Creating and Protecting Your Online Identity

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia

skilled immigrant
infocentre

Contents

1. Creating a Positive Online Presence

Introduction

There are a variety of ways for you to use online social media when looking for work including:

- Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- Participating in online forums and discussion lists
- Creating a personal blog

When participating in social media it is always wise to present yourself in a professional manner. It is also important to protect your personal information.

This guide offers you strategies on how to make the most of online tools to protect your safety and your professional image.

Some basic tips to remember when you are online:

- The internet is a public space. When you post online, you waive your right to privacy
- Online content can be permanent - it can be searched, it can reach many people, and it can reveal your location
- When giving out information, be sure you know how it is being used
- Provide sensitive or confidential information only through secure web sites
- Use social networking wisely; adjust your privacy settings to your own comfort level
- Despite all cautions, don't be afraid to participate and connect!

---

2. Your "Digital Tattoo"

Introduction

When you share information online, you are creating a "digital tattoo" because everything you contribute could have a permanent record. Online information can also be easily and quickly shared by others.

Your personal information online includes:

- Text, video, photos
- Name, address, phone number
- Sites you visit (or pages within a site)
- What you post yourself
- Comments and ratings on blogs and other sites
- What others post about you

For more information, see:

- Digital Tattoo (UBC Irving K Barber Learning Centre) https://digitaltattoo.ubc.ca/ (a wealth of information on how to protect, connect, learn, publish and blog)

Conduct a Personal Search

To find your digital tattoo, try searching your name and narrow the search to the country or city you live in. Use these search engines and if you are getting too many results place quotations around your name: "First Last"

- www.google.com
- https://pipl.com/

You can also try these more specific online directories:

- www.canada411.ca/

- https://mytelus.telus.com/ (click on "Search the phone book – search now")

If you have a Facebook account you can see how much information has been made public and then change your privacy settings:

https://www.facebook.com/people-search.php

Other Tips

- If you don't like what you see, try deleting it yourself or contact the site administrator and politely ask them to remove the content.

3. Your Professional Identity

Introduction

Social networking sites are good ways of broadcasting your interests, skills, and need for work.

According to a 2017 survey, 70 percent of employers use social media to screen candidates before hiring. As well, 69 percent of employers are using online search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing to research candidates. Employers primarily search for information that supports applicants' qualifications for the job while some look for what other people are posting about the candidates (see: https://www.careerbuilder.com/advice/social-media-survey-2017)

Build and manage your public online profiles so that potential employers find positive and professional information about you.

Building your Professional Identity

LinkedIn

http://ca.linkedin.com/

LinkedIn is the professional equivalent of Facebook. You can use it to connect to the millions of professionals on LinkedIn who use the site to recruit employees, find jobs, participate in online communities, and share expertise.

Employers are increasingly using LinkedIn as a recruiting tool, so building your LinkedIn presence is a worthwhile investment.

Twitter

http://twitter.com

Twitter is great for broadcasting short calls of help with your job search, giving professional updates, and more. Twitter also gives you a way to connect with people you couldn't access through Facebook or LinkedIn.

Facebook

http://www.facebook.com

Facebook is a social—not professional—networking site. However, if used correctly Facebook can be a useful part of your job search. You can use Facebook to:

- join relevant professional groups, adding details of your professional interests to your page;
- stay in touch with contacts through alumni and other networking groups;
- follow companies of interest by becoming a fan of their corporate pages; and more

Other Options

- Consider developing an **online resume** or **e-portfolio** – Use your e-portfolio to showcase any impressive projects you've worked on, including web links.

For more information, see:

- https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/resumewriting/preparing-your-resume-for-the-internet/1/
- https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-create-and-upload-an-online-resume-2062718
- https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/building-great-portfolio-interview-game-changer

- Create a thoughtful, well-written **blog** about your career goals or interests. Comment on recent news in the field. Post comments on others' blogs and use your full name to distinguish your professional ideas.

Tips

- Use an email address that sounds professional– potential employers may hesitate to respond to a childish email title.
- Remove or restrict access to any pictures, messages or videos you would not want your boss or coworkers to see from your online profile.
- Update your profile (and privacy settings) on your existing social networking sites.
- Use a dedicated email address so people can contact you, but do not post your phone number, mailing address or any other private information.

For further information:

- **10 Smart Ways to Use Social Media in your Job Search. US News** http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/slideshows/10-smart-ways-to-use-social-media-in-your-job-search
- **Your digital footprint in a social media world** https://www.slideshare.net/AntonRSA/your-digital-footprint-in-a-social-media-world

4. Social Media Advice

Privacy Settings

Using privacy settings allows you to share certain content and keep other things private or available to only certain people in your network.

Ask yourself: Why do I want to share this? Who do I want to see it? What happens if/when I want to remove it?

- Beware of the default setting on websites which is often public. You need to manually go in and change your settings to private.

- The *Terms of Use* section on a website contains some important information on how your information is used and distributed, and who owns the content you post.

Other Tips

- Remember to be respectful in your online activity. Do not tag others in embarrassing photos or places.
- Before you post controversial opinions in your Facebook update, Twitter account, or other site always ask yourself if this is something you will want remembered forever.
- If you are posting a resume online, do not provide detailed personal information.
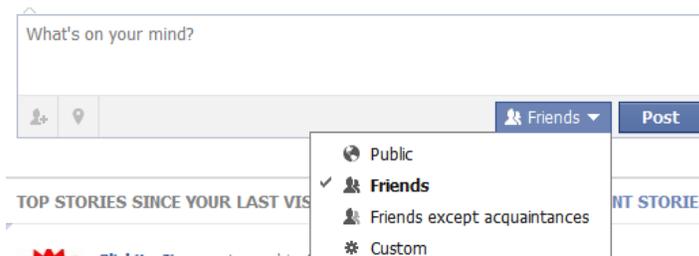
Focus on Facebook

This popular social networking site is a great way to share photos, opinions, memories and more with family and friends. The site is also used by employers who may search your profile to get an idea of how you present yourself in public. You may also have co-workers and managers who want to "friend" you. Never refer to work experiences or individuals online in a negative way.

How You Connect

Through the privacy setting you can control who can look up your profile, post to your wall, send you a message, etc. You can also better monitor what goes on your page by creating a step that requires your approval.

Sharing Content

You can choose to share content with specific groups from the drop down menu. If you have created lists of friends, you can share with one or more of your lists or use the "custom" option to choose which friends to share the item with.

How Tags Work

When someone "tags" you, they are linking your name and profile with a photo, place or piece of information. If you want to create restrictions and barriers around how others tag you, check your settings.

For more information on privacy settings see:

- **Facebook Help — Privacy** http://www.facebook.com/help/privacy

5. Avoiding Online Scams and Identity Theft

Introduction

There are many ways people try to scam you into providing financial or personal information by fraudulent means. It is important to be aware of the difference between online job scams and legitimate job openings.

Scams

If a job offer seems to be too good to be true or if you feel uncomfortable with some of the information requested either decline or proceed with extreme caution. *Legitimate employment ads will not ask for any banking or personal information or for any money deposits.*

Online Job Scam Warning Signs

- You're offered a job without an application or interview
- The company asks you to wire money or asks for your credit card information.
- The company asks for personal information like your social security
- You are promised high pay for not much work
- You are told you have to pay for training

Do your homework by checking websites and doing an online search of the company first.

Tip: Check the company name or email address through Google and add the word "scam".

Identity Theft

It is recommended that you do not provide personal information in your résumé, on application forms, or social media sites including:

- your Social Insurance Number

- your age, marital status, date of birth

- your driver's license number

- your health card number

- your banking or financial information, which includes credit card or bank account numbers and any Personal Identification Numbers (PIN).

Certain information may be discussed with a prospective employer only after the hiring process has begun.

Phishing:

Phishing is a term for e-mails, text messages and websites designed to look like they come from well-known and trusted businesses in an attempt to collect personal or financial information. Be extremely cautious when responding to unsolicited e-mails from supposed employers—even if the company name is well-known. Never click on any link or submit any information on a website you've been sent by email. These links can lead to websites that look legitimate but are run by scammers who collect your data to commit fraud.

Passwords

- Create strong passwords so that others cannot access your accounts. Don't use your boyfriend's name, your pet's name or your phone number. Strengthen your password by using a combination of numbers, upper-case letters, lower-case letters and symbols like #, $, %, and !

For more information see:

- **Job Search Safety Advice. Service Canada**
  http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/tps-eng.aspx

- **Better Business Bureau. Employment Scams**

  https://www.bbb.org/en/us/article/tips/12261-bbb-tip-employment-scams

- **Top 10 Job Scam Warning Signs**

  https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-job-scam-warning-signs-2062181

  and https://www.thebalancecareers.com/common-job-scams-and-how-to-avoid-them-2062172

6. Additional Resources

Still looking for more information? Try looking at the following resources:

- **How to Protect (or Destroy) your Reputation Online.** John P. David, 2017 Central Library, 659.20285 D24h

- **Influence : How to Raise Your Profile, Manage Your Reputation and Get Noticed**, Warren Cass, 2017 – *Ebook*

  https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/item/show/5672944038_influence

- **Protecting your Internet Identity: Are You Naked Online?** Ted Claypoole, 2017. Central Library, 364.163 C62p

- **Five ways to protect your online reputation and why it matters**

  https://www.allbusiness.com/5-ways-protect-online-reputation-matters-22359-1.html

- **How to manage your online reputation for free**

  https://www.cnet.com/how-to/how-to-manage-your-online-reputation-for-free

- *How to find a Job on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google+* / Brad and Debra Schepp. 2012. Central Library, 650.142 S325h1

- **Knock 'em Dead Social Networking For Job Search and Professional Success.** Martin John Yate, 2014 Central Library 650.13 Y31k

- *Find a Job Through Social Networking: Use LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Blogs and More to Advance your Career* / Diane Crompton and Ellen Sautter. 2011. Central Library, 650.13 S26s1

- ***Networking for Employment: A Guide for Newcomers to British Columbia***

  https://pwp.vpl.ca/siic/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment/

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Vancouver Public Library