BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Have you ever “Googled” yourself? Are you on Twitter, Pinterest, or LinkedIn? Have you set the privacy settings on your Facebook profile? How do your market your strengths and abilities to employers? In the job search, it is incredibly important to know who you are, and how to communicate that to employers. Being aware of what you do, and what you put, online is incredibly important in this day and age. Employers are using the internet and social media sites to both post jobs and search for information about candidates. With the advent of social media, our personal brands are in the spotlight, and easily accessible by almost anyone. Putting your best foot forward online is important to consider. You not only need to have an online presence, but your online presence needs to be clean, impressive, and accurately describe who you are.

What is Personal Branding?
Personal branding is the process of determining who you are—your skills, abilities, attributes, and personality—and being able to communicate this consistently across every possible medium. Building your personal brand includes deciding what you want to be known for, and identifying anecdotes and stories which communicate this brand.

Why is Personal Branding Important?
Personal branding can help your job search. Today, many recruiters are using newer, less traditional methods of searching for candidates, such as social media and search engines. Recruiters are looking for a positive, consistent brand in order to better understand who you are, and what you can offer their company. Neglecting to use every avenue possible, including social media, puts you at a disadvantage. Having a strong online brand will help you stand out from the competition.

Personal branding can also hurt your job search. Everything you do online is there forever, and all of this represents you, whether you like it or not. Having confusing, inconsistent, or damaging information online can be detrimental to your job search. Therefore, it is important to be clear, consistent, and cautious about all of the information you publish online.

How to Develop Your Personal Brand
To develop your brand, you need to know yourself. You can start the process at looking more closely at your purpose, strengths, and goals by answering these questions:

What is your vision and your purpose?
What are your values and passions?
What are your top goals for the next year, 2 years, and 5 years?
What are your core strengths or skills?
Who is your target audience?
Who is your competition and what differentiates you from them?

In addition to answering these questions, do a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis on yourself. Also, get feedback from others who know you best, at home, school, and work.

After you have compiled and reflected on this information, use it to develop a story about yourself that is clear, consistent, and constant.

**How to Communicate Your Personal Brand Online**

There are a number of different social media platforms through which you can communicate your brand to potential employers. There are also a number of things you can do to protect your information and your brand.

1. **Create and Utilize Your LinkedIn Profile**
   LinkedIn is an online professional networking site which allows you to connect with other professionals in your field of interest. You can join interest groups such as CMU alumni groups, or other professional associations to increase your connections and join in conversations about current topics in your field of study.

2. **Create and Utilize Your Twitter Account Effectively**
   Twitter can be used for more than just following celebrities and sharing meaningless updates. Many professional organization and companies have Twitter accounts and use them to tweet job openings. Choose a professional username, do a search for companies you’re interested in, and start tweeting about content relevant to your job search. Keep it clean and consistent, and don’t post any personal information.

3. **Clean Up Your Facebook Profile**
   Similar to LinkedIn and Twitter, Facebook can be used to connect and network with companies, as many have company specific pages. If you don’t want to utilize Facebook for your job search, be sure to use your privacy settings to block access to those who aren’t your friends. However, it is important to remember that once you post something online it exists there forever. Therefore, it is important to be cautious of anything you post, regardless of your privacy settings.

4. **Create and Utilize Your Pinterest Account**
   Pinterest can be incredibly useful, especially for students in creative fields, as it is a visual medium. Your Pinterest account can be used to link to samples of your work, your resume, and content related to your schooling and experiences. As always, keep it clean, professional, and consistent.

5. **Google Yourself and Set Google Alerts**
   Employers are “Googling” you, so it is important to always be aware of this, and know what is being published about you on the internet. If there is something you don’t want employers to see, you can have it removed. Additionally, by creating your own content, results you do not want employers to see will fall down in the search results. You can set up a Google Alert so that you are notified each time your name appears somewhere new on the internet.
6. Create a YouTube Channel
YouTube can be used to post short “video resumes” about yourself, which can be very relevant, depending on your major or career field. If you do this, remember to keep them short, clean, and professional. You can also use a YouTube channel to publish your work, such as videos and presentations. Once again, everything you upload to YouTube should be appropriate and professional.

7. Write and/or Comment on a Blog
Consider starting a blog about a topic you’re passionate about, but stay away from controversial or inappropriate topics. Visit other blogs, comment on them, and invite them to visit your blog to increase readership. Doing this will help to improve your writing skills, and the posts can then be viewed by employers who search for you.

Keep In Mind:

- The core message of your brand should be communicated in the same way across every medium. Be sure to use similar language and the same headshot on each account.
- Be aware of what you or your friends post online. Do not post anything you wouldn’t want an employer to see, and ask your friends to not post pictures without your consent.
- However, if you do have “digital dirt” that you can’t get rid of, add a lot of your own positive and professional content. This will help to hide that dirt deep in the search results.
- Don’t forget to include a personal aspect in your branding. Employers want to hear about your skills and accomplishments, but they want to know about your personality as well.

Set up an appointment with your Career Consultant
Building your personal brand is an important part of your career development, and your Career Consultant can be an excellent resource to help you through this process.

To schedule an appointment, log in to Handshake.