

PERSONAL BRAND: YOUR DIGITAL IDENTITY

CAREER PLANNING CENTER

Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J. Center • (203) 254-4081 • CPC@fairfield.edu • www.fairfield.edu/cpc

Everyone knows what a brand is... It's Starbucks, Google, McDonalds, Coca-Cola, and even Fairfield University.



Just looking at these logos elicits something about the company; consistent coffee, reliable search engine, or marquee education. The feelings and concepts attached to these logos have been carefully crafted and maintained by the organization to do just that. Organizations are not the only ones utilizing the concept of branding, individuals also have the ability to craft their own brand. Personal branding is the process by which we create our own brand and market ourselves to others. As a brand, we can leverage the same strategies that make these corporate brands appeal to others. Your personal brand is seen in a number of ways:

- Through the way you dress
- Through the way you carry yourself
- In your professional resume
- Through your **DIGITAL IDENTITY**

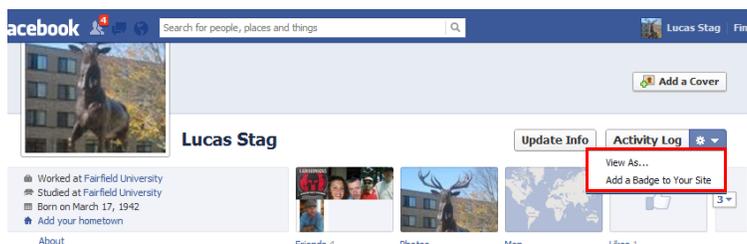
With the surge of social media, you not only have the ability, but you now have the responsibility to manage your own personal brand, both online and in real life. Your digital identity is defined by any and all online information that exists about you, whether you personally created it or not. Social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are all a part of your digital identity. The material you post and the things you write on these sites can influence your personal brand and thus impact an employer's or graduate school's impression of you, for better or for worse. A Career Planning Center counselor can help you manage your digital identity in a number of ways. For an appointment call (203) 254-4081 or email CPC@fairfield.edu.

MANAGING YOUR DIGITAL IDENTITY

In an effort to really gain control of your *PERSONAL BRAND*, it is important to manage it correctly.

Step 1: Assess your digital identity! How do people see you on the web and is it in line with how you want people to see you?

- Perform a thorough online search of yourself! Check your name through multiple search engines (i.e., Google, Bing, and Yahoo) Also, put your name in quotations (i.e., "Lucas Stag") and the search will change again.
- **See something you don't like?** Start with cleaning up sites that are in your control, such as your Facebook profile or blog. There are some pieces of information that are a part of the public record that can't be removed, like police logs and newspaper articles. But you can impact where those pieces end up in a search result if you are **DILIGENT** in building your identity on high traffic sites such as LinkedIn. The idea is, if you build up a positive identity on the web, that less flattering information will appear lower on a Google search.
 - It's important to remember that 68% of employers have rejected a candidate because of something they saw online (Repplar, 2012). You want to find that "something" before the employer does!
- Create a **Google+ Profile** and check out the "Me On the Web" section to help manage the content that comes up when people Google you! Google already has tools built in that can help you "clean up" your digital identity. For example, you can set up an alert when you are mentioned online, you can remove a page or site from a Google Search, or you could contact Google directly to report an issue.



- Be aware of your **Facebook privacy settings**. We know you have all heard this before, but Facebook is NOT a private place. However, privacy settings allow you to filter who in your network sees what making it feel private. You can also use "Lists" to group different people together (i.e., Professional Connections) and customize the list's privacy settings so that they have limited access to your profile. Be sure to check to see how a person can see your profile (see image).

- Utilize sites such as **MyWebCareer.com**, **www.reppler.com**, **brandyourself.com** to get a basic look at your online identity and to get some tips on how to improve it. These sites scan the web and your Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts for harmful content. Using these sites might bring issues to your attention before an employer sees it!

Step 2: Create the brand you want!

- First things first, you have to KNOW what you want your brand to be. Think about your professional goals or your ideal work situation and make sure your brand is in line with the organization.
- 68% of employers said that they actually HIRE employees because of their positive online presence, your digital brand really matters!
- Regardless of what you want your brand to be, for it to be effective **it must be CONSISTENT!**
- Create a professional and customized name or handle that you carry across all of your social networks:



www.facebook.com/LucasStag - *Customize your Facebook URL in the account settings*



@lucasstag - *Create a Twitter Handle with your name*

LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com/in/LucasStag> - *Customize your public profile URL in the Settings page.*

- Use the same **professional photo** as your profile picture across all of your social networks... You might love that artistic photo of your feet that you use as your Facebook profile picture, but while you are on the job hunt and working to craft your brand your photo should be professional and representative of YOU!
- **USE LINKEDIN!** Think of LinkedIn as a combination of your resume, cover letter, references and a moving/living database of your network. Having a strong LinkedIn profile is a great way to build your professional brand and to do your own personal advertising. See below for more ways to utilize LinkedIn in the job search.

Step 3: Maintain your brand!

- Now that you have your personal brand and it is displayed through your digital identity, it is important that you maintain it!
- That means actively updating your LinkedIn, Google+, and your Facebook profiles.
- Be sure to stay current on social media trends and changes to the different platforms. Facebook, in particular, updates often and the privacy settings might change.



Think of LinkedIn as an interactive business card. It's a summary of your professional experiences, interests, and capabilities designed to attract the attention of people who are searching for you online - potential employers, networking contacts, and grad school admissions counselors. A strong profile is a KEY differentiator in the job market. Here are some tips to maximize LinkedIn during your job search...

- **Utilize the headline** – write something that is descriptive of who you are that uses some key word
Fairfield University Junior English Major/President, University Journalism Society
- Write a keyword rich **professional summary statement** that is concise, specific, and typo free
I am a junior Marketing major at Fairfield University with a minor in Communication and English. My professional experiences lie in Marketing, Project Management, Public Speaking, and Public Relations. I have had the opportunity to intern at Gain Communications where I honed my consumer marketing expertise and skills.
- Show off your **education, your honors, and your activities**. Include important details such as majors, minors, and titles.
- Collect a diverse number of recommendations. You can ask your internship supervisor, a professor, or an advisor— having 5 recommendations from one experience is great, but if you can get 1 recommendation from **each one of your experiences**, you paint a well rounded image of yourself.
- **MAKE CONNECTIONS!** You have to participate in LinkedIn for it to be valuable. Ask people to join your network!
- **JOIN GROUPS!** Be sure to join the Fairfield Alumni Group and other groups associated with your major. It is also wise to join knowledge based groups for the industry you are interested in joining.
- **USE LINKEDIN** to find connections in companies or industries you are interested in. One way to do that is to look for Fairfield Alumni at specific companies.
 - Use search tool on upper right hand of home page, search for an organization
 - Go to that company's LinkedIn page and scroll down to see your college Alumni that work for that organization.