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| CAREER CRUISER | Branding Yourself Online |

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| **Step 5** | Prepare for your chosen career. |
| **Driving Question** | How can what I post online help or hurt my career prospects? |
| **Goal** | Take a personal assessment of online posting. Create a plan to create a professional media presence. |
| **Standard** | Demonstrate mastery of the career navigation skills necessary to obtain, retain, advance within and switch employment.  (CR.3.3) |

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| **FOR TEACHERS** |

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| **Timeframe** | Two roughly hour-long lessons. |
| **Materials** | Internet and digital device access. Access to copies of the reflection questions listed below (print off, projected or digital access). |
| **Xello** | [Xello](https://xello.world/en/florida-college-career-ready/), Florida’s official K-12 public school career planning and work-based learning coordination system, has tools you can use on this topic! Under ‘Home’ and ‘View All Lessons,’ consider having students complete the ‘Workplace Skills and Attitudes’ lesson. |
| **Overview** | **Beginning**   * Search online for a recent instance of someone being fired for what they posted online that is morally- and age-appropriate as well as relevant to students. Use this anecdote to emphasize the gravity of what they post online in relation to their future careers.   **Middle**   * Learn about online posting, personal “branding,” and social and professional media platforms.   **End**   * Students will search for themselves online, identify what (if any) information is available on them, rate the available information as professional/unprofessional, determine what they would like for their personal, online “brand” to be, and consider strategies to reduce unprofessional content and increase professional content.   **Extension**   * Have students write reports on the top three professional sites that are most important for their chosen career field. * Have students discuss what content could be perceived as unprofessional and what content could be seen as professional. * Have students present on what they would like for their personal, online brand to me and what long-term strategies they will use to accomplish their personal branding goals. |

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| **FOR STUDENTS** |

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| **Learn** |

**What You Post Matters!**

Numerous surveys have shown that most employers use an online search engine to research the name of someone they are considering hiring. This can either be helpful for the applicant if what they find reflects professionalism and maturity. Or, it can result in the individual not being hired. What you post matters! Even when you think a post is anonymous or private, it can be spread elsewhere and reflect back on you at a later date. Assume all of your posts will be visible to future employers and assume that each post you make says something about you.

**What You Post Is Your Online “Brand”**

The term “branding” in business refers to the process of creating the public identity of a business and can include a logo, design, mission, and tone of communication. It’s a very important topic within business, as it can have direct impact on the business’s success or failure. Everything a business does and says contributes to the public perceiving them as innovative, trustworthy, high-quality, and trendy, or as poorly run, untrustworthy, low-quality, and outdated.

What you post, in many ways, becomes a part of your brand and reflects on your values, personality, competence, and character. Being intentional about fostering a positive online personal brand can have many advantages.

**Cultivating a Professional Online Brand**

For every post you make, consider what it is saying about your online brand. Think through these questions:

* Values
  + If an employer were to see this post, what does it say about my values (what I think is true, valuable and moral)?
* Competence
  + If an employer were to see this post, how does it reflect on my competence (intellect and expertise)?
* Character
  + If an employer were to see this post, what does it communicate about my personal character (how much my actions align with my values and convictions)?
* Personality
  + What does this post say about my personality? It’s okay to be unique and express your true self! Many employers are looking for people that are true to themselves and bring their unique personality to their work!

**Social Media vs. Professional Media**

‘Social media platforms’ are sites and apps that allow people to post and interact for social reasons. Social media platforms can also be used for professional reasons, though ‘professional media platforms’ are explicitly made for this purpose. Professional media platforms are sites and apps that allow people to communicate for work-related reasons. These sites and apps allow you to display work experience, education, skills, credentials, endorsements and other people’s recommendations of your work.

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| **Do** |

**Search for Yourself**

Use an internet search engine to search for your name. Depending on how common your name is, you may need to add additional information, such as location and middle name. Take note of what websites have information publicly available on you, what types of information they display, and whether there are people that have a similar name that employers might assume are you.

**Self-Assess & Make a Plan**

Take the perspective of an employer searching for your name online and consider what you think the employer might think. Would they consider what they found as professional? Unprofessional? After considering this, make a plan to remove, hide, or reduce the amount of future unprofessional content and find ways of posting more professional content, either through social or professional media sites.

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| **Reflect** | | | | | |
| **Where Your Name Appears**: What types of websites came up when you searched online for your name? (Only share what you feel comfortable sharing.) |  | | | | |
| **Personal Online Info**: What types of information was available online about you? (Only share what you feel comfortable sharing.) |  | | | | |
| **Name Twins**: Are there other people online with your name that an employer might confuse with you? |  | | | | |
| **Rate Yourself:** Pretend you are an employer searching for you online as they consider hiring you. Circle the rating of how you think this employer would rate your online professionalism. | | | | | |
| □ Very Professional | | □ Slightly Professional | □ Neither Professional Nor Unprofessional | □ Slightly Unprofessional | □ Very Unprofessional |
| **Explain Your Rating:** Explain why you rated yourself the way you did. (Only share what you feel comfortable sharing.) |  | | | | |
| **Ideal Personal Brand:** Describe how you want employers to view your personal “brand” online. Use descriptive words and list specific content types in your response. |  | | | | |
| **Reduce Unprofessional Content:** Brainstorm or research ways that you could use to hide, remove or reduce personal content that could be seen as unprofessional. |  | | | | |
| **Increase Professional Content:** Brainstorm or research ways to increase your professional presence online. |  | | | | |