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CREATING A STRONG PERSONAL BRAND ONLINE

Too many times employers see candidates touting their accomplishments - real or imaginary on their CVs. But it's no longer enough to brag about what you have done or what you think you can do, on a piece of paper. Recruiters now want to know, not just what you are but, who you are and what you might be capable of accomplishing.

That's why leveraging social media is so important for candidates today. If you're not very active online, or if you're a bragger with nothing

to back up your claims of awesomeness, it becomes apparent within minutes. And a word to the more modest who think self-promotion is somehow a dirty word; you're not doing yourself any favors.

Candidates have never had so much opportunity to put themselves out there! It's all about the sharing and that's how we live today. So, if you're in the spotlight of the whole world, the number one rule has to be to get it right.

Here are our top tips...



Know Yourself

1

When people do online personality tests they often click on what they think the socially acceptable answer will be, rather than what they believe or feel personally. Don't be tempted to promote your personal brand in the same way. Be honest with yourself. Who are you really? What do you believe and are you willing to stand by publicly? Most importantly, what sets you apart from other people? Your brand should not be an imaginary construct of perfection. It should be the best of the authentic you.

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What Do you Want to Achieve?

Building a personal brand, is not much different than an employer brand or product brand. Goals need to be set, target audiences identified. You are the product you are trying to market. Who are you marketing yourself to? Do you have what it takes? And where can you find these prospective employers you seek? Figure that out and make a plan.





Your Personal Brand Is Your Reputation

It's now easy to find out from online platforms, who is saying what about you, or how they're reacting to something you've said. Check out what they say: if negative, is it justified or can it be dismissed as hate? Was it helpful? Do you need to develop a thicker skin? Again, being honest with yourself is the only way to navigate the social media battleground where the rules of real-life society often go out the window. Are you contributing to the chaos with emotionally-charged remarks? Or are you a positive and calming influence? None of this will escape the notice of a prospective employer checking you out online.

Don't be afraid to show your human side, but don't be tempted to over-share!

3

Clean Up Your Various Profiles Across Platforms

How many times have people been left out of consideration for a job because they've posted drunken photos or other compromising photos or indeed comments online? They may have a perfectly professional LinkedIn page but a Facebook or Twitter page that shows what they're like outside of a professional setting - and it's not always pretty. No one is saying don't get drunk on holiday or at a party occasionally, that would be unfair, but if you show photos of you being plastered every weekend, any employer would be justified in seeing this as an issue.

Keep all of your social media accounts aligned in terms of your goals and beliefs and simply check privacy settings if there are things you would not want a prospective employer to see.

People are getting fired left and right for things they say on Twitter, because 140 characters is no way to present a well-thought out argument on any issue.

Now That You've Got Your Own House In Order

No one said building a personal brand online is easy. It's not, and it requires time, thought and effort. Once your profiles are streamlined and consistent, it's time to draw up a plan to market yourself, be it through social media, an online community relevant to your industry or goals, or through your own personal website or blog, or all three. You want to be seen as a go-to person, a helpful, honest person and someone others want to connect with.

That's why the 'me, me, me' style of self-promotion won't work. Being an online personality is not too much different from real life in that you are still interacting with real people, who should be treated as if they were real-life friends and acquaintances, people who you make time for and respect. Like any relationship you have to work it. Ask not what others can do for you, but what you can do for others, especially prospective employers.

Visibility

The more you put yourself out there the better but be active. Tweeting once a week or blogging once a month, will not build up your following. It's literally an everyday job. And don't just be active online. Have a real photo, not an avatar and remember that meeting web contacts in real life is a thousand times more effective than a photo every time. Interact personally with people on your platforms, engage them on a personal level. There is nothing worse than sending out a 'newsletter'. Yes, it takes time to engage but that personal touch is what will set you apart. Pass on information you think might help individuals out, just because. Ensure your content or blog is mobile friendly for greater exposure, and that's its optimised for search engines. Always check reactions to your postings and monitor who is sharing your content and what other are saying about it.



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Know Your Stuff

There is no point joining an online community in your industry, or sector if you don't know what you're talking about. Become an expert in your fields of interest. Keep up with changes, post articles and comment on and share others'. Posting only your own work will give the impression that only your content is worthy to share. Make sure your posts are credible and useful and back them up with experts if necessary. Online nitpickers lurk everywhere waiting to pounce. Think before sharing – could you offend? Is it worth the grief? If you're seen as a trusted online presence/source of information, people will send more contacts your way. You can still call others out when they're presenting the wrong facts, but only if you can back it up. Be non-confrontational and keep your goal and audience in mind at all times.

Creating a personal brand should be approached like everything in life, with moderation and balance. You can storm your way through social media like a bolt of lightning, creating hundreds of friends at the speed of light, or you can take your time to build up a strong, steady and credible personal brand. Remember, it may be all about you, but you can't do it without the help of others either.

