

## #BrandYou 1.0

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**JOSH MUNSON:** Hi everyone. My name is Josh Munson. And I would like to welcome you to tonight's webinar, Brand You 1.0. I'm excited to have with us tonight Rebecca Cooney, who is the director of the online MA in strategic communications here at the Global campus, and a Clinical Professor at Edward R. Murrow College of Communication on the Pullman campus. We're excited to have you here with us to learn how to make your digital brand and how to implement that across all media platforms.

Before we begin, I'd like to let you know that there is a chat box. If you scroll your mouse over the screen, you should see a button that says Chat. Feel free to click on that and you can type in your questions throughout the webinar. But we will be holding questions and answers until the end. So I will be recording your questions, and then I'll be asking them to Rebecca at the end if they don't get answered throughout the webinar. So without any further ado, let's welcome Rebecca.

**REBECCA COONEY:** Welcome. I am excited have you guys here. And let me just give you a little bit of an overview of the webinar. It's a two part series. And it is going to focus on the development of your personal brand, taking it into the digital space, and knowing how to frame it from a job search and sustainability stand point. So my question for you throughout the two part webinar is not how you want to talk about yourself, but how you want others to talk about you.

Then, how do you translate that into your web and social presence? So whoops-- trying to advance-- there we go. So I am Rebecca Cooney. And I have professor, mentor, and professional is three keywords that I often use to describe myself. I have 20 years in experience in the communication industry. My primary role is a clinical assistant professor in public relations and digital media in Murrow College here at WSU. I've been teaching full time now for four years.

So it's pretty incredible how time has passed. And I am the director of the online in strategic communication program that just hit it's two year birthday. And I'm also the Faculty Advisor for the Public Relations Student Society of America here at WSU. So here's a quote that really talks about the fact that companies aren't just looking at you meeting their relevant industry standards and filling some checklist that's on the job description.

So Meredith Vaughan of Vladimir Jones in Colorado Springs, noted in a recent *Ad Age* article

that demonstrating that you know how to brand yourself gives them the confidence so that you know how to embody their brand as an organization. So it's a lot more than just meeting the job description qualifications. It's also about being a good fit for your company or the company that you're applying for, and to be able to really take that and apply it to their brand as well.

So let's start with brand-- personal brand profile looking at core messaging, the visual representation that you have of yourself, as well as creating consistency across multiple channels. So your personal brand platform, what I really mean by that is that you are able to articulate who you are and how you want to be talked about through the words that you use, the way that you describe yourself, and also the way you portray yourself in person as well as online.

And so some key points around personal brand platform, being articulate and intentional, knowing how you want to position yourself both personally and professionally, and then always speaking of yourself as you want others to speak of you. So thinking about things like if you're self-deprecating, and you say, well, you know, I'm kind of lazy, or I'm kind of unsure of myself, not very confident, I'm really quiet, that's not going to bode confidence to the people that might hire you or work with you in partnership.

So you definitely want to amp up your language and own who you want to be and how you want to be talked about. Some key words that articulate what employees value most, positive attitude, being resourceful, emotional intelligence is a new buzz term and very important, being adaptable and creative, and having a really, really good energy are also great attributes. So whether you know it or not, you have a personal brand that you're known for.

So it's up to you to decide what that's going to be and how you are going to stand out from others that are also applying for similar positions or trying to sustain positions that they're in. So your job in personal branding is to create the story of you and where you are today and what you hope to become. So I have this saying, "your one voice," I actually adopted from when I worked at People To People Ambassador Programs, which was an international travel company.

They had-- "one voice" was sort of our corporate saying that we had every day. And the idea behind it was that we adopted a single set of core messages. And we were really, really consistent about delivering those messages, whether it be in formal internal memos, external emails, answering the phone, or even just the language that we used in meetings. So it was

just that "one voice." And so I want you to think along those same lines when you're thinking about what attributes of your expertise can you market.

Why should someone hire you over someone else? What do you want your professional contacts to say about you either in a reference situation or maybe even on a LinkedIn referral? How do you want to be described, and again, those key words and phrases that can be used to best describe you? And the key is consistency. So establishing core messages for your long and short bios, those key words and phrases that articulate your greatest attributes, and highlights about your academic and professional accomplishments that can set you apart from your peers.

So one of the things that I teach my students pretty early on is to come up with that 16 second sound bite. That thing that when you're in a meeting, whether it's formal, or you're in a little meet and greet, or you even run into somebody at the coffee shop who introduces you to a potential contact or potential future employer.

You want to have that in your brain and memorized. So mine, I'm Rebecca Cooney, Clinical Assistant Professor in the WSU Murrow College of Communication. My expertise is in PR and digital media. I am an advocate for student success, lifelong learning in economic revitalization. And my focus lies in family, quality work, and being the best mentor possible. Little bit long, right? So that's a little bit of the long version. But it does surprise me how much you lose and forget who you are when somebody says, so tell me a little bit about yourself, and you go, oh no, I'm a dog lover.

You have to think about what you really want to say and think about that in advance. Also your image, so your actual physical image, both in person and online. So think about profile photos and photos that you have out on your social channels or if you have an online portfolio. But your image self, looking smart and plain background, head and shoulders, angles. So think mostly about the LinkedIn profile shot. So you want-- my recommendation is that you always get a professional head shot and maybe a half body shot, so it shows a little bit more.

You can give a chance to fold your arms or have some personality. And you use those in bio's, in profile photos, in about me pages. And you use those consistently. And if you look at my social channels, I give you some references at the end. I have the same photo up on all of them. That's intentional as a way of really just-- they know that they're going to the same person with every channel that they look at. And it provides that good consistency and

memorization.

I'll also show you another example at the end from a student. So again on this been consistent, online portfolio is another tool that I really recommend no matter what industry you're in. Because having the paper portfolio has become a bit archaic, especially in this day and age of doing things like this with Zoom, and having interviews that are maybe over video conference versus in person. It also is a place for them to-- for potential employers, or existing employers for that matter, to have a place to look and see some examples of what you've been able to accomplish in the past and your potential.

And the other thing I also recommend as part of continuity is deciding on a font sweet and a color scheme that best defines your overall mood and tone and approach. So if you're more of a business side, you might want to do more blues. If you're more artistic, you might want to lighten it up with pinks and other shades of blue. If you're going more for a softer look or a softer audience, you're photography, that sort of thing, or back and white, but choosing a color scheme that you can carry through thematically on all of your materials.

And I have some stats I'm going to be sharing with you in this next section that pre-employment screening when it comes to being consistent, the most used social networking sites to screen candidates, surprisingly is not LinkedIn at the highest, it's actually Facebook. Twitter is second. LinkedIn is third.

So let's talk about your digital footprint. I always-- my three mantra statements are strategic, intentional, and monitored, because your online actions are a reflection of the image you project to the world. So it's something to remember. So how do you want to be portrayed in the digital space? So Karli Overmier was with Murrow last week at our annual Murrow symposium. She is from Barokas PR in Seattle. And she suggested that those seeking employment, not just in the PR field but in general, anyone that's seeking employment in the modern workforce should have profiles in Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram.

It's the new big four. So even if you don't have a ton of content in those, it's a good idea that you can be found. In the online portfolio having an about you page, a section on goals, a section for samples of your work featured, course work, projects, papers, design pieces, anything that is relevant to what you do and how you want to project and market yourself, and then also contact information with your full name and email. And then also there's bio and staff pages.

And I-- this came up as I was realizing, I have not updated mine in awhile in the Murrow site, I need to do that. But definitely having your name and your titles, skill sets of expertise, accolades, objective, personal passions and anecdotes. One of the things that Karli also said that I didn't realize was back in favor in fashion was that they want to see your personality. And they want to know what you're into that's outside of the industry.

And they really are interested in your personal passions and what makes you tick and what makes you an interesting and dynamic person. So it's something to think about. 2 in 5 employers are using social media to screen candidates. So this is an updated stat. 65% evaluate candidate's professionalism and social conduct, 51% on company culture, and then 45% to learn more about qualifications, where I think a lot of people would reverse that order.

43% of employers say that they found information online that helped them to decide to not hire a particular candidate, also kind of a scary stat. So thinking about your Facebook and Twitter, inappropriate content, pushing information and advocacy of drugs and alcohol use, badmouthing an employer, poor communication skills, discriminatory comments, lying about your qualifications. They're actually looking specifically for that stuff.

And on the flip side, they are also finding reasons to hire individuals by their social media profiles, portraying a professional image, demonstrating a nice personality and creativity, demonstrating communication skills, in that you have a wide range of interests, that the background information is accurate and consistent across channels, and also of course any kind of accolades and positive references from others. Younger students are not expected to have a ton of experience.

So it's not really about all this-- really packing it in and trying to make the lifeguarding and the hostess jobs sound more than it is. It's really more about personality and communication skills and not having some of these negative content, drinking and drugs, discriminatory comments, really avoiding those things. But the younger students, the challenge there is to emphasize what makes them different while minimizing posts and images that indicate immaturity.

So on the flip side, going up to the average age of the Global Campus student is 31. And so even though that audience, the basically, let's call it 27 plus, struggle with personal brand, they've been out in the workforce for a while maybe, or they're in jobs that are irrelevant to course or goals. Getting a handle on your personal brand is the best way to reclaim who you are and how you want to be defined. And it's really about capitalizing on the benefit and value

of life experience in creating the narrative behind it.

So when researching candidates online, employers are saying that they look for the following, 60% that supports qualifications for the job-- which is not really surprising, obviously, a large portion is making sure that they're qualified-- 56% if the candidate has an online persona that's professionally displayed, 37% what other people are posting about the candidate, and 21% of reasons not to hire the candidate, those red flags is what they're looking for there.

So in the digital space, my biggest message is, know what is possible. Creating your own engagement strategy, which means how are you going to be portrayed in the digital space? Are you going to have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, or not? And my advice is, have a presence there. Are you going to have an online portfolio? My advice is yes. You should have an online portfolio. Sharing and liking and re-tweeting and contributing original content to your own social channels.

Make it easy for others to contribute content, especially things like LinkedIn where people can endorse you for certain skills. And using trending topics is a good idea, as long as you're careful that they don't slowly creep into the discriminatory or setting yourself up as some political advocate or something that maybe you're not. And then also adding visuals to make content useful and more interesting. So just in support of that, David Gallagher, he's a CEO at Ketchum Europe. And Ketchum is a big communications firm.

And he suggests that you tweet, blog, create content, and grow networks of contacts, and then put them all to work in a thoughtful way so that you can demonstrate your potential to prospective employers. So the number three is the story of you, where you were, where you are today, and what you hope to become. So Anne Sweeney, who is the former President at Disney Channel, said define success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life that you are proud to live.

So a couple of points of counsel here. My first one is listen to counsel from those that you admire and respect, hear them when they give suggestions on how you can improve your digital presence. It's a good idea to do that. Second, review your online accounts and remove images or commentary that you think may give-- reflect something negative about yourself and not be in brand with what you are trying to really portray as who you are and what you want to be talked about.

And then also updating unprofessional handles, like in Twitter and Instagram, and email

addresses, the actual Gmail or AOL or CompuServe or whatever you're using, those accounts to ensure that you don't always say, hot chicks 35. It's a time that you don't want to have that as your Gmail that you're giving out to employers, that it's best to do first initial, last name, first name, last initial, whatever you want to do, but keeping it very simple and very much in your own personal brand.

So another piece of the story of you, I look at today and in one year and in five years as a way to celebrate where you are today. So even if you feel like I don't have a lot of experience, I'm still going through my undergrad, and I'm still doing my cores, or I took five years off to be a mom or to travel or to-- I've been in the military, I haven't had a chance, so it's OK, celebrate where you are today. And then pursue what you hope to achieve. So today what the focus is is organizing your digital presence, build that resume, make contacts, create that personal brand, and then put yourself out there.

That's what your focus should be right now. And then through that, start joining professional organizations that are relevant to your field. And in one year make an impression. Sustain those connections. Stay in touch, especially when you don't need them. So even if you're not actively looking for employment, maintaining and sustaining those contacts, even if it's an occasional hello or a Merry Christmas or congratulations, I see you got a promotion, whatever, just sustaining all those connections.

Furthering your personal brand through the ongoing development of your consistency across channels and getting rid of content you're not proud of and building that LinkedIn profile. And then also learning what's possible, always continuing to learn. And I really recommend volunteering. And what I mean by that is serving on boards and committees of things that are of your personal passion or related to your industry is a great way to start to integrate yourself and get involved in-- meet people and network and also be really involved in the things that interest you most.

And then in five years is the time when you start to really pursue leadership opportunities, continue to evolve that resume. Your connections should be solid and continuing to grow. You should be developing a proven track record at that point. And also a great time is to advance your credential, get more certifications, pursue that master's degree, and start to put yourself out there in new ways to just continue to further your personal brand.

I have a sample for you. This is Madeleine and she is actually a former student of mine. And I

love to use her as an example of someone who started with pretty much no brand. And then built a brand. And as part of that was able to build it around a blog that is called *Seattle Stylista*. So just a little profile on Madeleine. She's a future communications professional. She's graduating this May. She has four years in the digital marketing industry and an expertise in social media, marketing, blogging, even planning and customer service.

So she is one of these professionals that has proven herself in both the classroom and outside the classroom. She has her blog which is just a great example of consistency across multiple channels. That's why I use her as an example. She's been able to generate buzz online and things that are really relevant to her field. She has also been able to take that into profession that's outside of the blog and be in an actual professional role to further enhance her skill set and attribution of strategic marketing.

And she also, in her personal channels, is able to tout her personality and her capabilities. So this is her Facebook page. And I have-- side-by-side, she has a personal Facebook page that is also consistent with her professional Facebook page. And I think that's a really great idea. Some people do choose to have a personal social channels against professional channels because they want one that's more friends and family versus professional. That's fine.

But trying to get some level of continuity across is really smart. And so her personal is on the right. And she of course has her friends and family and pictures and so forth. And that's great. And then her professional one is on the left, which is much more focused on her blog topics of style and fashion and that sort of thing. Her Twitter handle she has MadeleineRose8, which is purely *Seattle Stylista*. But she curates one account and it's consistent with the *Seattle Stylista* brand.

You can see that her photo is consistent across these channels. Going into Instagram, same photo, consistency, which is great. She blogs about fashion, dining, and lifestyle and so she has to include a ton of visual content. She takes her own photos or purchases stock images. And she does a really beautiful job of really furthering her brand both personally as well as the topic of her blog. Her blog itself, she's found a pretty good level of success and even fiscal reward from her blog, which I think is fantastic.

But more important, it has given her a voice and a place to showcase her talents and show her individuality and personality through the consistency of her brand both in verbal and written as well as visual. In LinkedIn she also continues her story. She showcases *Seattle Stylista*, but

she also showcases her academic and professional attributes. She has a nice, solid LinkedIn profile. She is touting her current status as a student in graduating. She's also a social media assistant as one of her many jobs in addition to being a student.

She has all these attributes of a LinkedIn profile, which I'm actually getting into deeper in the second part of this webinar, photo, and summary bio, work experience, highlighting course work, skills and expertise, which is really a great place to get those keywords and phrases that really jive with your personal attributes, education with anticipated graduation date, and any additional info such as honors, rewards, organizations that you're a member of, recommendations and endorsements from friends and family and coworkers and former coworkers, and then also groups that are related to your industry.

So I'm going to close with this quote and then we're going to open it up for some questions, give you guys a chance to ask some specifics around personal brand. And this comes from Ellen East who is the EVP and CCO for Time Warner. "First, figure out what your personal brand is and then live it authentically. It must be true to you and not an imitation of your boss or a colleague. Decide who you are and then be it." So we're going to open it up for questions, Josh.

And just an FYI that on the next Brand You, Brand You 2.0, on April 20th, I'm going to be talking a little bit more about the implementation of your personal brand in the digital space with an emphasis on LinkedIn, and the value of the online portfolio and best practices in your core social channels. So Josh, I'm going to turn it back over to you for a second.

**JOSH MUNSON:** Yes, Rebecca. We have a question from Beth. And she would like to know, instead of removing photos on Facebook, can one rely on privacy settings? For example, she has pictures with drinking, with drinks with a few friends. But mind you, she's not in her 20's, she's in her 40's.

**REBECCA COONEY:** Yes, and privacy settings are fine. What Karli Overmier, I mentioned her earlier, what she says about that, because that actually-- that question was asked of her in a panel discussion, and what she recommended is that they like to be able to see deeper. So the privacy settings, I think putting them on individual photos, I think that's doable, that you can limit who sees your photos. But maybe not doing an overall privacy setting on the entire account, but limiting who can see certain photos through-- I think you can do it where it's like acquaintances versus close friends. Looking at those levels of privacy settings so that you're a little bit accessible,

but you're not putting your whole self out there. Other questions?

**JOSH MUNSON:** Thank you. We'll give a few more seconds for if anyone wants to chime in any more questions.

**REBECCA COONEY:** And I'll just go ahead and advance for a second. So my personal brand is ever evolving. It's one of those things that I would love to be able to put more time into and really perfect and really polish. It's ever evolving. But you can see my LinkedIn and Facebook and Instagram and Twitter. I'm not very active on Twitter. I have chosen an engagement strategy where I mostly share relevant industry articles and pieces that I think that are very interesting and relevant to the communication and strategic communication and digital communication fields. Because most of my friends and followers are former students, to be honest. So that's what I mostly focus on. And I have a lot of thought leaders on my Twitter that I follow and-- or they follow me. And so I'm able to share just a tremendous amount of valuable content on Twitter. LinkedIn is basically a digital resume for me. I don't spend a ton of time contributing original content, although I do share content when I see it. Facebook is-- mine is-- right now, the RebeccaCooney6 is mostly for friends and family. So it's more personal than it is professional. And Instagram is the same way. So I have some work to do myself in personal branding and have some opportunities that I could also take advantage of to improve my overall social media presence. Are there are other questions Josh?

**JOSH MUNSON:** Yes. So Priscilla would like to know, is it a disadvantage to not be active on social media?

**REBECCA COONEY:** No. Actually, I asked that of Karli as well, and what she said was it's better to not be out there if it's not going to be portrayed in a totally positive and professional way, that it is to be out there on the opposite. I think you should have a LinkedIn profile. I think that's essential and almost always going to be something that a prospective employer is looking for. But as far as not having a presence in Facebook or Twitter or Instagram, I think that's fine.

I think you have to choose how much visibility you would like to have, and limiting that for the audiences that you're comfortable with is totally appropriate.

**JOSH MUNSON:** Thanks. Another user would like to know, can you give some examples of an engagement strategy?

**REBECCA COONEY:** Engagement strategy-- so I actually just kind of touched on it. So what I mean by that is really deciding do you want to have a digital presence, yes or no? So if the answer is yes, you want

to have a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter. It's like deciding what are you going to be in those social channels? So Facebook, right now for me, is primarily friends and family. And I'm just-- mostly what an employer would see-- a prospective employer would see is a mom, a gal who hangs out with family and friends, who has-- likes silliness and comics and that sort of stuff.

But they're going to just kind of get some personality things there. So I don't have a big engagement strategy there. But in Twitter, I'm pretty intentional, and same with LinkedIn. Because I choose not to contribute original content, I've pretty much made it my platform, in my current stage of life and available time and space, to make myself more of an advocate poster. So I look at-- I have chosen, on both LinkedIn and Twitter, that my repost and that sort of thing are going to be basically about the communication industry.

And that's what I'm going to focus my content on. I don't go into personal narratives. I don't talk about politics. I don't get into religion or any of those dangerous subject areas. But that's my intention. So the idea is create-- decide what your intention is and stick with it. Try to be consistent on whatever path you're choosing. It doesn't mean that you have to post every day or that you have to do original posting or you have to be reposting on a schedule. If I was in-- like in Madeleine's example, she has more of a schedule and that's smart. Because she's really tauting her blog and her blog posts.

So she's a little bit more consistent. But when it's just you, and just you putting yourself out there, you don't have to be as consistent in posting every week or anything like, as much as just being consistent in who you're going to be in that digital space. I hope that answers that questions. Let me know if there's a follow up.

**JOSH MUNSON:** Thanks. Another question, most of my social media accounts have been private and unconnected. Since my personal brand is a surname, should all of my outlets be under that name? I could share that name on my resume. What are your thoughts?

**REBECCA COONEY:** That's fine. I think what I would look for is consistency. So if you're going to have a surname and that's what you're comfortable with, then yes. Use it consistently. And then also, yes, make it available on your resume so that they can access it. So it doesn't-- it just means that maybe through a search they're not going to find it through your name. But making that available for a perspective employer would be important.

**JOSH MUNSON:** Another user would like to know, would you like to connect on LinkedIn?

**REBECCA** Would I like to connect on LinkedIn, personally?

**COONEY:**

**JOSH MUNSON:** Yes.

**REBECCA** Honestly, I get a lot of requests. And I look at them. And I make a decision based on whether  
**COONEY:** or not I think they're relevant to what I do. If they-- if you were to send me a LinkedIn reference and say, hey, I attended your webinar, I'd love to connect with you. I'm much more apt to say yes than I am-- because I can lot a random folks out there. And I'm a little bit more cautious when they're random and I don't have any reason to connect with them. And so I look at things like are they connected with some of my connections?

How many-- do we have shared connections? But sometimes I get solicitations from random salespeople and that sort of thing. So I'm very cautious. But if you are going to connect with someone, I actually suggest writing a personal note-- not just allowing the LinkedIn generic note that goes out that says, I want to connect-- and actually trying to attach a personal message that says, hey, I know you from, or I was referred to you by, and trying to make it a little more personal for those that maybe get a ton of requests.

**JOSH MUNSON:** Thanks. What's the best or preferred way to share all of this information we learned tonight with prospective employers?

**REBECCA** So your best way is actually to centralize it in your online portfolio. Because that's a place that  
**COONEY:** you could do a link to your Facebook, your Twitter, your Instagram, and any other social channels. The online portfolio can become like this really great central hub for all this great information about yourself, who you are, and how you want to be talked about. The other place to house your personal brand narrative is definitely going to be in the-- so you have your image, like your profile picture, and then you have the about that going to always-- almost always be part of your social setup, having that be consistent across all of your channels.

And if you are currently employed and there's a bio page, also being consistent there, and including links to your online portfolio and social channels. I also incorporate it into my email signature. So if somebody wanted to see my Facebook, my LinkedIn, or my just straight one-stop-shop could be your online portfolio of where they can find not only your overall spectrum but also links to your social.

**JOSH MUNSON:** One more question. How valuable are recommendations on LinkedIn?

**REBECCA COONEY:** I like them. I think if you can get them and they're legit, and if you can use professors or current or former bosses or current or former colleagues, I think they're really great. And I actually encourage people to ask for them when it's still really relevant and fresh. It's harder to go back to a professor you had three years ago, and say, can you give me a recommendation? I struggle with that because I have to remember-- I have 125 students every semester, trying to remember who they were and what they were like in the classroom, it's harder as time passes so does memory.

So I really recommend that asking for those recommendations pretty early on and certainly if you've made an impression on someone or you've just had a really great experience on a project or a job experience to go ahead and make that-- make that request. And people don't balk at it if it's relevant and appropriate. Are there others?

**JOSH MUNSON:** I think that's it. Is anyone typing in real fast?

**REBECCA COONEY:** So Josh, I'll go ahead and advance to this slide for I think-- do you want to talk about this on some instruction here?

**JOSH MUNSON:** Yes. So I would like to thank Rebecca for presenting tonight's webinar. I hope that you guys got as much out of it as I did. I thought that it was great information. And we're happy to provide you with us here at Global Connections. In the chatbox, I copied and pasted a link for a survey. If you would take about 30 to 40 seconds to fill in your thoughts on tonight's program, it helps not only Rebecca as she plans future programs, but it helps me here at Global Connections design and plan future programs for you as well.

We'd like to remind you that Rebecca is back with us two weeks from tonight on April 20th at 5:30, and she'll be concluding this webinar series on branding yourself. And now that we've learned the bare necessities and basics of it, we'll be further diving into now how to apply it and how to build this online portfolio that she's talking about, or how to consistently make sure that your brand across all social media platforms are the same. So we hope that you sign up and register at [connections.wsu.edu](http://connections.wsu.edu). And without any more questions, I would like to say have a good evening and we'll see you later. Thanks for attending.

**REBECCA COONEY:** Thanks.