Tweet to Best Buy" section with a text input field containing "@BestBuy". At the bottom of the sidebar, there is a grid of featured content including a video thumbnail and several book covers like "BAD RELIGION", "THE HONOR OF TYN LUTHER KING, JR.", and "INJUSTICE".

Twitter: <http://twitter.com>

Twitter provides yet another opportunity to follow company news by subscribing to their tweets. Pick an employer you might like to work for, and follow their daily updates for better insights into the company and new directions it may be heading.

### *Professional Development*

Customer service—like most specialized fields in business and public affairs—requires a high degree of interpersonal interactions and social skills. As you network with other jobseekers and colleagues in your networks, you may find some useful tips, and even share some of your own. The following suggestions may help with stressful situations of customer interactions, staff meetings, presentations, and just small-talk schmoozing at office parties.

- If you have a difficult time with public speaking or interpersonal interactions, you may want to find a Toastmaster's organization near you for some low-stress and supportive practice.
- When preparing for job interviews and performance evaluations, expect hard questions and draft out your responses in advance—especially for the questions you may not want to answer.

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- Do not be afraid to admit that you do not know the answer to a question; instead, offer to find the answer and get back to the asker as soon as possible.
- Do not rush when answering any questions. Do not feel obliged to fill the quiet after a tricky question. Just pause, think, and then answer.
- Always dress your part, projecting a cool, clean-cut professional image. Dress up or down as the circumstance dictates.
- Project enthusiasm for your ideas and goals. That attitude is contagious. Remember that if you are not excited about yourself, then the listener never will be.
- Do not be untruthful, but also do not feel the need to be hurtful. Do not say someone looks unwell, sick, or tired. This will do nothing to further conversation and only make the person uncomfortable. Remember silence is an option.

Personal development guru Dale Carnegie had many best tips for effective human relations in the art of “how to win friends and influence people” including:

- “You can make more friends in two months by becoming really interested in other people than you can in two years by getting other people interested in you.”
- People typically respond very badly to criticism, even if it is of someone else, so “speak ill of no one and speak all the good you know of everyone.”
- People yearn to be appreciated, so always keep a “thank you” on your lips.
- “Arouse in others an eager want,” or just talk about what it is that they desire, and find ways you can help them to achieve it.

### *Summary:*

- There are a number of networking resources worth visiting that help the job seekers engage in exchanges of information, leads, and mutual support.
- Social networks such as LinkedIn allow us to post resumes, join online professional groups, and help potential employers find us.
- Customer service success requires a high-degree of interpersonal skills such as simple but enthusiastic presentation, advanced preparation of information, and sensitivity to the needs of others.
- Key methods to connecting well with people are to demonstrate interest in others, express appreciation, and seek ways to help them better their lives.