

CREATING AN ONLINE PERSONA

By [Chandlee Bryan](#)

ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT: know what's out there...

DEVELOPING AN ONLINE PRESENCE: getting started on social networking sites, blogs, and personal websites

GENERAL NETIQUETTE TIPS

BUILDING ONLINE PRESENCE: how-to's for blogging, LinkedIn, and Twitter

CREATING AN ONLINE PERSONA

You know the drill: a strong resume and a targeted cover letter are essential starters for any internship or full-time job search.

Today, your “second life”—the one you live online—is an equally important part of the overall process. As early as 2006, a survey conducted by ExecuNet revealed that 77% of recruiters conducted internet searches on candidates. For many candidates, the search was a “game changer”: 35% of recruiters reported rescinding offers based on what they found online. Expect to be “Googled,” and if you have a distinct name—expect to be found.

The purpose of this article is two-fold:

1. To provide strategies for basic online reputation management, and
2. To share tips and tricks for creating an online presence that can enhance your job search.

Online reputation management is a “must-do;” cultivating an online presence is optional. You need to know how you'll be found online, and to monitor your own “digital dirt.” **The question of “to be or not to be” public with your career interests is a trickier issue—and is, in many ways, dependent on your career goals and aspirations.** A strong online presence that showcases your command of social media may strengthen your candidacy for positions in media, communications, or marketing; if you seek to work for a public figure, law firm, or government office (such as the CIA or the NSA)—your online presence could potentially hinder your job search. Career services staff, alumni, and working professionals in your area of interest can help you determine whether an online persona can complement—or hinder—your job search strategies. **Don't be afraid to ask for advice on how should you present yourself; a great way to start is to surf and observe—watch how others do it and borrow strategies from the sites you admire most.**

ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Even when you're among friends on Facebook with privacy settings locked, the information you post and share online has all the confidentiality of a postcard. Assume anything you post or—are tagged by—is visible to the world-at-large, and may be viewed in the job search process.

Don't assume you are safe. Here are five strategies you can use to manage your online reputation:

1. **Know what's out there.** Establish a baseline knowledge of what information is available about you online—as well as others who share your name. A great way to get started is to use the Reach Branding Online ID Calculator: <http://www.onlineidcalculator.com/>
2. **Monitor Your Digital Dirt**
 - a. **Set up an "Ego Search":** Establish a Google News Alert (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) on your name so that you receive results of any mention of you (or those who share your name) that hits the Internet.
 - b. **Untag yourself in non-flattering Facebook photos or status updates** that would make your mother blush.
3. **Research how other people you know with similar interests present themselves online.** Finding others with similar interests, conducting informational interviews with alumni in [PACNET](#), and asking questions of current employees in your intended field can help you answer the question: What should my online presence goal be?
 - a. Aim to have content on the web be "professional" not "confessional"
4. **Have a conversation with your employer about their comfort level with your online presence, find out company policies about using social media, and be conscientious:** Don't share information that reflects poorly on you or your employer. Maintain privacy and don't go on the record with information they would not want shared.
5. **Be aware that personal information can "float."** Try to keep any mention of your professional interests relatively consistent...

It's okay to go on the record saying, "I'm exploring possibilities in which I could combine my knowledge in _____ and _____. It's less okay to say "I'll do anything as long as I can live in San Francisco."

DEVELOPING AN ONLINE PRESENCE

You can influence your own online presence in a myriad of ways and on a wide array of platforms.

Social networking sites: e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Twitter

Social Bookmarking: Share insights, initiate and participate in discussions, and “DIGG” important topics. Sites for social bookmarking include Delicious, DIGG, ShareThis, and StumbleUpon

Blogs: You can comment on other people’s postings, write your own as a “guest” or host your own through sites including Blogger, TypePad, or WordPress. Twitter is a popular micro-blogging site.

Electronic Portfolio/Personal Website: While there’s no guarantee employers will look at your personal website or portfolio, you can create a site to showcase your skills and provide samples of your work.

Developing an online presence is a process—not a transaction. As such, you may find it’s easiest to start with tools that are easy to use and highly visible. One such tool is LinkedIn, which has been called the “Facebook” of the business world. LinkedIn features include tools to network and grow relationships “within three degrees” of connection to you, a question and answer forum, and a people search function that you can use to see how others present themselves—and find new potential contacts for informational interviews. As LinkedIn is widely used, we’ve developed a special list of tips for [getting started on the site](#).

GENERAL NETIQUETTE TIPS

1. **Don’t Flame Out.** If you disagree with someone, always do so respectfully—especially if you are commenting in an online forum and use your own name. “Flames” and profanity can help you strike out in the job search.
2. **A customized approach always trumps an “automated” one.** Personalizing invitations and sending messages tailored to meet the needs and interests of your audience will result in a higher return. This is true on applications from LinkedIn to Twitter—especially with regard to invitations.
3. **“Do as the Romans do.”** If you are trying your hand at a new technology application or platform, watch how seasoned users of the technology before actively using it yourself.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and there are unspoken conventions for many social media applications. For example, the micro-blog Twitter is commonly used by job seekers and business owners who wish to develop and strengthen their online reputation. On Twitter, users post “tweets” (messages of 140 characters or less) and can follow streams of other users and “be followed.” Twitter Netiquette guidelines: You’re more interesting to the community if some of your messages are “on brand” (i.e. commenting on areas you wish to be known for) and other messages share personal interests and preferences. If your material is consistently “all about you,” your followers may become “qwitters” (Twitter term for individuals who stop following you).

You can find how-to guides for getting started with many social media applications. Read up on the technology before you start, and you'll be ahead of the game when you develop your online profile.

- 4. Consider everything you write as a mini-writing sample.** As you never know what employers are going to find, you want to present yourself well. Good spelling and grammar can provide the tipping point in a hiring decision. Show you have what it takes.
- 5. Sound bites are in; strive to be brief, concise, and specific.**

Conventional wisdom maintains that employers spend 30 seconds or less on a resume. With social media, expect a quicker pass. Develop your materials so that they can be reviewed in an "eyeball": Is your message easy to digest? Can I tell what you are looking for or talking about within the first ten seconds?

BUILDING ONLINE PRESENCE

There are several ways to develop and increase your online presence. Here, we spotlight blogs, LinkedIn, and Twitter. With all of these forms of communication, the best way to start is to watch how other people do it, and ask questions.

GETTING STARTED WITH BLOGGING

BLOGGING: Before you start your own blog, consider making insightful comments on other people's blogs. Some bloggers will say you need to write everyday; if your goal is not to be a professional blogger, I would aim to go weekly or biweekly instead.

Chris Brogan is a well known social media strategist who has e-books on online presence and the web 2.0 job search available on his site. Here he provides [10 Blogging Tips](#) and additional advice [If You Intend to Blog Seriously](#) (Chris Brogan)

Penelope Trunk is the "Brazen Careerist" and writes about the intersection between work and life. She has a team of millennial bloggers who blog with her. Here are her [Easiest Instructions for How to Start a Blog](#) (Penelope Trunk)

GETTING STARTED WITH LINKEDIN

LINKED IN: One of the most important things to do in LinkedIn is to fill out your profile accurately and completely. As the cost to search LinkedIn for potential talent is free for unpaid subscribers (and minimal for users), employers routinely use LinkedIn as a place to identify potential hires. Therefore, it's important to have a great profile. Not sure what to say? Start with an advance people search. See how other people present their skills, interest and experience and write your own using best

practices from others. (Note: Employers search LinkedIn profiles on key words in title and summary, so fill out these sections in full with relevant information.)

Once you have a strong profile, expand your connections, join groups, and browse questions and answers...you can even explore job listings.

[Getting the Most out of LinkedIn](#)

A Career Services guide to using LinkedIn, written by Chandlee Bryan, author of this document.

[Leveraging 2.0 Job Search Skills](#)

Good introduction to LinkedIn. Covers how to get started and why it is a good tool for your job search:

[I'm On Linked In, Now What?](#)

Blog maintained by Jason Alba, author of "I'm on LinkedIn, Now What?" Great tips for how to use, maintain, and thrive with your LinkedIn accounts.

[Write Your LinkedIn Profile for your Future](#)

Chris Brogan, social media marketing expert, shares strategy on how to develop your LinkedIn profile so that your past experience is presented in context with future career goals.

GETTING STARTED WITH TWITTER

Twitter is a searchable public forum; don't share any information you wouldn't want your friends or perspective employers to see. As with Facebook, employers actively monitor "how they're talked about" and how current and potential employees represent themselves online. You can create a pseudonym but most people use their own names and include a short bio.

Posting on Twitter is a "dance" between the personal and the professional: users frequently pick a topic to talk about (i.e. job search, Philly gelato venues, observations from 39th and Spruce). Using this framework, a majority of messages will be written about "on message" with other personal observations thrown in. If you choose to write almost exclusively about your topic, make sure every fourth or fifth observation provides a personal glimpse of you. (Of if you choose to go personal, make sure you post on professional message every four messages.)

The trick on Twitter is to offer a unique perspective but not to bore your followers with incessant "tweets" (posts) about the same exact topic all the time.

The best way to get started on Twitter is to create an account, add your bio and start posting short messages of your own. Search [Twitter's search engine](#) by key words to

identify users of potential interest and to observe how they tweet. Once you have at least five messages, you can “find” and “follow” others...Most users are alerted when they have new followers, and will then evaluate your content to decide if they should be “following you” back.

[How to Twitter](#)

The Social Rules and Tips for Gaining “Followers,” Why Opinionated People Win
A new user shares her experience using Twitter, including writing suggestions for content

[Newbie’s Guide for Twitter](#)

Social media expert Chris Brogan’s straight talk on how to get started.

[Round-Up of Users Guides and Tutorials for Twitter](#)

From Pistachio Consulting, a firm specializing in the business use of Twitter and other “microsharing” applications

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