

I've got a bit of a reputation. Whether you know it or not, you probably have too.

I'm talking, of course, about our online reputation – the image we create of ourselves on the internet. Everything we post – blogs, tweets, photos and videos, likes, links, comments and shares – contributes to our online reputation. So, too, does whatever other people post about us. And anyone who discovers this information will form judgements about you and me, based on what they see – and may even use it against us.

Everyone from potential employers to clients, college heads, landlords, health insurers, mortgage lenders and romantic partners can check us out by searching for those telltale digital traces we've left behind.

But don't worry if your digital footprints are a little muddy. Below, in six easy steps, we'll show you how to regain control of your online reputation, mop up those digital spills, create and manage a strong, positive digital profile.

1. Research yourself online

Find out what's already out there about you in cyberspace.

First, clear your browsing history. Then put your name into several different search engines, and see what comes up. Try nicknames, initials and different variations of your name.

Type in other things about you – your school or college, clubs you are or were a member of, places you've lived, the company you work for and previous employers.

Look for images, photos and videos as well as words.

Search sites you visit often, such as online directories, online grocery stores, public record sites, shopping sites and ancestry services.

Don't forget to search social media sites and blogs – both personal and professional. Explore what other people have said about you, photos they've tagged you in or comments they've made. Look at your friends' personal pages as well as your own.

If you have a business site, look at the reviews given and comments made.

2. Assess your digital reputation

Consider what all the online information you've found says about you. You may not like everything you see. Ask yourself:

Is it accurate? Is it positive? Does it reflect the image I want to give? Is there something left out?

Would I be happy for anyone else to see it – my spouse, my employer, a health insurer, or a customer?

Does something need to be edited or removed altogether?

Are my personal and professional profiles combined? If so, should I create separate profiles for my work and personal lives?

How public or private are my profiles?

3. Practise mindfulness

Be mindful of how your online activities affect your digital profile – and that of others. Think about the long-term effects of what you post. Aim to do and say things that benefit your online reputation, and don't do anything that might damage anyone else's.

Before you share, think about the consequences. You may be happy to post that picture now, but what about in a few years' time? What does it say about you? And how will other people perceive it? What would your grandmother or your boss think? Could it be misinterpreted?

If you're feeling angry, hurt or upset, don't post. You may well later regret it. Don't be drawn into online arguments or make controversial or inflammatory comments. Definitely don't post when intoxicated.

Regularly monitor your digital profile. Check back often to see what new information has been added about you. Set up an alert with Google's Me on the Web tool. It will tell you when information such as your name or email address is posted online, or you're tagged in a photo. Every now and again, re-evaluate your social networks circle, pages you like, people and groups you follow and newsletters you subscribe to. Friendships change, so be selective about who has access to your information. Remove people from your online circle if necessary.

4. Think privacy

Keep personal information private. Ask permission before posting personal details and photos of other people. Keep passwords, user names and account numbers to yourself.

Use privacy tools to set appropriate levels of access for friends, family and the general public, particularly on social media.

Before you download an app, check what information it will gather about you and why, and who it will share this data with.

Discuss with family and friends what you are happy for them to share, and what should stay private. Respect their wishes too. Don't overshare. Help your kids to understand the consequences of sharing too much information. Remind them – and yourself – that nothing is ever really private if it's online. This site has great advice on helping teens manage their digital profiles.

Be careful not to share too much about your working life, or you might accidentally give away confidential information. And don't be negative about your boss, your colleagues or your workplace.

5. Fix what you can

Retrace your digital steps and take action fast to restore your online reputation. The sooner it's gone, the less damage it will do.

Delete old, inactive accounts.

Ask Google to remove unwanted information from search results.

Hide or delete embarrassing, controversial or offensive posts. References to drugs, discriminatory comments, dishonesty about your qualifications, or derogatory remarks about former employers or work mates – they all have to go.

If you can't remove content posted by others, ask the person who posted it to take it down or correct it. If you can't contact or get a response from that person, ask the site administrator for help in getting the unwanted content removed.

If you feel it's necessary, use a professional service to clean up your image. Just Google 'online reputation' and you'll find a long list of them.

6. Publicise the positive

Cultivate a great online image by putting your best self forward. This should help push negative information off the first page of any search engine results.

Create positive, up to date, quality content. Start your own blog or website under your own name, and write regularly about things you know well and are passionate about. Liven it up with attractive images and contemporary design. Ask your readers to leave feedback.

Keep up with current affairs so that you can comment constructively and knowledgeably. Join online forums.

Promote all the good things you do – like charity work, helping with community meals on wheels or managing your local kids' football team.

Build a profile on a professional networking site like LinkedIn, make connections and ask for recommendations from people who know your skills and career achievements. Write recommendations for your contacts, and comment on their posts. Keep your profile up to date with new accomplishments. Be honest.

Consider buying your domain name, and using it to write a biography of yourself and share authoritative articles and insights, and interesting (not too personal) information about you.

Keep it up

Now that you've kicked off those muddy digital boots, had your online makeover and created a strong and positive profile, don't let it slip. Stay alert and make sure you protect and maintain your digital reputation so that it continues to reflect the person you want to be seen as and gives a lasting impression.

Be proud of that reputation. Look after it.

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Unfortunately creating an awesome, professional digital presence isn't a quick fix – it's something you need to continuously work at. Here are a few ways you can build your digital authority:

Blogging and articles: Showcase your expertise and get your opinion out there. Depending on your seniority, you may be writing articles in relevant publications or contributing to blogs. Most employers look to see if the candidates who are applying for a job are active in their chosen field – so finance, accounting, technology, or whatever it may be.

Authorship: Authorship is a way in which you can link content that you've published on various websites to your Google+ account. Yes, you also need one of those.

LinkedIn: In this day and age, no LinkedIn profile means no job. You need a well-populated profile that includes recommendations, endorsements, social interaction and membership to groups.

Social profiles: The amount of available professional social networking sites is growing and distribution on sites such as SlideShare show active engagement in your chosen field.

A simple Google Search can show your potential employer your past history. And, it goes without saying that any personal social profiles that show you in less compromising situations should be deleted.

Let the truth get in the way of a good story

Too often resumes are embellished and take credit for accomplishments that are not their own. As well as looking at social signals, employers look for qualifications, accreditations and case studies – so make sure you’re true to your word. If you have worked on an online project that is still live, make reference to it and provide links within your CV so an employer can see your work in action. If you have a reference from an employer or client who will back the fact that this case study is your own work then that will only solidify your resume.

When you’re busy trying to progress your career, it seems near impossible to find the time to blog, constantly update digital profiles, as well as put effort into the more stock-standard application formats. But in today’s digital world, the first thing a potential employer will do is search for your name. Try it: do you appear to be an expert in your field? Then you better get back to work...

The Best Ways To Improve Your Digital Profile

More employers and recruiters are turning to social media to find the best talent. Even if you are not actively looking for a job, others are still taking note of your digital footprints. What is the state of your digital footprint?

What is a digital footprint?

Your digital footprint is the trail of data you leave behind while using the internet. It includes all the things you post, follow, join or visit online. Your

digital footprint can have a lasting impression on your reputation, relationships and employability.

If you don't believe me, believe the stats. For a start, nearly 87% of Australians (or 21.74 million) have the internet. 93% of this number uses the internet daily. On average, Australians are spending up to 5.5 hours per day online including 3 hours of viewing streaming services and internet broadcasts, 45 minutes on music and 1.5 hours on social media. That's a lot of time to get things wrong if you are not careful. Don't forget that once something is posted online it becomes permanent.

Paying attention to your professional online personas can benefit our future careers according to researchers from Harvard Business School. You are defined by what others think of you – how successful they think you are, how they judge your character and behaviours and how they think you compare to others. The ability to present your personal brand authentically is critical if you want to succeed professionally.

The best ways to develop your digital profile

The recent pandemic crisis has heralded a new era of digital workers. In lockdown mode, offices are now obsolete and remote working from home is the new normal.

Nearly every form of business communication now is online. How you behave during a video meeting and how you sound in the acoustics of the room is now an important consideration for employers and customers. Even if your social

media accounts are private, there is ample information on the internet that employers and recruitment managers can access if they want to learn about you.

But wait, here's the good news: The internet relies on AI to collate information. AI depends on a series of signals and patterns to make sense of things. But unlike their human inventors, AI is inanimate. It does not possess emotional intelligence and is, therefore, more rigid, and prescriptive. If you understand the algorithm, you can easily curate an online profile (or avatar) in a way that can positively influence your target audience whether they are your boss, a recruitment manager, a new client or a business associate.

One of my roles as a career coach is to help my clients curate their digital profiles. My clients are constantly surprised by the amount of talent acquisition and recruitment activities that are conducted via social. So, I make it a point to include digital profiling as a key topic in my coaching sessions.

Here are three important things about digital profiles:

1. Your photograph

AI facial recognition may sound creepy to you, but the truth is AI is an unbiased platform. A person assessing another person for a job could bring into the equation his or her prejudices about the candidate's physical attributes, age, and ethnicity. AI is a programme. It has no bias.

Some parts of your physical appearance can be controlled. You can consult a stylist to change the way you look. You can invest in a professionally taken photograph and even software to photoshop flaws. All of these items are worth it if you are on the lookout for a job or a new career.

Getting your online profile photograph right is the first step to creating a positive digital persona of yourself.

2. Your tone of voice

Your tone of voice in a video or an audio recording can convey many things about you as a person. Your voice can also convey clues about your health.

Here are some examples: If you speak hesitantly, you can come across as having a lack of confidence. If you speak too loudly, the listener will think you are overpowering. If you speak too fast or too slow and the listener cannot understand you, they will not shortlist you or buy from you.

The tone of voice can make your communication more effective. There are 6 different tones of voice in communication:

Questioning and commanding tonality

Complimenting

Pressing a point

Addressing a younger audience

Friendly

Business voice

Fine-tuning how you speak by using the right tone for the right occasion can help you create a better connection and deeper engagement with your online audience.

3. Your choice of words

It's not just what you say but how you say it that's important. Behavioural science studies have shown that positive words are extroversion. If you want to come across as a sociable, outgoing and confident person then use more positive words. Individuals who tend to use more negative words in their communication are often regarded by others as pessimistic and emotionally sensitive. Those who are considered smart tend to use complex and unusual words.

Unsurprisingly swear words signify anti-social and psychopathic tendencies. Also, too many self-referential pronouns ('I', 'me', 'my') can come across as being narcissistic.

Getting it right a fine balance. Need help with your resume writing? Check out Careerists Academy's Digital Resume Building here.

4. Your social media activities

There is growing evidence to suggests that our social media activities are indicative of our deepest psychological traits. More companies today are using social media activity as a process for talent acquisition, recruitment and evaluation. Your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles and postings are used to create your psychological profile which could determine the future of your professional life.

If you are active on social media always think before you post. Consider if what you are going to say, share or view will have any impact on your future employer, current bosses, colleagues, clients, or partners. You want to inspire and excite not alienate or anger.

5 ways to the best digital profile

Here are my 5 top five tips for building the best digital profiles:

1. Highlight your capabilities and potentials.

Your digital profile should highlight not just your skills and experiences. It should project a strong message about your capabilities and potentials.

2. Tell your story

What is your story? To stand out from the crowd, you must have a strong personal brand that others will remember. Craft what you have to offer convincingly and persuasively to make an impact.

3. Find your ‘voice’

Organisations today are looking for leaders. You must demonstrate potential in your area of expertise and profession.

4. Watch what you post.

Ask yourself a question: ‘Would I do it in real life?’ If the answer is ‘No’ then do not post it.

5. Show your passion

Your passion and interests can impress. Employers want to know how your passions can add value to their organisations. You are a good fit if what you believe in is aligned with what the organization wants to achieve.

LinkedIn is estimated to have more than 187 million members in over 200 countries and territories. They count executives from all Fortune 500 companies. Its corporate talent solutions are said to be used by 85 of the Fortune 100. Information is being shared in more than one million LinkedIn Groups. And yet many people don't have a profile. Or worse, they have one that looks like an untended flower garden.

On the one hand I understand their reticence. All this on-line stuff can be a bit overwhelming. If you're not careful and not smart about it, you can waste a lot of time. And then there is that privacy thing. The people that hold back often think that not having an online profile will somehow protect their privacy. They're not even aware that can backfire on them. So rather than take control of it and get with the program, they continue to downplay the importance of having a robust and vibrant digital profile.

The new reality is you need a digital profile. It's not an option if you are looking to earn a living, stay marketable, maintain and expand your networks and connections, and grow your business. The choices of what that will include are vast and will vary dependent on your needs and want you want to achieve. But the one place that I believe is a must, across the board, is LinkedIn.

While I think the numbers above speak for themselves here are seven more reasons to consider.

First impressions do count! Today they happen on-line as often as they do in person. This is a chance to virtually make yours memorable.

Prospective employers, potential business connections and new clients are searching your name in advance of your first meeting. Whether it concerns a job or a business deal, LinkedIn is a great resource. If your page comes up blank you wasted an opportunity to garner interest.

Digital profiles are making the resume a formality. Resumes are still important. But without a well-written online profile you might never get a chance to send it.

If someone cannot find your LinkedIn profile, you are sending a red flag that you might have something to hide.

Your digital profile is a reflection of who you are, what you've done and what you'd like to do. It makes sense to have it read well and be interesting. And yes, you must include a photo!

Your on-line profile is an opportunity to tell your story the way you want it told. Whether you prefer the term branding your image over selling yourself, it is all storytelling. This is your chance to tell yours in a way that highlights your strengths and downplays those other areas that may not be so strong.

Your digital profile is an asset to building your personal and professional brand. It shows not just who you are, but how you interact. For a digital profile to be vibrant and robust you're going to have to do a little more than just have a shiny shingle. You're going to need to share some of that great expertise and information you've been hoarding until now.

Preparing for Online Meeting

Today, companies all around the world are embracing remote working environments. Distributed teams are having to consider how to build good

working relationships with remote colleagues and how to collaborate effectively, including via online meetings.

guide to running online meetings

Fortunately, distributed working doesn't need to lead to disorganized meetings. With some preparation and a game plan, your team can have online meetings that are just as productive and collaborative as getting everyone in the same room.

Here are a few tips for preparing, participating and following up on online meetings, so that communication is crystal clear and important details and tasks won't fall through the cracks.

Preparing for Online Meetings

As the saying goes, "to be prepared is half the victory." If you go into an online meeting with a gameplan, you'll see better results during and after you meet.

1. Create an agenda

One key part of meeting preparation is creating an agenda, which will help everyone come to the meeting on the same page and keep participants focused on priorities. A good agenda is less about your ability to lead an online meeting and more about fostering understanding for participants, especially people who aren't in the same room, says Daniel Mittleman, associate professor at the DePaul University School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems.

“They have no access to your nonverbal cues,” Mittleman writes. If there’s no agenda, they’re more likely to “lose place, lose focus and lose attention to the meeting.”

When putting together an agenda, make sure to:

- ask for input from those attending the meeting
- note any time a decision needs to be made
- if necessary, identify who will lead the discussion for each agenda item or topic
- leave room in the agenda for last-minute additions or questions.

2. Use mind maps

Mind maps can be a great way to record who’s attending and offer space for comments or ideas beforehand with branches that can link to relevant documents, action items or notes so everyone comes prepared. This can be a useful structure for online meetings that are a little more formal and require an exact record, which you can refer to later on.

Shared mind maps can also be useful if you want your team or participants to brainstorm ideas in preparation for an online meeting, or in real-time during the meeting itself.

3. Prepare your space

In March, you probably read about Robert Kelly, the South Korea expert whose kids crashed his BBC interview while he was live on air. Anyone who’s worked remotely before likely felt for him. Whether it’s a cat walking in front of your

camera or a garbage truck coming down your street, distractions happen. You can't prevent every mishap, but preparing your space beforehand can go a long way.

Before the meeting, find a quiet environment where you can limit distractions. Use headphones to minimize background noise and prevent audio feedback. If you're working with new conferencing software, do a test run before the online meeting begins.

Participating Like a Pro

You're all prepared and it's meeting time. Here are a few tips to make sure your online meeting goes smoothly.

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4. Slow and steady

Keep the pace of your online meeting a bit slower than in-person meetings, suggests Susan Colaric, assistant vice president for Instructional Technology at Saint Leo University in Saint Leo, Florida.

"Video-conference meetings should actually move at a slightly slower pace than a typical meeting due to a two to three-second delay for most systems to communicate," Colaric told Inc. "If you're leading the meeting, make sure there are sufficient pauses after asking a question. If you are a participant, bring attention to yourself before addressing the group by signaling with your hand or saying "question" or "comment" and then waiting a couple seconds before continuing."

5. Use your words.

If you're not sharing your screen and need to describe something remote participants can't see, try to be extra descriptive. This will help you communicate clearly and effectively.

"We describe all of our visual designs using words," according to 18F, the digital service agency for the U.S. government. "This might seem intuitive, but when your coworkers can't see your computer screen, it's particularly important to make sure you're describing what you see. (For example, we encourage folks to use titles of page components and other descriptors to help collaborators more easily locate what a person is talking about (the blue "Get Started" button with the white text, below and to the right of the hero image, etc.))"

6. Take great notes.

Good note-taking is something all meetings can benefit from, and there are lots of ways to take useful notes. If you want to take shared notes during an in-person meeting, you may well turn to a whiteboard.

For online meetings, you can get a similar effect with online mind maps, which allow everyone to see and add to the notes as new ideas come up, in real-time. It's a great way to keep everyone engaged, create more clarity and get input from all team members involved.

After the Meeting

You did it! Meeting adjourned...almost. Here are a few things you can do at the end of an online meeting (and beyond) to maintain clear communication from everyone involved.

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7. Recap before you're done.

When the meeting's about to end, have everyone recap the action items that they're responsible for. This is a way to make sure everyone understands who's tackling what and ensure accountability. That extra clarity is especially helpful when you can't see facial expressions or body language.

8. Save your debrief for later.

Especially if you just finished a high-stakes meeting, often our first reaction is to immediately debrief with colleagues. Hold off until you're out of the room, though. You'd never want remote attendees to overhear something you didn't mean to share because they hadn't left the video conference yet. As a general rule, wait until you're out of the room to discuss anything that occurred.

9. Share notes.

Remember those great notes you took? Make sure everyone involved has access to them. This can be another great way to create a shared understanding of what was decided, who's responsible for what action items and what to follow up on in the future.

If you're using a mind map to take meeting notes, with MindMeister you can invite attendees to collaborate via a shared link or email invitation, so you can edit, comment and feedback, all in real-time.

The goals for online meetings are no different than in-person meetings: communicate clearly so you can make decisions that move your organization forward.

When your meeting is remote, you just need to make a few adjustments to achieve that goal. By preparing properly, participating fully and following up, your online meetings can be just as successful as sitting in a room together.