

Chicago Tribune

careerbuilder®

chicagotribune.com/careerbuilder **Employment Section**

SUNDAY, JULY 25, 2010

Branching out

Owlsh Communications CEO touts social media as 'relationship accelerator'

One man in the Chicagoland area knows LinkedIn better than anyone: J.D. Gershbein.

When you think of an owl, what pops into your head? Harry Potter might flood your thoughts for a few seconds but when Gershbein thinks of the animal, he sees wisdom, speed, instinct, and great vision — all great qualities for business. Inspired by this bird of prey at a young age, he named his company Owlsh Communications. As president and CEO, Gershbein is an Internet marketing specialist who has dedicated his work solely to LinkedIn, which now boasts more than 70 million users.

Gershbein bumped into LinkedIn serendipitously. While at a networking event, he saw a couple of his peers using the website and created a profile of his own that same night.

"Before long, people were coming to me with their questions about LinkedIn," says Gershbein.

Ultimately, he started helping people with their professional profiles and showing them how to advantageously use the site. From group training to corporate workshops to public speaking, Gershbein preaches the potential of LinkedIn and



its ability to change people's professional lives.

"Your success on LinkedIn, however you define it, is directly proportional to the power and reach of your LinkedIn profile,"

says Gershbein. "If you present well on LinkedIn and work it with purpose, you can expect positive outcomes."

Success on LinkedIn doesn't come without time dedicated to polishing your profile. We're not talking about a recommendation here or a keyword there, although Gershbein thinks both a crucial to a successful profile. We're talking about personal branding and the principles of industrial psychology.

"Everything I do, for me and my clients, is strategic," says Gershbein, who applies theories from neuroscience to help construct the most compelling profiles possible.

He is acutely aware of how the human brain processes visual information and language cues on a computer page and seeks to draw out the most favorable perceptions of people through their LinkedIn profile. This step, according to Gershbein, can frequently "tip the scales in your favor" when being accessed as a possible employee, business partner or service provider.

Every decision you make with your LinkedIn profile can have an effect on your professionalism and credibility offline. For example, you should take the time to methodically figure out with whom you really want to connect with before actually joining their network.

"Be selective about who you link in with on social media," says Gershbein.

Adding about a million users a week, LinkedIn continues to grow and evolve.

"It is a relationship accelerator," says Gershbein. "It creates leverage. I see it gaining even more momentum." It can help companies find new employees, help recruiters find people looking for jobs and, most importantly, help candidates land their dream position.



Networking, whether at social events or using social media opportunities, is an ongoing process that needs to be updated and adapted.

And, as LinkedIn moves forward, you can be sure that J.D. Gershbein will be right there on the frontlines, helping people develop their profiles, strategically and effectively building their brands.

— Christopher Nelson, Tribune Media Services

"Before long, people were coming to me with their questions about LinkedIn," says Gershbein.