Developing your Personal Brand
Presenting your best version of YOU!

Your *Brand* is what people say about you when you're not there.
(adapted from Jeff Bezos).

Your Brand is what you stand for and it matters both on a personal level and in terms of your career – the professional setting.

What are your values, and how does your behaviour reflect those values? Are they consistent?

What words are used to describe you? by friends, family, co-workers?

Your brand is the ALL of YOU – it's your story and it is critical as it's what others see whether they look for you online, as well as what you choose to present when meeting people face-to-face.

To some extent a focus on crafting your brand provides you with some control to present an accurate picture of YOU, rather than it occurring accidentally. It also can help you stand out (for the right reasons) in a crowded applicant pool to secure the job you want.

Your brand should be genuine and an accurate depiction of who you are. Focus on the positives. Don't be fake – it's easy to spot! If your behaviours are inconsistent with who you say you are, it's the behaviours that will be believed. Actions speak louder than words!

Your brand should highlight your strengths, establish a reputation, build trust and communicate 'what you offer', especially to employers, what's the package you are offering and how is it unique and distinguish you from others.

Your brand should also be about more than who you are today; it should provide a window into the future – where you are headed and your potential. Focus on working out who you are – what's already in your personal toolkit and what do you need to develop?

Early in your career, your brand is very much about who you are as a person, and not so much about your skills and experience. Your professional brand is likely to adapt as your career grows and even shift in focus, however at the core remains your personal integrity and the attributes you want to be known for.

Developing a personal brand might sound overwhelming but really, it's just about being the best version of you and presenting your story. Your personal brand is the foundation for marketing you.

With the reality, proliferation and pervasiveness of the online world, it's important to manage your exposure in this context as it directly impacts your brand. If your online interaction, and particularly your socials are inconsistent with who you say you are – the social media version will dominate.

Many a career has been ruined by an online post that pops up unexpectedly.

Here's some factors to consider to better manage your brand!

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1.   Check out yourself online - what will you find when you search your name?

Do you like what you see and just as importantly would an employer like what they see? Will it help or hinder you obtaining the job or scholarship you want?

There's likely to be quite a lot of information online, whether it's photos, stories or similar. Some you may have posted, and some may be from media reports, or others. This all tells a story about you possibly before someone has even met you and perceptions are formed, which can be difficult to overcome, especially if not so favourable.

It's quite easy for employers to find information online that you may have preferred to keep private. It's as simple as that online search. And they do check.

Be mindful of what shows up and if you are seeing photos or posts that potentially could negatively affect your brand reputation and thus your job search, then change your profile settings or delete what is in your control.

'Friends' online – are they really? If your 'friends' are posting and it links to you or shows you in an unfavourable way, you may want to consider whether to keep them as a 'friend'. Take action and delete those 'friends'. You won't miss them!

   You want to be presenting your best version of you to gain the job or opportunity you want!

2.   If you don't want people to see it – don't post it online!

If you don't want information to be seen potentially in the public domain then don't provide it – even to friends. Messages between friends have been known to find their way into the public domain.

Often you don't have control over information you share so if it's private keep it private. As a minimum - check your settings. Be careful about the share!

3.   Be careful what you say – it may come back to bite you!

We all make mistakes, right? Yes, but if you don't need to make an obvious mistake, then don't!

Be careful what you say in the online space. Think before you 'speak'. It's so easy to go online and vent our frustrations in the heat of the moment. Even when you commence work and start using some of the online platforms for professional use, it's wise to filter what you say and comment on.

Be cautious as you don't know who might read it and where it will end up and the damage it could do to you, your reputation and thus your brand. For example – posting 'I hate my job or my boss, or worse still using the actual name, is never a good idea. Or you call in sick to work on a Monday, and next thing your fishing photo shows up in your supervisor's online feed.

Be mindful who you 'friend' from your workplace. Recommend avoiding becoming 'friends' on more personal platforms with your boss or senior colleagues in particular. It's helpful to keep some separation in the work and friend space.

Your name and reputation are your Personal Brand and your most valuable assets – Protect them!