

Insights From the 2013 After-JET Conference: Improving Your Online Professional Presence

By Karl Hoeschen (East Chichibu Village, Saitama, 2010-2013)

The After-JET Conference took place from February 25th through the 27th, focusing on a variety of themes for JETs heading in all manner of directions. Because of this diversity of skills and interests, a consistent message throughout the different presentations was the increasing importance of media as a resource for new job opportunities and for securing those opportunities. These kinds of ideas can be useful for current and former JET members alike, so I have compiled important key points from the conference into the following. This article will summarize some of the advice and best practices regarding how to establish an online presence to improve one's success in our competitive job market.

The first important step to take is to assess your online presence. Search your name on Google, Facebook, and any other media currently used by you, your friends and your family. Clean up search results that you *can* control by removing and un-tagging yourself from any unprofessional media results. For results over which you *don't* have direct control, use Search Engine Optimization (SEO). An SEO service allows you to prioritize the search results you want prospective employers to find when they search your name. There are pay-services that manage SEO for you and free services where you manage it yourself. The goals of using SEO are to make yourself the first search, showing up before anyone else with a similar name and to ensure that the results displayed will help the impression you are trying to make. Employers researching prospective employees usually only look at the first page of results.

The second step is to establish your online presence by using the internet to reach other professionals for information and recommendations. Of the networking tools available on the internet, **LinkedIn** was the service most-emphasized in the presentations and also used personally by the speakers for their own professional networking, *"Everything that's relevant to the job career you want goes on LinkedIn. And don't be shy about asking for recommendations."* – Janelle Jimenez, presenter on Social Media. Join the JET Alumni groups on LinkedIn. Use your interests to find people to ask for recommendations and build contacts. The more contacts and endorsements you acquire means the stronger presence you are making online.

The final step is further networking using other online resources. It's important to consider researching contacts even in locations you are thinking you *might* like to work. Increase your visibility before moving to a new city by using these resources:

1. Build contacts in prospective cities by using www.meetup.com
2. Apply to other JET Alumni groups and network within them on Facebook/LinkedIn
3. Get job announcements for those areas on www.JETwit.com
4. Put your name out there by writing for JQ (JET Alumni) Magazine and/or your local JET Alumni chapter.

Having excellent search results and an ever-growing group of contacts are the key ingredients to remaining competitive and finding good job leads. Good luck in your searching, everyone. I hope this article was helpful and informative. I'm looking forward to meeting you on the colder side of the pond.