Social media and the internet are playing a larger role in our professional lives. Every year there are more news stories of people being fired from a job because of posting a touchy political opinion on Twitter or sharing party photos on Facebook. Because of this it is important to **be aware of what you put online**, and **how other people view and perceive you across the internet**.

What Is Online Branding?

One of the top things to be aware of in your job searching is how you brand yourself—that is, how you portray yourself and how others perceive you. **On the internet, your reputation is created through what you post and what you do.** Consider it your "digital reputation." Some of this can be intentional, like creating a professional LinkedIn profile. Some of this can be accidental, like venting about work on Facebook with the "public" setting turned on.

> *"Your digital reputation is the new first impression … and many times something you have complete control over." –Dr. Josie Ahlquist*

Google Me: How and Why to Search Yourself

Looking yourself up on a search engine like Google or Yahoo is a great habit to have when you're active online. **This way you can know what will show up when an employer looks you up**, and get a sense of what you may want to highlight or take off of your social media profiles.

When you search for yourself, make sure that you *log out* of Google and *turn off* personalized search results. This way you see what's tailored for you based on what you have searched for before. You also may try adding other information like city and state to the search if you have a common name:

- **"Erin Eagle"** – This would find results for anyone named "Erin Eagle"
- **"Erin Eagle Cheyenne WY"** – This is more likely to find results for an Erin Eagle here at LCCC

To learn more about searching for yourself and how to manage the search results, try out the free services from BrandYourself: brandyourself.com

Privacy: Keeping the Personal, Personal

If you do just one thing to improve your online presence, it should be learning how the privacy settings on your social media profiles work. A golden rule of the internet is that **nothing is totally private online**. You need to make sure that whatever you do post on social media is something you wouldn't be afraid to accidentally share with *everyone*.

Many social media platforms have privacy controls that allow you to customize who can see what you post. **Make sure that anything that's set to "public" is information that you would be OK sharing with a future employer.** Everything else should be set to "friends only" or a customized setting that lets you have control over who can view your content. It is important to trust who you share content with—even private posts are one screenshot away from being shared with the world. **No matter how tight your privacy controls are, you still need to be aware of what you post.**

To learn how to adjust privacy settings on a particular platform (like Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat), visit: identity.utexas.edu/everyone/how-to-manage-your-social-media-privacy-settings

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Post Responsibly

Have you ever called in sick and gone skiing or fishing instead? It won't go over well with your boss if you post about it online for all your coworkers to see. Similarly, if you or a friend are looking for a new job, be careful about sharing job openings or asking what's available—especially if you haven't told your boss yet. You might have to find a new job even faster if you get fired because of what you post!

Some tools to help you check what you've posted in the past include repnup.com and heyclear.com. You can also use apps like Timehop to check and edit past posts.
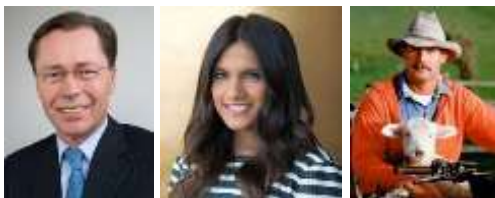

Nice "sick day" bro! 😝

Profile Pictures 101

Even if you only use social media to connect with family and friends, you need to be intentional about what others can see, including your profile picture. Here are some examples that can help you choose an appropriate picture.

Professional*	**Casual****	**Unacceptable**
Wearing business formal, business casual, or your industry workwear. A professional headshot or photo taken on the job.	Wearing casual attire. Everyday pictures with family and friends, selfies, or professional photos from personal events like weddings.	Photos containing drugs, alcohol, partying, nudity, inappropriate gestures, or profanity.

Use on: LinkedIn, work-related Twitter accounts, email accounts for the job search, portfolios you send to employers.	*Use on:* Personal Twitter accounts, your Facebook profile, Pinterest, other sites that are for personal and work use.	These photos should not be used on social media.

Online Branding Checklist

If you'd like to take the steps outlined in this handout, use this checklist to keep track of your progress.

- ☐ Look yourself up on a search engine like Google or Bing
- ☐ Check and make any necessary modifications to your privacy settings on:
    - ☐ Facebook   ☐ Snapchat   ☐ Tumblr   ☐ Instagram   ☐ _____   ☐ _____
    - ☐ Twitter   ☐ Pinterest   ☐ YouTube   ☐ LinkedIn   ☐ _____   ☐ _____
- ☐ Look for social media or other web accounts you don't use anymore and close them
- ☐ Check your old posts for status updates and pictures that may not reflect how you want to portray yourself online and delete them
- ☐ Change your profile picture to something appropriate for the platform
- ☐ Make sure information (like job title, major) is updated and consistent across all of your profiles

*Images source: http://www.headshotlondon.co.uk/what-is-a-corporate-headshot/
**Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16289516

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