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Introduction

Social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are becoming increasingly popular in the last two years and can be seen as “tremendous vehicles for connecting with others, be it socially or professionally” (Jencius & Rainey, 2009, p. 22). For example, according to ebizmba.com, as of February 1, 2016, Facebook has over one billion users (<http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites>). Social media are socially constructed; the sites are flexible allowing the user to create their own functionality. For example, some users may use them to increase their social connections while others may use them to network with employers and other professionals (Strehike, 2010). These sites are unique because they “enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). This allows other users to easily search for and create connections to others, facilitating connections between people that wouldn’t ordinarily have been made (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media appears to be a natural platform for networking because anyone with access to the Internet can create a personalized profile and post information that others can access (Strehike, 2010). Networking is a key component of job searching, but prior to using social media for job search, user profiles must be created that emphasize a job seeker’s skills and experiences.

In the following sections, we will discuss various social medias that provide opportunities for creating and managing one's personal optimization reputation in powerful ways.

Facebook

Facebook launched in February of 2004 as a result of an endeavor by Mark Zuckerberg and his associates to connect students at Harvard University students. However, the website was eventually extended to include individuals from all over the world with a total of 400 million users to date (Boulton, 2010). Registering as a Facebook user allows individuals to create a profile, connect with friends and colleagues from around the world, share photos, videos, and websites, and post statuses to keep those within your network up-to-date on occurrences and happenings within one's life.

Facebook has experienced an exponential rise to fame within the last ten years as a means of connecting people from around the world. Originally intended to be a way for professionals to network and connect with each other, the use of Facebook has extended beyond the realm of professional networking to include connection and interaction within non-professional settings (About Facebook, 2016). However, this paradigm shift has brought about, for some, a problem for some professionals who use Facebook as a means of social connection in non-professional settings.

Facebook offers professionals many opportunities for promoting their personal brand (About Facebook, 2016). For example, individuals can create a professional page in which they can display their personal brand, and connect with professionals around the world. In doing so, the individual's network of industry-related contacts expands exponentially allowing for more opportunities to emerge. In general, there are two types of professionals who utilize Facebook as a way of promoting their personal brand: those

who are seeking employment from companies, corporations, or organizations and those who are attempting to start their own company. For those wishing to attract employers and have it serve as a method of “portfolio-ing” accomplishments and experience, a professional Facebook page is an excellent option.

Facebook has made prospective employees so easily accessible to employers looking to gain a deeper insight into an applicant’s personal life. In some cases, this can lead to discoveries that are unbecoming of the type of person the employer is looking to hire. Therefore, it is extremely important for professionals to maintain a positive, social media presences that promotes one’s personal brand in a manner that peaks an employer’s interest in hiring an applicant.

For those attempting to “kick-start” their personal brand to promote their own business or organization, Facebook offers many options for business owners to utilize in order to market their product to individuals around the world. One of the most common examples of this is the option to utilize FacebookAds to promote one’s professional page and products/services being offered for purchase. FacebookAds range in price based on the frequency of appearance as determined by the business owner. Essentially, a budget is set and the ad appears on Facebook to a number of viewers based on the budget set forth by the account holder (About Facebook, 2016).

Whether one is looking to use Facebook as a means of social networking, professional networking, or a combination of both, Facebook offers many types of profiles that appeal to these different needs. For business owners and professionals, Facebook offers a professional profile in which customers and users can "like" one's professional page and keep up-to-date with products and happenings with the business. It

is not recommended for professionals to have the same profile serve as both their professional and personal profile (About Facebook, 2016).

Professionals who have a personal profile should always be mindful of their online presence and the materials on their Facebook profile available for others to view. In order to ensure that personal profiles are secure and contents are only available to audiences with whom the account holder wishes to share videos, photos, and postings, users should utilize the privacy tool options within Facebook account settings and set their personal profile to private. Even though professionals separate professional profiles from personal profiles on Facebook, users should nevertheless be mindful of postings to personal profiles as photographs and videos associated with one's Facebook may appear on search engine results when one's name is "searched" within a search engine.

Twitter

For someone trying to reach out to promote their personal or professional brand, Twitter may be a quick and effective way to access large amounts of people. According to Forbes.com, founded in 2006, Twitter is a global platform that individuals can use for microblogging and social networking services (#1,605 Twitter, 2016). In addition, the website acknowledges that Twitter can be used for business and marketing purposes. Twitter accessible to all individuals for free and can be accessed via computer and mobile devices.

Since its founding in 2006, Twitter has seen its usage grow immensely and integrate with other popular forms of media. According to Albanesius (2009), Twitter saw 7 million unique visits to the website for the month of February 2009.

Comparatively, according to Twitter's website, as of the end of 2015, the social

networking site has 320 million active monthly users. What's more, they report over one billion unique visits each month to websites that have tweets embedded into the page (About Twitter, 2016). These figures may even be larger as Twitter's website does not require one to be an active member to view all tweets. Given the sizable increase of active user on the social networking site and the integration of tweet posts on other websites (e.g. Facebook), utilizing Twitter may be an effective to increase brand visibility and social media traffic.

Recognizing that the potential of its platform for small businesses, Twitter has created resources with the intention of helping small business to best utilize the social networking site as a means to increase their brand. Two such resources that Twitter has created include The Twitter Small Business Blog and Twitter Analytics.

Reading blogs within The Twitter Small Business Blog can provide you with valuable tips and suggestions that are designed to help someone to promote their small business, but also appear to be applicable to promoting your own personal or professional brand. These blogs cover many themes and topics including but not limited to using the Quick Promote to gain attention on Twitter (Wadlington, 2016), the use of emoji's in business promotion (Stecyk 2016), or simply explaining different functions like how to embed a tweet on a blog or website.

Twitter has developed Twitter Analytics as a tool for small businesses and users to track data regarding twitter postings and how users interact with those postings.

Twitter Analytics allows you to track specific data on how your followers are viewing and interacting with specific content on your Twitter feed. For each tweet, analytics can track the amount of impressions (times the tweet was viewed) and engagements (times

the tweet was interacted with, including replying, following, liking, as well as clicking on hashtags, links, usernames, etc.) There are several other resources that allows individuals to best target their respective audiences. Stecyk (2015) suggests several means of best using twitter analytics. She points out that with using audience insight, users have the ability to understand the commonalities of followers as well as their major demographic information. She also points out that users can get monthly analytic reports, and feedback on who seems most engaged in your tweets. It also provides feedback on when a particular tweet may be gaining large enough attention, and with quick promote, you can advertise that tweet to a larger audience.

According to Osborn, Kronholz, Finklea and Cantonis (2015), many job seekers may use Twitter as a means of searching for and following companies, notable individuals, or professional associations. In addition, they stated that seekers may participate in “tweetchats” or “tweetups” as a means of connecting and interacting with other active users. As someone hoping to promote their personal or professional brand, this may be an effective means of connecting with individuals or small and large companies for networking purposes.

Many articles and resources can be found online that give suggestions about using social networking for branding, and this could especially be said in regards to Twitter. Where many articles may focus on improving one’s brand, others may focus on things to consider and avoid when using Twitter. In an interview with an individual specializing in social media and marketing, Whitley (2015), a Forbes contributor, highlighted things to consider when attempting to strengthen one’s personal brand on Twitter. The article suggests creating clear separation between one’s personal views from that of your

company or small business, even by placing a disclaimer on your personal Twitter account, avoid religion, politics or other hot-button issues, be consistent on the topics you tweet about instead of bouncing around different topics, and when interacting with twitter followers, don not be reactive to any negative comments. Instead, walk and come back and respond once you have a chance to calm down.

YouTube

According to the About YouTube page (<https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/>), YouTube is a video sharing website with billions of users that was launched in 2005 and is owned by Google. YouTube provides a platform for people to connect, share media, entertain, and educate others on various topics across the globe. Additionally, YouTube serves as a host for advertisement and promotion, which is often paired with original video content. Users can subscribe to their favorite video channels, which allows them to see new video content by that person or group in the subscriptions feed on their homepage. Users can also create playlists containing groups of videos they select to watch at any time. Users who wish to subscribe to video channels and post their own content must sign in with a Google account. On the homepage, YouTube provides a “Trending” category, which allows users to see videos that are popular on any given day. The Creator Studio function is for individuals who post videos, and contains tools such as the dashboard, video manager, and analytics. The analytics tool allows users to view and create reports based on the performance of their videos in several categories such as, “performance metrics” which calculates watch time and number of views. Video creators can also access audience engagement metrics, compiled based on data such as number of likes, dislikes, comments, and shares from other YouTube users. Another interesting

analytics metric allows publishers to view demographic data based on gender and reported location of users. These functions can be viewed in greater detail by visiting the following website:

https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1714323?hl=en&ref_topic=3025741

YouTube can be applied to personal online reputation management in a number of ways. This site is of particular interest because it provides a platform for individuals to display his or her values, interests, skills, and personality in video format, along with the opportunity to interact with a large network of users. According to the Hootsuite blog posted by LePage (2015), professionals can create a visual brand with social media tools like YouTube. To create a brand, the user must decide on the qualities, skills, or values that the individual wants to express in video format. This is known as identifying the “brand voice.” The next step involves choosing the content for video posts. LePage (2015) suggests that it is better to select specific topics rather than creating general posts. Professionals could focus on topics that are related to their chosen or desired occupation, or industry area. For example, teachers and educators could create videos demonstrating mastery of certain instructional techniques or examples of creative lesson plans. Job seekers can create videos to showcase their resumes and relevant experiences in a more interactive format, using examples of their skills and qualifications, while also demonstrating excellent communication skills and presentation abilities. Employers could post recorded information sessions with an overview of the company and what they are looking for in potential applicants for available positions. The branding component can be enhanced by using consistent pictures, names, and titles within the video posts which are connected to the individual who created the content. Video posters can also embed

links to their other social media sites and blogs within the video posts to encourage users to follow and view their content on other platforms. For professionals, this might include the web address for the person's LinkedIn page or professional Twitter.

YouTube offers plenty of options to engage with and track the participation of a large audience of potential viewers. Professionals can respond to appropriate comments, subscribe to relevant channels, join groups of likeminded individuals, and create reports using the analytics functions. As noted by Clay (2014), information gained from interacting with the online community can be used to judge whether or not content creators are achieving their goals and reaching their target audience. One example might be looking at the total number of views, shares, and likes for a particular video. From this data, the professional who created the post can decide what factors may need to be adjusted for the next video, both in terms of content and how the videos are shared. A job seeker who is looking for work in Florida could view the demographics data to see if viewers from that state are watching the video that the individual posted to demonstrate relevant skills or qualifications. If the number of viewers from the desired state is low, the professional may decide to share the video link with other social media pages or job search websites that are based in the preferred employment area. Additionally, the user may wish to create new posts on a semi-frequent basis, depending on the individual's goals, in order to hold the attention of subscribers and obtain more viewers. Professionals should consider how much time they can devote to maintaining their YouTube channels and participating in audience interaction.

As with other social media tools, users should be aware of protecting personal information and keeping private content separate from that which is made public and

available for sharing. Furthermore, users should request permission and maintain confidentiality before involving others in published YouTube videos. Professionals should also be aware of YouTube's company policies, procedures, and copyright rules. Lastly, since YouTube is a video-based platform, screening for technical errors is advised. Factors such as tone and clarity of voice, professional dress, video background, sound and video quality, use of props, and reduction of external noises that could distract viewers should all be tested to ensure that the published video meets the appropriate standards for production and marketability, and ultimately helps the creator to reach his or her professional goals.

Miscellaneous Tools

Many of today's websites have a social media component. Articles often have a place for users to comment, and sites that once used to be strictly for one activity, such as job boards or uploading pictures, have evolved into interactive sites where repeat users form an online identity and virtual relationships with other users. Examples of these sites and ideas for using them for personal online reputation management are presented below.

Instagram

Instagram was released in 2010 as a photo/video-sharing social networking mobile tool and currently boasts over 400 million users (iTunes, 2016). It works with many platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. As with many other tools, while Instagram is used to share pictures and videos of one's life with followers, it could also be used in a professional way. Starting strategies for doing this include creating a professional name (e.g., debosborn_counselor_educator) and

profile, such as “Counselor educator who aims to inspire students to explore the use of technology to enhance and expand counseling services to all.” For PORM, an individual should view Instagram as an online photo album of evidence of skills and experiences. In addition, pictures often reflect personality and professionalism. One should look their best, but also reflect with whom they are being pictured (or who is absent from pictures, such as different ethnic groups, ages, etc.), and what message that may possibly send. To portray multiple skills, an evaluation of how well each of the skills is represented is recommended. Pictures don’t need to all be of the individual; they can be of one’s work, such as a book or a presentation, or even a Powerpoint slide saved as a picture that outlines a research agenda or teaching philosophy. Pictures should be captioned and hashtags used so they can be found through the system’s “Explore Tab.”

Tumblr and Other Blogs

Tumblr is similar to Instagram in that it is a social networking site in which most users choose to upload pictures and GIFS (graphic interchange formats) and accrue followers. It differs from Instagram in that Tumblr is designed to work as a blog. Founded in 2007, as of February 1, 2016, Tumblr hosted over 277.2 million blogs and 555 million visitors each month (About Tumblr, 2016). The strategies mentioned in the previous section for Instagram also apply here. Individuals interested in PORM should create a professional user name and profile, and use Tumblr to showcase skills, experiences, and professionalism. In addition to pictures, though, a user can also incorporate more text, preferably about professional matters that all point to the individual’s area(s) of expertise. If the user wants to highlight

engineering knowledge and skills, for example, they might blog about a controversial article that was released, or provide a link to a model they've created and describe the rationale behind it. Because blogs on Tumblr have the option to be liked or re-blogged, users should make sure to regularly post material that followers find "re-blog worthy."

Many other blog sites exist, such as WordPress, Wix, Weebly, Blogger, and SquareSpace. Interested bloggers can find recommendations for best sites to start a blog on sites such as <http://www.dearblogger.org/blogger-or-wordpress-better>. To use blogs in a way that optimize one's online image, in addition to following strategies mentioned throughout this paper of posting relevant information often and using professional media and text to demonstrate skills, bloggers should also seek to create a sense of community among their followers. This translates into inviting and responding to comments, as well as acting similarly to other bloggers (follow them, post comments on their sites). Bloggers will want to mix up their format on a regular basis. Reading repeated lengthy text entries will lose a follower's interest quickly.

Meerkat, Periscope, Snapchat and Vine

While these are not strictly social media sites, used in connection with social media sites, especially ones in which people are regularly monitoring updates, such as Twitter, these live web video tools can be very powerful. An example of using these tools for professional purposes would be in demonstrating a specific skill. For example, showing how one teaches a complex topic, or one's speed and accuracy in creating origami. Even though the intention was to capture live, in the moment

behaviors, there is an option for users to replay a video. In addition, to make the most of the live broadcast, users should use other social media to alert their followers that a demonstration will be happening and provide relevant information about how to see it.

Snapchat is a mobile app in which users upload pictures or brief videos that are available for viewing for a pre-determined amount of time (generally 10 seconds), and then disappears. Snapchat also has a story option that allows users to compile images (“snaps”) into a chronological storyline, available for 24 hours. With seven billion videos being watched on Snapchat each day (Lunden, 2016), some employers use this tool as a screener for personality prior to viewing a resume (<http://www.inc.com/graham-winfrey/how-to-hire-through-snapchat.html>). Individuals wanting to use Snapchat to increase their PORM should make sure that their pictures and videos walk that balance between being professional and personal, and showcase work-related skills.

Vine is similar to these other tools in that users upload six second long videos that loop that can also be shared on other social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Users set up a profile and a brief description. The number of people they are following and the number of followers they have are included on the profile, as well as a link to an external website if desired. While demonstrating any skill in six seconds may be challenging, it can be done. An artist might be able to showcase a painting, or demonstrate musicianship with singing or playing a difficult segment of music; a dancer could show complicated dance moves, and so forth. In fact, it is

possible to create a 6 second resume (<http://mashable.com/2013/02/21/vine-resume/#8VIDdjTUS055>) by listing skills and/or experiences.

Reddit

Any site in which individuals can offer ongoing commentary about a topic is a venue for employers to preview potential job candidates. Reddit is a social media site that focuses primarily (but not exclusively) on entertainment and news. A search box can yield thousands of posts on specific topics by users. Clicking on a user's name links to all of their posts and comments. While there is no user profile to maintain, information is provided about how many comments and links are made by the individual, how long they've been a member, and any "Reddit" awards the personal might have won for their posts. In addition, a subreddit site, */r/iama* (<https://www.reddit.com/r/iama>), is where a user can share their professional story and answer questions from other Reddit users. There is also a */r/forhire* site (<https://www.reddit.com/r/forhire>) in which users can post their skills for potential employers. Similar to other social media tools, the key with using Reddit to increase PORM is to make sure posts and comments are professional, regularly updated, and centered on a theme, such as one's areas of interest and skills.

Summary

Social media tools such as the ones described in this paper allow individuals to express themselves and connect with friends, acquaintances, and even strangers around the world. Given that networking is one of the most common ways people find work, the initially strange marriage between social media and job searching begins to make greater sense, as strategic use of social media has the potential to create opportunities for

individuals to present themselves in professional ways to potential employers. Personal Online Reputation Management (PORM) requires that an individual be strategic about the images and information they are posting on social media sites, and to be diligent in managing their profiles in a way that accentuates their best skillsets and experiences. While some of the social medias presented in this paper may become extinct over time, and new ones emerge, the strategies presented on PORM are likely to remain.

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Author biographies



Dr. Deb Osborn is an Associate Professor in the Educational Psychology and Learning Systems department at the Florida State University, and a Nationally Certified Counselor. She is a Fellow and of the National Career Development Association (NCDA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA). She is Past President of the National and Florida Career Development Associations, and currently serves on the NCDA and ACA boards as a governing council representative. She received her PhD in Combined Counseling Psychology and School Psychology from Florida State University in 1998. Dr. Osborn's program of research includes three foci, including: (a) the design and use of technology in counseling, (b) innovation and effectiveness in counselor education; and (c) the design and use of assessments in career services.

Over the course of her career, she has been honored with several awards, including the Robert M. Gagné Faculty Research Award (2015), the JoAnn Harris- Florida Counseling Association Bowsbey Award for Excellence in the Field of Technology in Career Development (2010), Outstanding Practitioner Award (National Career Development Association; 2009), Counselor of the Year (Florida Counseling Association; 2006), and the American Counseling Association's Emerging Leader Award (2005). She is a past president of NCDA and the Florida Career Development Association, and currently serves on the NCDA and ACA boards as a governing council representative.

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