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ENG 2720 Writing with New Media

The Write Up

Social media is one of the best ways to make professional connections, build your network, and land the job you have always wanted. Social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook have changed the nature of human interaction forever. Social media is now universal among young and old age groups alike for *social purposes*; it is fun, sometimes adventurous in having the ability to watch or spy on someone else's page, and often unexpectedly entertaining. For those who are not using social platforms to advance their careers may be missing out on the chance to meet and interact with people who can be beneficial in acquiring new opportunities. Much like myself, prior to making a LinkedIn account, I was one of those people missing out on such opportunities.

My project is based around the presentation of self and what it means when an individual presents themselves online. Kenny and Cohen proclaim that the differences within social media platforms gives individuals the chance to present themselves respectively based on the social platform’s conformity. Long term career success is now essentially dependent upon various social platforms where there is no shortage of interaction among hundreds of people who could be potential employers/business associates. Because different people play different roles, users who participate in social media must be able to actively manage their personal networks that they involve themselves in, which include but are not limited to, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. As a result, the student generation of digital natives have started defining their identities in terms of their social media profiles. Therefore, I took it upon myself to actively participate in the social platform of LinkedIn to be able to share what tools the medium offers in order for users to present themselves professionally online. With carrying out this project, I will be creating an e-magazine for college students so they too, can model after what I’ve done in order to put into practice, the presentation of self.

In order to belong in the professional realm of LinkedIn, there are two entities colleg students should possess, two entities that I have learned to grasp and accept through conducting my project. Seidman declares that “Facebook use is motivated by two needs: belonging and self-presentation” (1) and the same should stand for acquiring a sense of professionalism. Without self-presentation there is no belonging anywhere. Hence, college students should aim to present themselves professionally online if they wish to belong in the professional and work world for the future. Beyond the classroom, students should be able to possess the qualities of professional social skills both in the real world and in the scope of the World Wide Web. Education is the key to success however; it should not merely entail the transmission of facts but help students maximize their potential, both personally and professionally. Just as users of the web have the drive to form and maintain relationships on Facebook, they should be willing to do the same on the LinkedIn platform, which was created to illustrate one’s professionalism. What are professional social skills you may ask, simply put, it is the interpersonal interaction between individuals or in a group setting. Preferably, professional interactions require having an awareness of the respective positions of the persons involved, the relationships among persons, and the task.

In analyzing and learning about myself this semester, one reason that students may have poorly developed professional social skills is the lack of emphasis on them in a traditional educational setting. A second reason may be that students have not had previous role models of professionalism, because of either limited personal work history or lack of modeling in the home. In addition, students who do not realize the costs and benefits of social professionalism may not be motivated to develop those skills. In seeking employment during the course of one’s college career or after, employers typically look for these attributes in college students (with the help of a former employer and my father who employee people every day):

* Monitoring one’s own emotional expressions and responsiveness (e.g., showing interest in and motivation toward the task at hand)
* Maintaining composure when challenged
* Speaking and writing in a manner appropriate to the audience (e.g., different levels of formality in different contexts)
* Being receptive to feedback and constructive criticism (e.g., a willingness to learn and improve)
* Respecting others’ professional position, particularly those in authority (e.g., referencing people formally unless instructed otherwise)
* Being on time
* Being prepared for the task at hand

In a college environment, teachers often learn of opportunities (e.g., internships) that that may extend to students. In addition, whom do they select for those opportunities? The students who are competent, but also the students who can produce a positive impression. Thus, socially skilled students open themselves to additional educational experiences.

“Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn, when asked in a 2010 interview to compare the platform to his biggest competitor, replied:

*Facebook is largely a social utility platform. LinkedIn is a professional network.… The key distinction is that as a professional you want people to want to know who you are. People are searching for you or people like you whether you like it or not”*  (vanDijck 9).

Seidman explains that “the internet can provide a unique venue for expressing alternate selves and in the realm of LinkedIn, it serves as a tool for the higher education of students to present their professional selves (1). The number of college students looking for jobs is steadily increasing every year.  Therefore, anything one can do to differentiate themselves from the endless amount of others all competing for a position is important.  First, students must understand what it means to present themselves online. Self-presentation is the behavior that attempts to convey information about oneself to other people. The questions *to whom* and *for what purpose* does one craft their self-image raises more insightful issues of personal and professional representation. In the case of utilizing LinkedIn for future employment, it is in the best interest of students to present themselves professionally. A complete and polished LinkedIn profile can help students do just that.  By engaging in the social platform of LinkedIn, I myself have been able to understand the key components to successful presence online. I have curated a list of dos & don’ts for college students:

1. **Do** keep your LinkedIn profile clean and up-to-date. A LinkedIn profile acts as a digital resume – except, there is no control over who sees it or when it is seen.  A student should not post their most recent job on their profile without adding descriptive points as to what the job title entails. Be sure to have a brief but clear profile summary that illustrates who you are. Add all special skills and accomplishments as long as they’re relevant.
2. **Do** use LinkedIn to actively follow the network that you are seeking. Whether you are looking for an internship at your favorite company or applying to an entry-level job posting on your college’s career network, search for the companies that you are interested in on LinkedIn.
3. **Do** remember that LinkedIn is in fact NOT Facebook and should be utilized by sharing relevant content. Posting intriguing articles or thoughts about the industry you want to break into is a great way to bid comments and interactions with connections that share similar interests.
4. **Don't** only rely on LinkedIn job postings, postings are open to the entire LinkedIn user population, therefore the probability of getting a particular job is low.
5. **Don’t** be reluctant to be social on the platform. Join groups you are interested in and follow companies that intrigue you. When you join groups, you expand your searchable network to all group members. In addition, by posting in groups, you encourage others to interact with you and view your profile, expanding your LinkedIn impression. Following companies gives insight with interviewers and keeps you up-to-date with company news.
6. **Remember** to stand out, be active, and utilize this social network (LinkedIn Inc.).

According to Wikipedia, an electronic portfolio (also known as an e-portfolio, digital portfolio, or online portfolio) is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. For students who desire not to participate in the social platform of LinkedIn have the option of an e-portfolio provided to them at their college. E-Portfolio is a personal portfolio tool that affords students the opportunity to store, organize, reflect on, and share items that represent their learning over the course of their college career. Students can include items such as documents, graphics, audio files, videos, presentations, and course work to demonstrate their development or skills in certain areas.

Students can control what items you want to include in their portfolio, how they are organized, and whom they want to share them with. When sharing items with peers, mentors, or potential employers, permission may be given to view items, edit items, see or add comments, and see or add assessments to receive feedback. An e-portfolio is without a doubt the alternative to a LinkedIn profile as they serve to maintain a level of professionalism and adequacy of a student’s work throughout the years. What LinkedIn lacks in terms of an e-Portfolio is the capacity to encompass one’s thoughts, reflections, goals and aims for life, and other work that does not evidently fit into the “employment” or “education” categories. Employers are capable of understanding what an individual’s end goal may be as far as a career? However, what work portrays that that can be viewed outside the realm of LinkedIn? Where can employers view the other skills, one possesses that shows that a student is not just well-rounded in one specific field of work? I think the thing to do is keep a blog that records your reflective writings and other activities that do not fit into the current LinkedIn framework.

It is not just enough to have a profile online; students need to warrant that their profile stays current and that they are taking advantage of all the best features of each platform. By mastering these four LinkedIn features, a student can strengthen their personal brand and expand their success. The best features of the LinkedIn platform include:

1. Summary. Your summary’s purpose is to get the target audience to want to read on. To have a specific to an individual, it should say what the individual does and what the individual would like to step into regarding their field of study.
2. Groups. The actual worth of the platform is found in the groups, that serve particular functions that include:
   1. They help build and develop your network of interest. When you join groups related to your area of skill, you can easily connect with like-minded professionals and leaders who can help you reach your goals. When joining a group, ask yourself; Are these my people? Do I want to connect with these people? Do I have content and value to contribute? Am I willing to be a regular part of their conversation?
   2. They enable you to keep informed. Groups provide new information for learning that points to the direction of which topics are tending and introduction to new resources
3. Endorsements. Judgments are made about people based on the skills for which they were recognized, and LinkedIn highlights those skills.
4. Headshot. In today’s world where most people meet online before they do in person, people want to connect a face with a name. Your headshot should add sincerity to your profile therefore make it professional. It is not just about having a photo. It is about having the right photo. Save the selfies and vacation shots for Facebook. Make the viewer want to get to know you.

Students should take their choice of what to display personally both on a LinkedIn account and e-portfolio, exercising the practice of impression management. Impression management is the process of attempting to sway the perceptions of other people about oneself, object or event. This is done by regulating and controlling information in social interaction. Alternatively, as sociologist Erving Goffman likes to describe it as “the social rituals involved in self-presentation.” Impression management in this context therefore becomes a matter of distinguishing yourself and standing out, rather than preserving a positive image simply by virtue of omitting or concealing questionable information on your profile. Students now should be concerned with how others process and interpret the information on their profile, but in a way that encourages never-ending examination of the way, students present themselves on networking sites.

Student e-portfolios are now most dominant in college of education programs. Student e-portfolios are gaining momentum in general education courses where they can reveal skill levels and abilities in areas such as communications, nglish, or leadership. Other disciplines such as business, culinary, architecture, and engineering are also using them to record students’ learning experiences and skill sets. In general, e-portfolios are helping students become critical thinkers and helping in the growth of their writing and multimedia communication skills. E-portfolios can help students learn information and technology literacy skills and how to use digital media. Beyond academic evidence, they give students the opportunity to create a digitized showcase of their work and skills that can be presented to prospective employers. These e-portfolios may link students to their alma mater after graduation, provided they receive temporary or lifetime access to their e-portfolios housed on the institution’s servers such as the institution New York City College of Technology.

Because not everyone is interested in participating on LinkedIn, an e-portfolio should serve as a secondary option to be an official record of a student’s work. It should be able to serve as an official representation of a particular learning experience or skill achievement of a student with the option of making any necessary updates. An institution should promote and support the use of e-portfolios by giving students the affordance of using the e-portfolio as a job-finding tool. Students always ask questions and in the case of an e-portfolio, they may ask, why I should use an e-portfolio and there are numerous answers below.

* To share information on your academic progress with others (peers, tutors, advisors, etc.)
* To develop and store coursework, such as reflections, which may be required as, part of your course assessment.
* To showcase your best work (e.g. to friends, family)
* To help you self-assess and monitor aspects of your learning.
* To give you a synopsis of your learning (bringing together your experiences from individual courses).
* To help you connect your educational experiences with your personal experiences.
* To help you set personal development targets.
* To collate evidence (in one central online area) of the skills that you have developed whilst studying at Greenwich, such as IT, communication, analytical and critical skills.

In addition, after college, an e-portfolio may aid in

* Providing evidence of learning achievements for a further course of study or professional work.
* Helping in applying for graduate jobs.

Only so much information can be presented in a traditional transcript or resume, which rarely stands out from the crowd of other resumes being examined. With e-portfolios, students can give employers and graduate schools a better picture of themselves. They can include their essays from their courses; they can include course syllabi to explain the course content; they can add pictures and audio to expand their audience’s picture beyond the tradition of printed words.

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