Building a Personal Brand

Employers no longer rely only on resumes, cover letters and background checks. Today, most hiring managers take to the internet and google their potential hires.

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The site "We Work Remotely" reports that 80% of hiring managers consider it important for a candidate to have a personal website and 47% of companies say they won't hire someone if they can't find them online.

Your personal brand, according to Dr. Sean Gresh, a faculty member at Northeastern University, is your story. It is who you are, what you stand for, the values you embrace and the way you express those values, he said. It helps you to "communicate a unique identity and clear value to potential employers."

So what are the dos and don'ts of creating your online brand?

KEEP IT CLEAN

According to a Career Builder survey in 2018, 57% of hiring managers who search for information about candidates online have found content that caused them not to hire a person. CareerBuilder listed both what led employers not to hire a candidate and what made them more likely to hire a candidate.

What do you want to avoid? These things made hiring managers turn a person away, according to the survey:

• Candidate posted inappropriate or provocative photographs, videos or information.

• Candidate posted information about them drinking or using drugs.

• Candidate made discriminatory comments related to race, gender, religion, etc.

• Candidate was linked to criminal behavior.

• Candidate lied about qualifications.

• Candidate had poor communication skills.

• Candidate bad-mouthed their previous company or fellow employee.

• Candidate's screen name was unprofessional.

• Candidate shared confidential information from previous employers.

• Candidate lied about an absence.

• Candidate posted too frequently.

That said, there were several factors that caused hiring managers to look more favorably on a candidate. Many are under your control.

WHAT DO THEY INCLUDE?

According to CareerBuilder's survey:

• Background information supported a candidate's professional qualifications.

• Candidate was creative.

• Candidate's site conveyed a professional image.

• Candidate was well-rounded with a wide range of interests.

• Employer was able to get a good feel for the candidate's personality.

• Candidate displayed great communication skills.

• Candidate received awards and accolades.

• Others posted great references about candidates.

• Candidate interacted with the company's social media accounts.

• Candidate posted compelling video or other content.

• Candidate had a large number of followers or subscribers.

CREATING YOUR BRAND

Take control of creating a strong personal brand for yourself, which means knowing what it is and making a plan.

Capitol One suggests the following steps to create your personal brand:

1. Define who you are.
2. Understand your audience.
3. Decide what you want to be known for.
4. Prepare your elevator pitch.

Let those guide how you act online, what you put out there and how you promote yourself. Decide the best places to pitch yourself. Columbia University's Career Center recommends focusing on a few professional social networks and not saturating the market.

Once you have established your brand, maintain it. Even after you get the job, managers may be monitoring you and making decisions about your future promotions.