OSP Social Media Resource

Module 3: Building Your Brand

In this Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) Social Media Resource module, you will learn how to:

- Critically review and build your online reputation or "personal brand".
- Improve your brand so that you stand out from other people who are interested in pursuing the same career and study opportunities that you are.

This module will also help you find meaningful answers to these four education and career/life planning inquiry questions: *Who am I? What are my opportunities*? *Who do I want to become? What is my plan for achieving my goals?*

So; what exactly do we mean by "brand"?

Brand is the "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's product distinct from those of other sellers". Initially, *Branding* was adopted to differentiate one person's cattle from another's by means of a distinctive symbol burned into the animal's skin with a hot iron stamp, and was subsequently used in business, marketing and advertising. **A brand is often the most valuable asset of a Corporation**. (*Source: Wikipedia)*

Look at the three brand logos to the right.

1. Do you recognize all of them? What products or organizations do they represent?

2. List three words you associate with each brand.

3. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of each brand? Is it a positive or a negative impression? Why do you think that is?

In the next section, you are going to examine your own online reputation – your personal brand.

Why Does Your Brand Matter?

56%

OPP, UK

91%

Reppler

Large numbers of employers, post-secondary institutions and organizations are all using social media to check out potential candidates.

Many reports put the number at more than a third with some reporting as high as 91%!

There's no way around it. The information is out there, right? Why wouldn't they look? With just a few clicks, they can access the information they need to help them decide if they want to invite you in for an interview for the program, volunteer position or job you have applied for.

So, here's the big question:

What would someone find if they were to Google your name right now?

37%

CareerBuilder

Good or bad, the information they find can directly impact their perceptions of you. This is what many people now refer to as your personal brand. It's getting more and more competitive out there, so that old saying "you only get one chance to make a first impression" really counts when it comes to your online reputation.

Complete the reflection worksheet on the next page and share your honest reactions to the three real life scenarios it describes.

Work Smart: Stay Safe

CAUTION

Social media is a great tool to expand your opportunities for post-secondary education, volunteer work and employment. But like any tool it is important to take precautions to stay safe while you are using it. Before beginning these modules:

1. Make sure your parents know what Websites you are using before you start any social media networking.

2. Check with your teacher or guidance counsellor for any additional school board policies that may apply in your area.

   The Kids Help Phone website has some great online safety tips.

Your Personal Brand: Reflection

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

Scenario 1: Your aunt just recommended you for a great summer job with her company. They need to fill the position right away and her boss is about to contact you. To get an idea of who you are the boss does a quick Google search of your name and your email address. How does this scenario make you feel? Describe your initial reaction below.

Scenario 2: You are applying to volunteer for an organization that represents an issue you are passionate about. If they were to check out the social media account that you are most active in, is there anything in your profile now that would make them **want** to contact you for an interview? If so, what is it? If not, what could you share that would persuade them you'd be a good fit?

Scenario 3: Are you one of those people who find it hard to resist sharing a super funny joke, video or picture even if it may be a "little" inappropriate? Do you think that spelling or swearing when you are posting online doesn't matter? Without looking at your accounts, what do you think your social media sharing weaknesses are? List your ideas for improving them below.

How to Conduct a Brand Audit

You might be thinking, audit? Isn't that an accounting word?

Yes, you are correct.

A financial audit is a close inspection of a business or person's financial accounts and records to make sure what is being reported matches the numbers in the accounting books.

On the social media side, a **personal brand audit** is a close inspection of what you have shared online to see if it matches the image and reputation you want to portray to post-secondary institutions, volunteer organizations and employers.

> **au·dit**
> /ˈôdit/
>
> Noun: An official inspection of an individual's or organization's accounts typically by an independent body.
>
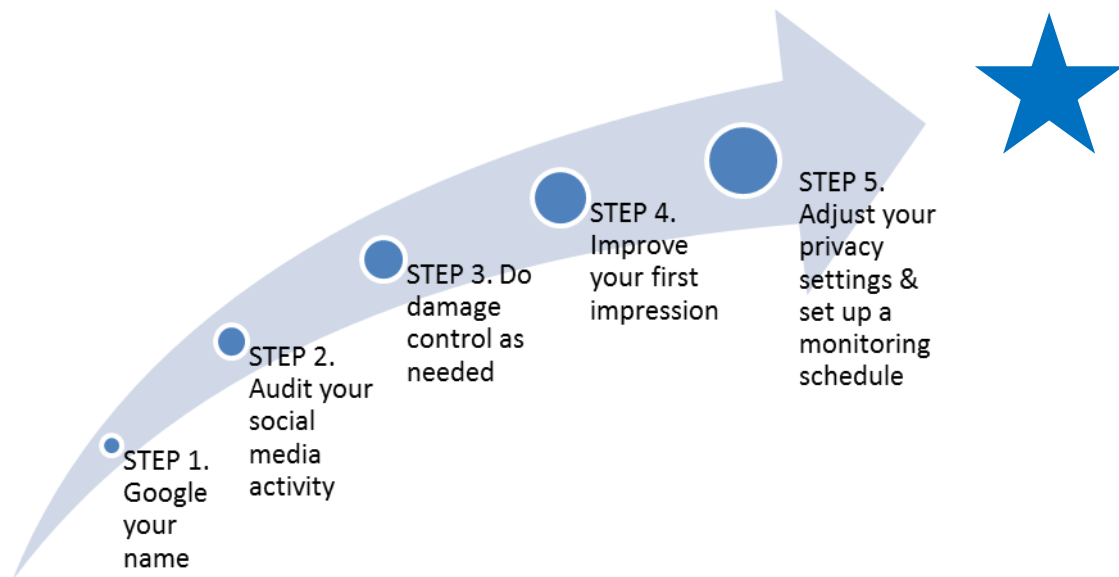> Synonyms: checkup – revision – examination
>
> Verb: check, inspect, verify

This is because every time we share, post, like or comment on something, we reveal a little bit about ourselves. If you look through a profile of someone you've never met before, it's not hard to imagine what that person may be like.

Step-by-Step Brand Audit Process

In this OSP module you will learn how to review and evaluate your personal brand using the five steps shown below. Each step has an activity to help guide you through the process.

Let's get started!

STEP 1. Google your name

STEP 2. Audit your social media activity

STEP 3. Do damage control as needed

STEP 4. Improve your first impression

STEP 5. Adjust your privacy settings & set up a monitoring schedule

Step One: Google Yourself

Have you ever Googled yourself?

It's a great way to review and monitor your online
reputation. When you search your name you should
expect to see images and posts that you remember uploading and some that were uploaded by
your friends and family. But you may also be surprised to see what else comes up that you
didn't post.

You just never know, and that's the reason why you should **Google your name at least three
times a year** to see what's out there.

When people think of this task they tend to focus on searching for the negative. Many people
have happily discovered tons of positive posts, articles and pictures by others they never even
knew existed or completely forgot about. So, remember to be on the look-out for positive
postings too!

However, if you do find anything negative, see if you can remove it right away. Or make a note
to contact the person who posted it to remove it. Don't worry, there's more to come on
improving a bad online reputation later in this module!

How to Google Your Name

Seems pretty straight forward right? Enter your first and last name and boom you've got results.
Interestingly enough, there's more to it than that.

In the following activity make sure that you check a minimum of 10 pages of search results for
each question.

Remember to also check any images or videos that show up in the results.

Use the worksheet to record what you find.

Did you know that Google results are customized to each user? After you complete the activity,
it's a good idea to have someone else Google you and see what they find that may not have
been included in your search results.

You are now ready to complete the worksheet.

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**Personal Brand Audit Step 1:
Google Yourself**

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

For each of the following enter the terms in bold into Google and hit search. Remember to check not just the text it brings up but also any pictures and video images.

1. Search your **first + last name**. What did you find?

2. Search your **name + town/city**. What did you find?

3. Search your **current + past email addresses.** What did you find?

4. Search your **current + past usernames**. What did you find?

5. Find anything else?

Step Two: Audit your Social Media Usage

As you've read, your online past can come back to haunt you. This section will help you to identify the "funny at the time" but now "not-so-cool" posts you may have forgotten about.

Look at the sample worksheet below to see how one student audited one of his social media accounts to identify what was okay and what needed to be changed to create the positive and professional brand he wanted to project.

Review	Notes	FIXED	Need to FIX
Pictures	• Most pics okay. Messaged John to ask him to remove that picture from Taylor's BBQ last July.		✔
Privacy settings	• Checked all my privacy settings and adjusted a few of them. There were several photo albums that I made more private.	✔	
Comments	• I looked through all the comments and I deleted a few with swearing but overall I didn't find anything too bad.	✔	
Posts by me	• I deleted a few of my old posts with swearing and really bad spelling but nothing I am too concerned about.	✔	
Posts by others	• Found an awesome picture of Hannah's from when we volunteered at the community clean up but you can't see me clearly. Have messaged to see if she has another.		✔
Videos	• I have not posted any videos that I am worried about	✔	
Applications / Games	• Surprised at how many Candy Crush and Temple Run posts were on my wall! It makes it look like all I do is play video games all day. Need to find time to delete or hide them.		✔
Groups	• Left a bunch of groups that I don't participate in • I need to locate and connect with groups that better show my career and social interests		✔
Pages	• I un-liked a lot of pages. I really want to get a job at Chapters so I liked their page and I also liked the pages of two of my favourite authors and two Canadian publishing companies.	✔	
Contacts / Friends	• I was surprised to see how many people I was "friends" with that I either didn't know or even like. They got deleted!	✔	

Now it's your turn. Choose the social media account you are most active in and complete the worksheet on the next page.

**Personal Brand Audit Step 2:
Audit Yourself**

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

> Choose the account you are most active in (Facebook, etc), and complete the worksheet to identify the information that is OK (✓) or where changes are needed. It's a good idea to do this with all of the social media networks you have used in your lifetime. For some people this could be a long task but it's important to know what's out there.

[Your account]	✓	Write any changes you need to make in the spaces below.
Pictures		
Privacy settings		
Comments		
Posts by me		
Posts by others		
Videos		
Applications		

Games		
Groups		
Pages		
Contacts / Friends		
Additional notes		

Step Three: Damage Control

You may not need this information, but just in case…

Most people have posted something online that they've regretted later: a picture, a negative comment or a link to a site that not everyone may find funny. Think these posts are not a problem? Check out the story on the right.

There are ways you can clean up your act online. While there are no guarantees that your old posts won't be found, you can minimize the damage done. [1]

The process is called **Social Media Account Damage Control** and should only be taken if you have a *really* negative online past and feel it is limiting your opportunities. It's a very manual and tedious process but it is worth it if things are really bad. Please follow the steps in order for each of your accounts that need damage control.

Damage Done

While no one plans for things to get out of control; stuff happens. Read the story here of the fast food restaurant employee who posted a picture, as part of a work contest, that he and his colleague both thought was funny. But the employer didn't think so and after it went viral both employees lost their jobs.

1. Delete every photo and video on your account individually and ask your friends to delete any damaging photos they have posted (unfortunately not everybody will). In extreme cases, try contacting the social media company to see if they can do anything for you.

2. Un-tag everything you've been tagged in and delete any comments you have made.

3. Un-friend all of your contacts individually. Re-connect with the friends that matter,

4. Adjust your privacy settings to maximum.

5. Change your name on the account or completely close the account.

6. Start a new account and create a new email address. If you used your real name before, rebrand with using your middle initial. Consider creating two accounts. One under your real name for professional contacts and one under a nickname for friends.

7. Do not use the old email you used for anything else.

8. Build a new account with positive posts and pictures. Eventually the good posts will outshine and outnumber the bad ones that you can't get rid of.

9. Last point: If you have a common name there may be 100's of people in the world with the same name. If you search your name and find embarrassing posts that are **not** about you, consider adding your middle initial to **all** of your accounts, applications and résumés to help separate you from the others whose posts can accidentally damage your reputation.

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[1] http://www.cbsnews.com/news/employee-fired-from-taco-bell-for-licking-shells/

Step Four: Improve Your Profile's First Impression

According to Malcolm Gladwell, Canadian journalist and best-selling author, we make decisions about other people in as little as **one or two seconds** after meeting them.

Researchers from New York University found that we make eleven major decisions about one another in the first **seven seconds** of meeting.

In business interactions, first impressions are crucial. While you can't stop people from making snap decisions about you – the human brain is hardwired in this way as a prehistoric survival mechanism – you *can* understand how to make those decisions work in your favour.

So, you've Googled your name and reviewed your social media accounts, now it's time to improve the first impression you want people to have when they look at your profiles.

A profile that showcases a good first impression can help you stand out in a crowd of applicants applying to the same program or position as you are.

Think about it like meeting somebody for the first time. What do you look at first? Their face! What do you want to know next? Their name followed by where they are from. Finally, you want to know a little bit more about them. That's why people look at the following four key areas when they look at a social media profile for the first time.

1. Profile picture

2. Profile name or username

3. Location

4. Bio

Check out the example on the next page.
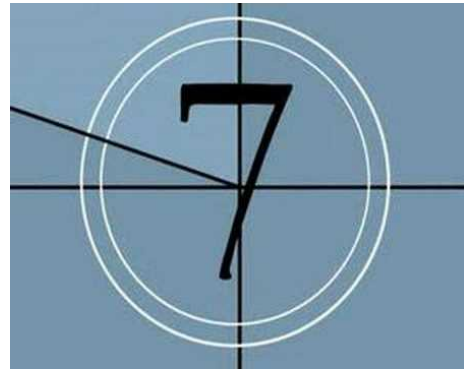
Profile Pictures. Profiles without pictures often get ignored. We know it is fun to use pictures, cartoons and graphics instead of a picture of your face. But, when looking for a job or volunteer position you definitely want to consider using a warm, welcoming and professional picture of yourself.

Location. Never share your home address on the Internet; ever! In the wrong hands, that information could leave you open to identity thieves and much worse. However, asking someone where they're from is a standard question when you meet them for the first time. To be safe, share only general details such as the name of your city, town (if not too small), region or province. You can find more information on Internet safety in the Introduction to the OSP Social Media Resource.

Username and profile name. Creating a cool username can be a way to express yourself. There's nothing wrong with using something fun that truly represents who you are. Just be careful of what it communicates. Obviously, a name that suggests negativity, immaturity, drug use or promiscuity is not going to attract the right people. In doubt? Use your own name. Same thing goes for email addresses. CutiexHottie15xo@mail.com or KillrNayshun@live.com are not appropriate for email addresses.

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Kitchener, Ontario

I am a 17 year old Mac obsessed app developer who loves a great debate and plans on being a future radio superstar. Oh yeah, I'm terrified of cats and I recycle almost everything.

Bio. If well written one or two sentences can communicate a lot about you. You can share your general interests, what you are passionate about and reveal a bit of your personality. Check out Module 1 of the OSP Social Media Resource to learn how to write an effective mini bio that makes people want to get to know you.

Now it's time to review your own profile.

Use the *First Impression Checklist* to help you create a fantastic first impression with your social media accounts.

First Impression Checklist

What kind of first impression is your social media content making? Before you publish something to the Web, ask yourself the following questions:

Profile Picture: The answers to the questions below should all be "Yes"! If you can't check off everything below, consider changing your profile picture.

- ❑ Do you have a profile picture?
- ❑ Is it current?
- ❑ Is it a picture of you, by yourself? (having others in the shot can be confusing)
- ❑ Is it a close up shot?
- ❑ Do you have a friendly expression?
- ❑ Are you appropriately dressed?

Do you need to change your picture?

- ❑ Yes, I need to change my profile picture.
- ❑ No. My picture is perfect. It's friendly, welcoming and professional.

Username: Do you need to change your username?

- ❑ Yes, I need to change my username to _____
- ❑ No, I do not. My username is great just the way it is.

Location: Do you need to update your location?

- ❑ Yes, I need to update it.
- ❑ No. My location gives people a sufficient idea of where I am from.

Bio: Do you need to update your bio?

- ❑ Yes, I need to update it with something much more engaging and inviting.
- ❑ No. My bio does a great job introducing me.

Step Five: Check Privacy Settings

When was the last time you looked at your privacy settings? Chances are they may not be as private as you think. Social media websites regularly change their terms and conditions and this includes their privacy policies. This can leave everything you've shared wide-open including your personal profile details.

Take the time to go through the privacy settings on each of your accounts to see what you would like to keep just between friends. But, remember, nothing is ever really private once you post it, no matter how tight your privacy settings are.

It is important to regularly:

✓ Check and adjust your privacy settings

✓ Set up a schedule of ongoing privacy checks at least three times a year

✓ Log out of your social media accounts and then search yourself to see what others can find out about you

Image credit: Online privacy. Creative Commons Attribution.

Step Six: Schedule Your Brand Audits

It's very important to audit your online personal brand regularly. Three times a year should do it. It's a good idea to schedule it when you do your privacy checks! It will take less time than when you did it the first time because you have learned a lot about the importance of your online reputation.

Free Tools!

There are some cool free tools to reduce the work when monitoring your brand and privacy.

Reppler (www.reppler.com). This service will send you an email alert if you have posted a "questionable post" (one with swearing, sexually explicit content, drug related references, etc.) on any of your accounts. It also lets you know if your friends have posted anything inappropriate on your accounts.

Google Alerts (www.google.ca/alerts). When you set up an alert using your name as the search term, Google will email you whenever something new gets posted publicly to the Web that includes your name.

The information you gathered in your own personal brand audit can help you find meaningful answers to these four education and career/life planning inquiry questions: *Who am I? What are my opportunities? Who do I want to become? What is my plan for achieving my goals?*

Use the worksheet on the next page to capture your ideas.

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Your Personal Brand: Final Reflection

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

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1. **Who am I?**

   What am I doing well that I can do more of to improve my online brand?

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2. **What are my opportunities?**

   What people, experiences or things are available to help me improve my brand?

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3. **Who do I want to become?**

   What is my goal? What do I want people to think or do when they see my online brand?

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4. **What is my plan for achieving my goals?**

   Now that you've analyzed your personal brand, take a few moments to review all your responses. Think about where you are now and where you want to be three years from now. How can you use your strengths, Essential Skills and work habits, and social media knowledge to help you get there? List a few ideas below.

Final Thoughts

When building your personal brand, remember to review your OSP Work Plan and other OSP records. They include important information on how you have demonstrated your Essential Skills and work habits that you can bring with you to every new opportunity.

Highlighting this information will make your brand more attractive to future employers, post-secondary institutions and volunteer organizations and result in the positive first impression you want to make.

Ready to learn more about using social media to showcase your Essential Skills and work habits to achieve your goals?

Go to OSP Social Media Resource Module 4: Building Your Network.

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