

SAFE SOCIAL NETWORKING

Maintaining a Professional Image for Career Success

ONLINE IDENTITY

Employers will often search the Internet to learn more about a potential candidate. Believe it or not, this can make or break your candidacy even if you have stellar qualifications or you nailed the interview! Consider the following safe social networking tips to curate and maintain a professional identity in the age of social media.

- + **Search your name** in various search engines to see what information is available and make adjustments to your accounts - privacy settings, profile summaries & photos, and other visible information - as necessary.
- + **Avoid sharing personal information publicly** that can be used as identity theft, such as your birthdate, social security number, student ID, address, and phone number.
- + **Use privacy settings** to limit specific information to certain audiences. This is especially easy to accomplish on Facebook - every photo and status can be tailored to have their own unique privacy setting. Use this to your advantage!
- + However, **assume that everything posted online can be seen by all.** The Internet is inherently public, and there is no definitive way to prevent potential employers from seeing what you decide to post online.

NETWORKING STRATEGIES

Social media, if used appropriately, can be a powerful professional networking and personal branding tool.

The following tips can guide you in leveraging social media as a tool to use in the professional realm.

- + **Consider making all of your personal accounts private.** Even if you keep what you post clean, public profiles allow employers to easily search back in your history. Be wary of the archival nature of social media platforms.
- + **Develop separate accounts for professional use or branding.** Many students or young professionals maintain public accounts where they can post industry news, their design work, or other professional updates. This allows you to clearly separate work from play.
- + **Link branding accounts to a personal website or blog.** This allows you to direct employers to one specific website where they can learn about your professional interests and view your work. Hint: a great base platform is your student profile on the UTSOA website!
- + **Follow companies on social media.** Many firms in the design and planning world utilize Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, and more to showcase updates on their work and engage with constituents. Following the day-to-day updates of companies you're interested in working for can expose you to their firm culture and projects more effectively than just visiting their website.
- + **Use LinkedIn.** LinkedIn can connect you to peers, colleagues, and professionals across the country and world.

In summary: exercise caution, use common sense, and be creative! Social media can allow you to showcase your professional identity and make a positive impression on potential employers.