Building Your Professional Online Presence

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and blogs can be a great resource for networking and establishing an online identity. By creating and maintaining professional profiles, you can connect with potential employers, highlight your skills and experiences, and build a professional brand that makes you stand out.

Where to Start

- **Decide which version of your name to use.** Being consistent (full vs. nickname) will create a clear identity and make it easier for potential employers to identify you.
- **Choose an appropriate photo.** Dress in professional attire and choose a high-quality image. Pick a photo with a high pixel count. When the image is scaled down, it will result in fewer artifacts. This is the first picture people will see of you. What do you want them to think?
- **Define yourself.** Write a profile headline that is clear, concise, and memorable. Think of it as a personal slogan – you want people to remember it!
- **Highlight your skills.** Share your work! Post writing samples, link users to your professional website or blog, share documentaries or videos you directed, or post pictures of your artwork.

Now what?

You've established an online identity that is clear and memorable. Now what?

- **Connect**. Add or follow professionals in your area of interest. To find professional associations in your field of study, check out WEDDLE's (http://www.weddles.com/associations), a research, publishing, consulting, and training firm that helps organizations and people maximize their success in recruiting, retention, job search, and career self-management. Networking is one of the best ways to learn about job and internship openings, opportunities for development, and general career advice.
- **Update**. Update your status with current news in your field of interest. Tweet interesting articles. Share your own work and thoughts – just remember to keep it professional!
- **Add value**. Continue to update your profile. Add your education, the new skills you've learned, and show what you represent.

How Should I Use These Sites?

Facebook (www.facebook.com)
- *Join groups.* Join network, industry, and alumni groups to connect with others. Want to stay connected to your classmates and discover potential career opportunities? Search for "The Ohio State University Class of 2016."
- *Edit your info.* Craft your About section so that it is an accurate representation of your professional brand and reflects what opportunities you are searching for.
- *Share.* Post content that is interesting and relates to fields that are important to you. Just saw a TED (ted.com) talk about how great leaders inspire action? Share it and begin a discussion with your peers.

Twitter (www.twitter.com)
- *Follow companies and people that interest you.* Remember that viewers can see who you follow, so it can be a way for potential employers to get to know you.
- *Retweet!* It's a great way to share interesting content and connect with other students and professionals.
- *Ask questions.* Twitter is great for getting feedback and opinions. Looking for an internship in Dublin, Ohio? Ask your followers if they know of any opportunities.

- *Use hashtags.* The search bar filters content by using keywords and hashtags. By using the right combination of words, users will be able to easily find your posts. Generate conversation by asking your followers to add a tag to a specific topic. For example, if you wanted to discuss solutions to conserving energy, you might create a #goinggreen tag. Your post will show up for anyone who searches "going green."
- *Learn to use URL shortening tools.* You've found an awesome article you'd like to share but the URL is over 140 characters – what now? Sites like TinyURL (http://tinyurl.com/) and go.osu (http://go.osu.edu/) will allow you to post links while staying within the character restraints.

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)
- *Highlight your skills and achievements.* Continue to update your profile so that it accurately reflects all of your areas of expertise. Have you recently learned HTML or CSS? Add that to your "Skills & Expertise" section.
- *Request recommendations.* Ask past and present employers to write a recommendation for you to include on your page.
- *Join groups.* Join industry, alumni, and personal interest groups and actively participate in discussions. This is a great way to begin networking with like-minded people.
- *Search for opportunities.* Use the "Jobs" tab to look for jobs and internships in your field.
- *Network.* Add connections to people you know, and search for people who have a job similar to what you want to do so you can begin to connect.
- **Additional Tips:** Check out https://asccareerservices.osu.edu/files/asccareerservices/Build-A-Professional-Profile.pdf

Pinterest (www.pinterest.com)
- *Follow employers you wish to work for.* By exploring company pins, you can get an idea of their corporate culture and marketing techniques.
- *Search for jobs.* Use keywords like "hiring," "human resources," "college relations," and "recruiting" to find employers using Pinterest to recruit.
- *Create a portfolio board*. Post examples of your work to share with peers and potential employers.
- *Create a resume board.* Pin pictures related to your schooling and experiences to create a visual representation of your resume. Interning for an event planner? Pin pictures of a wedding you worked on. Serving as the president of a student organization? Consider including pictures from the teambuilding retreat you implemented.
- *Show off your creativity.* Because of its visual focus, individuals seeking employment in a creative field can use boards to stand out. Use them to tell a story or grab an employer's attention.
- *Use the text box.* Be sure to explain how the pictures you pin relate to you as a professional.

Blog/Website
- *Develop content that is both meaningful and professional*. By doing so, you will allow other professionals the opportunity to develop a stronger connection to you and your brand. Have a passion for baking and want to get involved in the industry? Post pictures and descriptions of your sweet treats.
- *Refine your About section*. Craft your "About Me" so that viewers get a good sense of who you are, what you are about, and what kind of opportunities you are looking for.
- *Include your resume*. This is a great way for potential employers to find out about your qualifications. Add a "Resume" tab and highlight your skills. If your site is public, you may want to consider taking off information that is too personal (GPA, address, etc.).
- *Respond to comments and questions*. Actively monitoring and responding to comments will promote discussion and keep your viewers feeling connected to you.
- **Additional Tips:** Check out sites like WordPress (www.wordpress.com) and Tumblr (www.tumblr.com) to start your own blog for free. If you're interested in creating your own website and purchasing a domain, you might consider 1&1 (www.1and1.com) or A Small Orange (http://asmallorange.com/). There are plenty of places to begin a blog or website. Do your research and find what best fits your needs!

General Advice

- **KEEP YOUR PERSONAL LIFE PRIVATE.** Remember that potential employers may be looking at your profile. Keep it classy, folks!
- **Utilize privacy settings.** Check your privacy settings to be sure you know *exactly* what pieces of information you are sharing with the public. Decide whether pieces of personal information should be private or public (address, phone number, email, etc.) and make adjustments accordingly. Settings often automatically change when sites are updated, so you'll want to double-check your controls during those times.
- **Google yourself.** You may be surprised at the results! Be sure the information is appropriate. Employers often use search engines to find out more about potential candidates. If something shows up that you don't wish to be shown, you'll need to delete the information from the original source. To help expedite the process, check out this support from Google: http://support.google.com/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=164734.While there is no guarantee that you can delete unwanted content, these steps may help.
- **Set up a Google alert for your name.** Google alerts send you email updates of the latest relevant Google results. By placing an alert on your name, you will be notified when someone mentions you online. You can set up an alert at http://www.google.com/alerts. Add your name in quotes to the search box and then select how often you wish to be notified of updates.
- **Be careful about what you post.** It is important to be mindful about what you post *anywhere* online. If your name is attached to a forum comment or thread that is viewable to the public, potential recruiters might see it. Sites like Yelp and Rate My Professors are examples of places you may want to carefully consider what you write. Fair and objective comments are ideal. Employers tend to shy away from people who sound overly subjective, negative, or aggressive.
- **Place URLs on job search materials.** Include links to your profiles in your e-mail signature and on resumes and cover letters.

Additional Resources

- **Mashable** (http://mashable.com/). Mashable is the largest news source dedicated to covering digital culture, social media, and technology. Stay on top of current trends by exploring the site. Read articles about using social media to position yourself professionally.
- **FutureLink** (www.futurelink.osu.edu). Use FutureLink to find employers who use the database's social media sites. Click on the organization you are interested in. On the employer Profile page, you will find links to their social media websites. Use these sites to connect with and learn about the company.