Creating an Impressive Online Brand

These days, a strong resume might not be enough to get you an interview – many employers are looking for a well-rounded web presence, as well. The purpose of your online brand is to showcase your skills and talents to potential employers, colleagues, and networking contacts - anyone who can help you find a job, and grow your career.

Social Media Tips

- **LinkedIn** is a great place to have your career-related online profile. Ensure your photo is a professional one - a head and shoulders shot of you in business attire is ideal, and be careful with grammar and punctuation on your profile page and your posts. Post appropriate and interesting content when relevant, but don’t make posts just for the sake of it. The more you showcase your work, knowledge and experience, the better. **For more tips on building your LinkedIn profile, see our separate information sheet: How to build a Professional Student LinkedIn Profile.**

- **Twitter** can be used for either career-related or social posts, or a mixture of both, BUT if you want to use this as a professional tool, remember that those following your professional posts will see ALL your Twitter posts. Following industry professionals on Twitter can be a great start to your online networking as it’s less invasive than requesting a connection through LinkedIn.

- Employers will expect a more relaxed and social-oriented presence on **Facebook** – but what can be accessed has to be appropriate for your grandma AND your boss.

- Regularly search for your name online. Note others with the same or a similar name, and ensure that your profile allows you to be differentiated, e.g. your professional photo. It’s also a good idea to check on any other information or photos published about you by others – **anything that can be found by searching for your name on Google** – e.g. testimonials you have written, letters to the editor, opinion pieces, blog responses, photos you’ve been tagged in – do they represent you in a positive light?

"The first thing an employer is going to do is Google you," says Alexandra Levit, generational speaker and author. “The worst thing is to have something negative pop up. In the absence of anything negative, having nothing come up really doesn’t say much about your level of seriousness in terms of being out there and being professional.

- Check your security and privacy settings for all your online accounts - high security is almost always a good idea. However, don’t rely on privacy settings – apparently some organisations can get through these!

- If you really want to impress online, why not start a blog post or online portfolio to showcase your knowledge / experience / skills in your industry. You can then include any relevant web addresses (including your LinkedIn URL) on your resume and email sign-off. This is particularly relevant for professions where work samples play a big role in getting a job – e.g. writers and journalists, designers, animators and anyone who is hoping for an academic career.

Build Your Connections

- Demonstrate your interest in your industry and your potential employers by ‘connecting’ with like-minded contacts who you know in the field. LinkedIn has a system for people to report if they have received a contact request but don’t actually know you which can have a detrimental impact on your ability to connect with others in future – so make sure you do know the connections you are requesting. See our Networking and Information Interviewing information sheet for more ideas about how to meet the industry contacts you will want to connect with online.

- Follow relevant organisations – e.g. professional associations, companies and organisations in your industry. Don’t forget to ‘like’ the “QUT Careers & Employment” facebook page – we post timely and relevant career and employment info.

Social networking sites can provide an excellent platform for students to establish a professional presence.
Your Online Brand – what NOT to do

Did you know that many employers will check your Facebook and LinkedIn pages and search for you on Google before they decide whether to offer you an interview? **Is your online presence up to scratch?**


In the current economic climate employees may receive hundreds or even thousands of applications for one position, so if they find something they’re not impressed with through an online search - a ‘red flag’ – chances are your application will be put straight into the ‘NO’ pile!

**Clean Up Your Online Presence**

Your **email address**:

Regularly review your online presence to ensure it aligns with the professional image you want to project to potential employers.

- Is it professional, simple and appropriate to the business world? E.g. longlegs@hotmail.com is not going to get you an interview!

Your **social media profiles** - including LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare etc.:

- Make sure your personal life stays on Facebook, and off LinkedIn. And vice versa, ensure your LinkedIn profile and posts are professional in content and context.

- Ensure all information on your profiles is correct and aligned with information in your resume, application letters or selection criteria responses. Gaps and inconsistencies between your online profile and your resume may lead to doubts about the overall accuracy of an employment application.

- Most social media platforms allow you to control how much of your profile is publically visible. Keep up-to-date with the terms and conditions, as they can change frequently. We recommend keeping privacy very high on Facebook and other personal platforms in order to reduce the risk of an employer seeing an off-hand post or a check-in that could be seen as inappropriate.

Your **social media posts**:

- Play it safe and don’t post anything you wouldn’t want an employer, or potential employer, to see. Remember when commenting on other people’s social media pages, that they may not have set their content to private - your comments may stay online forever.

- **Check-ins**: Are you regularly checking in at pubs and clubs – what image is that portraying to potential employers? Similarly posts while driving may not be viewed positively by safety-conscious employers.

**Photos on the Web**:

- Make sure your LinkedIn profile photo represents your professional image. A head and shoulders shot of you in business attire is ideal.

- Would you want a potential employer to see the photos you have been ‘tagged’ in? See if you can alter your tagging settings, so you cannot be tagged in photos until you approve the tagging.

- Check back over earlier photos - what you were doing in 2009 may not match the professional image you are now aiming for. ‘Untag’ yourself in any photos which a potential employer might question.

**Red Flags in particular industries**

Consider the industry, sector, and type of work you are looking for and what the ‘red flags’ might be. For example:

- Zero tolerance policies for drug use in mining and engineering organisations
- Community sector organisations are often affiliated with religious organisations
- The legal profession has very strict standards for suitability
- Political affiliations and activism can have an impact in public service or security/policing agencies

**DID YOU KNOW?** Legal actions have been brought against employees who were defamatory about their employers on Facebook – play it safe and don’t comment on your employer / organisation online.