

Virtual Branding and Career Management Through Social Media



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What is Social Media?

Whenever you put something about yourself onto the internet you're in the world of social media, whether it be Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and all the others. People use social media for many different reasons from Voyeurism to simply keeping up with friends. The ways you can interact with people from all over the planet now seems endless. Everything you put on the internet is stored somewhere and, with enough knowledge and diligence, can be found. Most of it is so much in the public domain that it takes no effort at all to find quite a bit of information about all kinds of people (the armed forces are concerned that soldiers tracking their training on Strava (a mapping tool) could be tracked by unsavoury characters for example). Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to what you put on social media.

What is "Your Brand"?

Your Personal branding is the way other people would describe you to a third person. You have several brands, your family brand, your friends brand, your sporting brand etc. In this eBook we are only concerning ourselves with your business or working brand. Your brand is made up of the collective interpretations people make of what people see, your body language, what you do, how you do it, what you say and how you interact with others.

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We are always trying to 'sell' ourselves to others in some way, hence the use of the marketing term 'brand' and our ability to 'sell' ourselves has a lot to do with our brand. It starts with first impressions, a snapshot of you (sometimes unfair I know) but people are starting to draw their conclusions about you immediately, sometimes its based on what someone else says. It's our natural nature to do that, we look for patterns and we build stories in our head. Most people don't pay much attention to their brand, most people just get on with their days and the people around them, but you can be totally in control of your brand. Politicians are a classic example, they are continually trying to convey a consistent message to anyone they need to influence, that's why Trump must be such a nightmare to brand manage, he's a loose cannon.

So, the first step of your brand is just acknowledging that you are totally in control of every action and message you send out to people (con men understand and do this so well). Now that you acknowledge that, you can see how it can be managed, how you speak, dress, body language etc. is within your control to manage.

Now let's return to the world of Social Media, you don't have to manage that much complexity to manage your online brand. Social media is made up of what you say, your opinions on things, how you write and the pictures you post (they can speak a thousand words).

For anyone interested in having a successful career, whether you're a job seeker, consultant, student, employee or entrepreneur, your personal brand is everything, it's your reputation, the size and strength of your network, and what unique value you can contribute to a company or your clients.

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What is my Brand on Social Media?

Everything you put on Social Media will and can be seen by someone (whether you like it or not) at some time. If they see it, they will immediately start to interpret it. Given this is the only information they have about you, they will interpret based solely on what they see (makes sense) so if you are a career person, looking for a promotion, moving companies, or looking for a job, your "on line brand" will be there for all to see and it will be interpreted on its merits.

If there are a lot of pictures and messages around 'partying' then your brand may become that of a party person even if that may not be the image you'd like to portray. Whatever people focus on in their social media posts and messaging starts to become their brand. A lot of it is innocuous of course, but if you start writing about your political views, or strong views on any particular topic, they will also add to your brand and the more extreme your views the more you will start to isolate people, because that becomes your brand. Of course, it's all a choice thing and we're only talking about people who consciously want to portray themselves as a stable, intelligent, hardworking employee.

Admonishment

We'd just like to point out at this stage, if you are at all concerned about your brand online that you do not post anything that you would not be happy putting on a bill board around your neck and walking through the shopping mall surrounded by your extended family. That is our base guideline.

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If you do not have any online presence, in this day and age, it may be seen as detrimental. It is the primary way people are connecting so not having a profile is making you invisible. We strongly suggest you have some form of online presence (through LinkedIn if its for work) just so you actually 'exist' in the virtual world.

So what Social Media should you be using?

At Career Life Transitions we would initially recommend LinkedIn for your career Social Media one stop shop. Now this is not to say that the other forms of social media are not beneficial, but LinkedIn is the preferred business social media network. We would suggest you build LinkedIn and then use this to guide your contribution to other Social Media. Any and all networks are important, 75% of people will get to the next step in their career through their network, but LinkedIn is a great start because people think and know it is about business.

Once your LinkedIn Profile is set, you can look at using those themes to post on other Social Media networks ensuring you have a consistent theme throughout. If you're an Engineer for example, you should have a strong LinkedIn profile and then use Facebook to post pictures that may relate to engineering, or comment on Twitter on posts that relate to engineering etc. I'm sure you get my meaning. If you're a doctor looking for a promotion posting a picture of yourself half naked on holidays clearly drunk, smoking a joint and surrounded by 3 scantily clad members of the opposite sex is probably not going to positively enhance your brand, even if it was a one-off event.

So, let's start with LinkedIn and then look at how you can use other Social Media to positively enhance your online brand.

The 10 Steps to a great LinkedIn Profile

What you need to realize is that people may be checking you out on the Internet – whether you like it or not! A professional LinkedIn profile can do wonders for your brand – and YOU control it.

1. Get a professional photo and put it on your profile photo. Many people will not open profiles or accept invitations from people without photos. A great photo speaks a thousand words, make it head and shoulders, plain background and smile.
2. Enhance the headline next to your photo with your key skills and expertise to encourage profile views. Putting down General Manager at ABC Company won't get you noticed, GM's are a dime a dozen and not that many people may have even heard of ABC Company. Don't think of your Professional Headline as the job title that your last company gave you. Instead, think of it as a 10 -15 word marketing phrase that you would use to describe yourself to someone else if you wanted a hiring manager to be more interested in you. Rather than the LinkedIn version, "Engineer at John and Citizen" try "Engineer – Mining & Civil – Design, Infrastructure, Planning Forecasting, Budgeting, Reconciliations, Reporting"
3. Make sure you use the summary section. We would suggest that you put your purpose statement in here. This should be quite comprehensive and composed of short sentences and short paragraphs. Repeat the skills from your headline and add any more that you couldn't fit in.

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4. Build your career experience using short, double spaced paragraphs. You can put in more detail than you would in your resume. Don't be afraid to be repetitive when different roles entailed much the same tasks. This just increases your keyword count.
5. Add extra sections under headings such as Advice for Contacting, Projects, Publications, Interests and Volunteering. You wouldn't put them on your resume, but here is the perfect place for them. People can start to see what work you do in the community etc. and these are great for positively enhancing your brand.
6. Add a list of skills and seek endorsement from your connections for those skills. The best way to get endorsements is to liberally give them to others. This may seem like a waste of time but the key here is to increase your word count on the skills you have. When people come looking for that skill set, you're in the hunt.
7. Ask for recommendations, these are the modern day 'references', once again we don't recommend you add them to your resume, but this is the ideal place for them. Give them out and ask others to recommend you.
8. Show some of your personality through use of language and interests, this is your brand. Profiles are often viewed by a range of people and it will enhance your brand if they know a bit more about you.

9. Look at other profiles to get an idea what other people in your industry and profession are doing, you want to differentiate yourself but not so much that you've differentiated yourself out of any search. Copy the ideas you like.

10. Don't forget to "manage" "privacy and settings" and uncheck "Share profile edits." Otherwise your network will be bombarded with news of every change you make.

Here are the profiles for several LinkedIn & branding experts. They're using just about every capability that LinkedIn has to offer. Check them out for what's possible on your profile.

Patrick O'Malley <http://www.linkedin.com/in/patrickomalley>

Scott Allen <http://www.linkedin.com/in/scottallen>

Wendy Terwelp <http://www.linkedin.com/in/wendyterwelp>

Jason Alba <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jasonalba>

What is the real benefit of LinkedIn?

The most powerful concept behind LinkedIn is that it finds people, the right people AND shows you the connections you have with them. It makes the networks of the people we know visible. LinkedIn shows us our second and third degree networks and the paths towards them.

People already have difficulty keeping track of their own (first degree) network. It is impossible to know who our network knows. LinkedIn makes this visible. This is extremely powerful especially if you start with the end or goal in mind. Many people make the “mistake” to only look in their own network when they are looking for someone to help them. In this way they are limiting themselves tremendously.

What if we start with defining the best person, find them and then find out via LinkedIn whom we can get introduced to them?

Start with a network connection goal in mind. If you define the HR Manager as the person who can help you best reach your goal. Then you use LinkedIn and do a search with “HR Manager, Company, and Australia”. The result is that you don’t only find the exact name of the person, but also any connections you might share with this person.

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When you then look at the mutual connections you have, you might discover that this person is connected with your neighbour. You didn't know this because the company never has come up in your conversations. She has never mentioned anything about it and you never told her that you were interested in working for or with the Company. After discovering the connection on LinkedIn and talking to your neighbour about it, you find out that she has worked together with the HR Manager in the past. When she hears about your goal she agrees on writing an email to introduce you to the HR Manager. Five days later you are invited to have a talk with the HR Manager and land the job or contract.

How do you Increase your visibility?

Add connections to suit your needs. If you're building a business, then you want to expand your connections quickly, invite as many people as possible. Connecting to them will ensure you increase your 2nd and 3rd degree network exponentially. However, if the purpose is to expand within a specific industry or professional network you may want to be more selective. Join all LinkedIn groups that your 'targets' are members of - this ensures you can send them direct messages - even if they are not a first-degree connection yet.

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Activate your network through questions – start posting questions which revolve around your speciality.

You can become known as an expert in your field by answering questions in LinkedIn's Q & A section. To see the questions that are "open":

- Click Answers at the top of the page
- Click Answer Questions
- On the right-hand side, where it says Browse, pick a category
- Click on Date in the upper right so that you see the most recent questions

If you give insightful answers, others will see the value of your opinion. Also, the person asking the question can "rate" your answer, and LinkedIn keeps track of that, so you can become known as an expert by having a lot of "Best answers" in that category.

How LinkedIn can help you find a job

1. Get the word out. Tell your network that you're looking for a new position because a job search these days requires the "law of big numbers" There is no stigma that you're looking right now, so the more people who know you're looking, the more likely you'll find a job. LinkedIn added "status updates" which you can use to let your network know about your newly emancipated status.

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2. Get LinkedIn recommendations from your colleagues. A strong recommendation from a client or manager highlights your strengths and shows that you were a valued employee. If you were a manager yourself, recommendations from your employees can also highlight leadership qualities.
3. Find out where people with your backgrounds are working. Find companies that employ people like you by doing an advanced search for people in your area who have your skills. For example, if you're a web developer in Sydney, search profiles in post code 2000 using keywords with your skills (for example, JavaScript, XHTML, etc) to see which companies employ people like you.
4. Find out where people at a company came from. LinkedIn "Company Profiles" show the career path of people before they began work there. This is very useful data to figure out what a company is looking for in new hires. For example, Microsoft employees worked at IBM, Intel and Google.
5. Find out where people from a company go next. LinkedIn's "Company Profiles" also tell you where people go after leaving the company. You can use this to track where people go after leaving your company as well as employees of other companies in your sector. (You could make the case that this feature also enables to figure out which companies to avoid.)

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6. Check if a company is still hiring. Company pages on LinkedIn include a section called “New Hires” that lists people who have recently joined the company. You could even ask these new hires how they got their new job. At the very least you can examine their backgrounds to surmise what made them attractive to the new employer.
7. Get to the hiring manager. LinkedIn’s job search engine allows you to search for any kind of job you want. However, when you view the results, pay close attention to the ones that you’re no more than two degrees away from. This means that you know someone who knows the person that posted the job—it can’t get much better than that. Another way to find companies that you have ties to is by looking at the “Companies in Your Network” section on LinkedIn’s Job Search page.
8. Get to the right HR person. The best case is getting to the hiring manager via someone who knows them, but if that isn’t possible you can still use LinkedIn to find someone inside the company to walk your resume to the hiring manager or HR department. When someone receives a resume from a co-worker even if they don’t know the co-worker, they almost always pay attention to it.
9. Find out the secret job requirements. Job listings rarely spell out entirely or exactly what a hiring manager is seeking. Find a connection at the company who can get the inside scoop on what really matters for the job. You can do this by searching for the company name; the results will show you who in your network connects you to the company. If you don’t have an inside connection, look at profiles of the people who work at the company to get an idea of their backgrounds and important skills.

10. Build your network before you need it. As a last tip, no matter how the economy or your career is doing, having a strong network is a good form of job security. Don't wait until times are tough to nurture your network. The key to networking however, is filled with counter-intuitiveness.

First, it's not who you know—it's who knows of you. Second, great networkers are not thinking "What can this person do for me?" To the contrary, they are thinking, "What can I do for this person?"

Get Found - Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

1. Come up with a list of keywords that a recruiter might use when searching for someone with your skills. Make sure they are all in your profile. Include all the variations and conjugations. Engineer, engineers, engineered, engineering. Put them in multiple times to get yourself higher on the search list. Put them under interests, projects, summary or anywhere you like.

2. Join groups. Fellow group members are almost as close - and come up on searches - as 1st level connections. Choose groups with large numbers of members in industries and locations that suit you. Turn off the digest emails if you don't want to get spammed.

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3. Share, like and post things at least once a week. This consolidates your network and dramatically increases your visibility.
4. Accept every invitation that comes your way. You never know who will be useful. If someone invites you, feel free to message them or look at their profile.
5. Get connected to, your friends and colleagues, peers in other companies, HR and recruiters in other companies.
6. Personalise your invitations rather than using the LinkedIn generic version. This will double or triple your acceptance rate and lead to more profile views.
7. Mine mutual connections. Once you connect to one person in a company, all his connections are now you second levels and open to invitation. This can get you to the managers and recruitment section of a company. Open profiles and check out "people like" and "people also viewed".

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