Career Education and Management

Module 6: Personal Branding & Social Media
Overview
The world of work has changed. Employers list personal branding as one of the top three skills they want from employees. Creating your own personal brand is a way to deliver your unique value proposition to an employer and the world. The key to developing your personal brand is consistency – everything people read or see or experience about you is reliable.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

• Describe whom you are and what you have to offer employers.

• Understand the importance of personal branding plan

• Prepare your online presence and become familiarized with social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn

Preparing your online presence
Online social networking (including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook) is becoming one of the leading methods of connecting qualified job seekers with employers. When used correctly, online resources can help you to brand yourself, present your qualification and skills, and connect with others in your field to find potential employers.
The first step to establishing your online professional presence is to establish what your current online presence is. The quickest way to do this is Google yourself. Search your name in various forms (first and last, first middle and last, first middle initial and last etc) to see what comes up. If anything shows up that you wouldn’t want an employer to see, and then fix it! This can be done through privacy settings on your personal Facebook account, Twitter account or Myspace account, or by requesting that contact be removed from third party websites. Eliminate your personal presence as much as possible, but leave up hits that may look favorable to employers, for example if you have been published in a newspaper.

Online resources can help you to brand yourself, present your qualifications and skills, and connect with others in your field to find potential employers.
Ritika Trikha, in her article “Time to Clean Up Your Online Identity”, Published in the online blog Resumebear.Com gives some great tips on how to remove inappropriate material. In this learning module, we will go over some of her tips for each of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

Often, the first step of a recruiting process is to find out as much information about applicants as possible. If the recruiter finds photos of you at a party last week, or your personal blog expressing political views, then this might affect their view of you unfavorably. Now that your non-professional online presence has been removed, you can begin building your professional online presence.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is an online professional network, designed to connect you with your trusted professional contacts. While it can be used to connect with friends and family, its intended purpose is to connect with people that you have interacted with, within your field of study, or in a professional capacity. It allows you to keep in touch with your professional contacts, even if their place of employment, or contact information change. It also allows you to connect with your contacts’ connection, expanding your professional network, and enabling new introductions.

Getting Started
The first step to LinkedIn networking is to create a profile. The website is very user friendly and provides step by step direction when creating your profile. Remember, all the information you include in your profile will be available to your professional contacts after you make connections, so only include information that you would like your future colleagues or employers to see.

To begin, navigate to the LinkedIn homepage. Once on the main home page, choose the ‘Join Today’ option. The site then gives you a choice to start from scratch, or to join via Facebook. When you choose to join via Facebook, it will automatically search your Facebook contacts for anyone that is already a LinkedIn member.

You can then choose which people to invite to be your contacts, which is very handy. Remember though that this will become your professional network, so be choosy when connecting to your Facebook contacts on LinkedIn.
Building your LinkedIn Profile

Some people think that a Resume and a LinkedIn profile should be completely interchangeable, that’s not 100% true. Your LinkedIn profile becomes a complete inventory of your experiences, whereas a resume is tailor fitted to the job that you are applying to. Think of the LinkedIn as the box of tools that you can use later to populate a targeted resume.

LinkedIn recommends that you begin your profile with 8 Key components:

- Correct industry and Postal code
- Your current position and Description
- Two previous positions
- Education
- At least five key skills
- Profile photo
- A summary
- At least 50 strong connections

Once you have filled all these components, the LinkedIn algorithms are able to find possible connections to connect you to, and to suggest you to potential employers based on your expertise.

Let’s break it down a little bit further to make it easy to populate:

Current Industry and Postal Code: this one is easy. It’s there to ensure that you are being shown the most applicable positions (both the correct field and the correct geographical location) and that you show up in the correct searches that others are making.

Your Current Position and Description:
I know what you’re thinking: What if I don’t have a current position because I’m a student!? Put that in as an experience, to fill the gap, and to show potential connections what you’re doing with your time. Remember, your contacts can always come and check out what you’ve been up to, and don’t like to see dead space. You can include a “Position” called ‘Social Service Worker’ at Sheridan College to show that that’s what you’re currently doing! If you are completing a placement or co-op (paid or unpaid), this is a great place to put that too!

The description is very important, and should be formatted similarly to the bullet points that follow the position title in your resume.

Two Previous Positions (at least):
This is where your LinkedIn really becomes different from your resume: You can include ALL previous experience on your LinkedIn if you want.
You’re not targeting your profile to a particular job. Make sure that you keep the details accurate and strong, but you can include as many previously held positions as you want. That being said, your 2 month summer job at McDonalds in 2001 might not help your online presence that much; be choosy with what you would like to share with the world.

**Education:** This is another opportunity to include your entire history. On resumes, we usually begin after high school, or only include the most recent of many diplomas or degrees. On LinkedIn you want to ensure that people can connect with you that may have been your classmates during previous education (even high school!). Make sure you include the year that you graduated, and any clubs or teams that you were on while you were there, including fraternities, societies, choirs etc.

There are additional features on LinkedIn where you can include the names of courses that you took while at the educational institution. This is an opportunity to show the breadth of your education!

**At least five key skills:** On your resume, your skills are more like capability statements, instead of one word. On LinkedIn, an online database, you are better of using single words.

This makes you more searchable.

Profile Photo: A headshot, or a logo that represents your professional career, is usually the best bet when using LinkedIn. Make sure that it’s a small photo (80x80 pixels or smaller).

A photo makes your profile stronger, and can represent you as a person instead of just a name. One key use of a photo is that your contacts can make sure that you are the “John Smith” they met at the conference last week… especially if you have a common name.

**A Summary:** This is the same concept as your personal or professional profile at the beginning of your resume. It is used to give your contacts and idea of what you are all about! You can even type out your 30-second elevator pitch and include it in your LinkedIn profile.

**50 Connections:** This is where it gets tricky. Be careful with who you invite to be your connection on LinkedIn: Everyone should be someone that you have interacted with in the past in a professional or academic capacity.
LinkedIn isn't used very often for your personal social life. A great way to get started is to go through your e-mail contact list, and use that to create a LinkedIn invite list.

Once you have 10-15 contacts, the program will begin suggesting people to invite to be your contact.

You have now created a LinkedIn profile.

**Next Steps include:**
- Joining groups that are relevant to your field of study
- Ask former employers or peers to recommend your work
- Search for jobs using the Job Search feature on LinkedIn
- Use the Answers section to learn how better to use the program
- Download the mobile app to your phone (m.linkedin.com)

Twitter

Twitter is used currently as both a personal social network and a professional network. It's known as a “microblogging” site, where users can post statements of 140 characters, as well as links to photos, websites and other users’ content.

While it can be used to ‘Tweet’ about your personal life, it is a very useful tool to show your expertise in your field, and to keep others up to date on your professional development, involvement in your field, and to demonstrate you knowledge.

**Getting Started:**
Creating a Twitter account is very easy, and can be done in just a few minutes. The tough part is coming up with a user name that reflects you as a professional. This is similar to choosing your e-mail address: you don't want to push away future employers with an inappropriate or cutesy handle.

Once you’ve created your account, you have an opportunity to input a (short) bio, which can be a condensed version of your professional profile from your resume. You can also include a profile picture, which should either represent you as a professional, or be a professional logo or image.
Glossary
Now that you have a profile, it’s time to learn
the language of this social networking platform.
These are a few of the common terms
summarized by www.mashable.com

Tweet: A 140-character message.
Retweet (RT): Re-sharing or giving credit to
someone else’s tweet.

Feed: The stream of tweets you see on your
homepage. It’s comprised of updates from
users you follow.

Handle: Your username.
Mention (@): A way to reference another
user by his username in a tweet (e.g. @
mashable). Users are notified when @mentioned.
It’s a way to conduct discussions with
other users in a public realm.

Direct Message (DM): A private, 140-character
message between two people. You may
only DM a user who follows you.
Hashtag (#): A way to denote a topic of
conversation or participate in a larger linked
discussion (e.g. #Resume, #Jobsearch).
A hashtag is a discovery tool that allows others
to find your tweets, based on topics. You can
also click on a hashtag to see all the tweets
that mention it in real time — even from people
you don’t follow.

Following Others
There are thousands of Twitter users in hundreds
of fields, who share wisdom 140 characters
at a time. Start seeking out leaders in
your field to follow. You can also follow celebrities,
friends, family and colleagues.
Find the “retweet” button under every message
made by others. If someone says something
you agree with, or would like to share,
and then click this button and it will show up
in your feed! It’s a great way to get on the
radar of someone, and let them know “hey, I
respect you opinion”.
When you see something that you want to
discuss with someone else, you can press
the “reply” button. The @ symbol means that
it will appear on your feed and theirs, but
remember that this is in a public forum, do don’t
say anything that you don’t want everyone to
see.

Tweeting
Now that you have developed a group of
people that you are following, and have begun
to discuss tweets with them, it’s time to
start showing off your expertise! Use twitter
to display your tid-bits of knowledge, update
your followers on projects or courses that you
are working on, or ask questions and spark
some discussion! Remember that this Is a public
forum, and you are trying to develop your
professional online presence.
Facebook

Facebook is primarily being used as a personal social network, but it is also a valuable resource to develop your professional presence. The tricky part is separating the two. Ensure that if you have decided to use your Facebook professionally, that you must remove all aspects that may reflect poorly on you during your search for employment, or when networking with colleges and employers.

For New Facebook Users:
Facebook boasts a very simple user interface, and takes only minutes to create a new profile. Navigate to www.facebook.com and choose the option for creating a new profile. Facebook will then walk you through the first few steps to setting up your time line with the details required.

For Existing Facebook Users:
The first step to using Facebook professionally is to ensure that there is NO personal content available for colleagues or employers to view. With Facebook’s new timeline feature, you are able to scroll through previous entries, and hide them from view. If you have been a facebook user for several years, this can be very time consuming, and difficult to hit all of the inappropriate content. Revisit the article Time to Clean Up Your Online Identity if you are having difficulty.

One recommendation is to create a second Facebook profile for your professional use. You can change your ‘personal’ profile to a nickname or a middle name that only your friends would know, to keep it un-searchable, and create a 2nd profile with your full name, using a work or business email address.

Tips to maintain a professional Facebook profile:

Use your professional profile to ‘Friend’ your coworkers, professional contacts, supervisors and clients, and avoid adding your personal friends. This can be done on your personal account.

Upload a picture that represents your professional personality, and avoid anything depicting inappropriate behaviour.
Post status updates about projects you are working on, continuing education, new connections, or topics that you are an expert on.

‘Like’ pages for companies and organizations that are relevant to your field, and participate in conversations.

Join groups for your employment or activities that you take part in as part of your professional life.

Monitor what your friends post on your wall, or tag you in. You don’t want your name associated with inappropriate photos or content. You can always untag or report material you would like removed.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite is an online social media management dashboard that is free to use! You can log in with information about your twitter, facebook and linked in accounts to be able to monitor and update from one place. It has many features that allow for scheduled postings, comparing audiences form the different networks, and monitoring traffic. Check it out at www.hootsuite.com

Mashable

Mashable is an online blog and news site that includes user guides and information about online media. Useful tools include market research, industry news, and how-to guides for the major social media outlets. Check it out at www.mashable.com

It’s important to keep track of your online presence so you always know how you are represented to the virtual world.

Other Networks to Research

Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are currently the leaders in professional networking, however there are many other online networks that you can explore. They include:

Google+
Pinterest
Upspring
YouTube

It’s Important to keep track of your online presence so you always know how you are represented to the virtual world.
Summary

Just like a company selling a product, your personal brand will help promote you to potential employers. An on-line presence – especially through LinkedIn - is now part of your personal branding and your job search toolbox. Please keep in mind that Facebook is your social presence, while LinkedIn is your business presence. Keeping the two separate is important to maintaining your professional presence on the web.

If you are engaging in Twitter, use it to display your tid-bits of knowledge, update your followers on projects or courses that you are working on, or ask questions and spark some discussion! Twitter is about on-going discussion and sharing information. It is important to always be aware of what your brand says about you, by keeping it up to date and relevant. Refresh your presence as you gain more knowledge, skills and experience.

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