

CHAPTER 3

Social Media and Personal Branding



Figure 3.1 Personal branding on a laptop.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing emphasis on the importance of colleges and universities teaching students how to use social media to build social capital (Russ, 2015). Social capital refers to the relationships that one builds in society. These relationships help individuals function properly as productive members of society. Seibert, Kraimer, and Linden (2001) indicate that social capital helps professionals to successfully find career leads, identify protégés, and pinpoint resources that facilitate career development. While education can directly impact an individual's career progression, social capital is also a primary consideration that must be factored into development opportunities (Russ, 2015).

The movie, *The Circle* (Bregman, Goetzman, Hanks, Ponsoldt, & Ponsoldt, 2017), presents an interesting take on the pros and cons of social media. In the movie, the main character, May, initially has a temporary job, which she uses to support her parents financially. However, her friend, who is in a leadership role at a technology company, helps her to secure a permanent customer service job in the organization at which she works.

As May settles into her job, she finds that the social media context of the workplace becomes an integral part of her own personal and

professional lives, and those of the people she loves. May is initially apprehensive about using social media; however, after gentle persuasion from her coworkers, she finds that she enjoys being a part of “the circle’s” online community, through which she engages in more social interaction in the physical world.

Later in the movie, she reflects on how her life has evolved and how she has developed connections with people all over the world . . . connections from which she is now unable to disconnect. She has become reliant upon the continual communication and camaraderie that characterize online interactions. However, through various mishaps, she comes to realize that using social media puts her own privacy at risk and that of the people with whom she interacts. The movie positions social media as an ever-evolving Pandora’s box. While it can be employed for the common good to help society grow into a global community, it also has a dark side that is ignored at one’s peril.

While *The Circle* is a work of fiction, its underlying messages have implications in the real world. How much information can employers access about employees via their social media profiles? Should employees be mandated to use social media for work purposes? Should our use of social media at work cross the line into our personal lives? When do we have the right to refuse to use our social media profiles for work-related activities?

In *The Circle*, May proactively employs social media to build her brand. At the beginning of the movie, she is perceived to be a “guppy,” someone who is at the outset of her career. However, by the end of the movie, her popularity has significantly increased due to her social networking activities. As her “friends” watch and chat with her, their responses to her social media activities validate her as a professional. She progresses from a novice to an expert whose opinion is valued and sought after. Although May is a fictional character, in the real world, many people use social media channels to validate themselves as experts, enhance their popularity, and build their professional personal brands. Let’s look at how personal branding and social media can help you.

3.2 WHAT IS PERSONAL BRANDING?

Although social media is one of the most commonly used tools for developing a personal brand, [Llopis \(2013\)](#) asserts that it is not the only component of personal branding. According to Llopis, personal branding is a part of leadership development. It is a process that requires an ongoing

commitment through which the brand image is nurtured on a continual basis. Because personal branding is an ongoing evolution, you need to begin with a distinct set of goals in mind. What is the primary objective that underpins your personal branding activities? How will this affect you within and outside the workplace?

Llopis (2013) further asserts that the personal brand needs to represent the characteristics, skills, knowledge, and abilities that set the individual apart from everyone else. What can you offer to other people that they cannot get elsewhere? What is your area of expertise? For Llopis, personal branding is not necessarily about telling everyone why you are important and bragging about your accomplishments; it is a way to serve as a role model for people who need advice. It involves accepting the responsibility to engage other people with valuable information that will help them successfully achieve their goals. In this way, personal branding requires a level of accountability. You must be willing to assume high standards for the image and content you deliver.

Because personal branding requires the creation of content and an identity, you need to consider it as an asset that demands constant protection. Assets need to be monitored, managed, and nurtured. Consider yourself as part of the stock market. Your value can fluctuate depending on how the public views you as a commodity (Box 3.1).

According to Llopis, personal branding requires a strong sense of self-awareness. People who engage in personal branding activities need to be explicitly aware of the image they are projecting when they attend meetings, present at conferences, write articles, and post on social media. Every single action you take gives other people insights into your knowledge, character, goals, potential, and professionalism. Are you leaving people with a positive impression? Are your actions reflective of how you

BOX 3.1 What tips do you have for building your personal brand with social media?

Greg Hardin—*I would say be very intentional, and thoughtful about almost every move you make. Don't be afraid to experiment or try out some new things. But do look at the outcomes. Ask yourself, "Okay, did that work?" If you put out a series of things, on Twitter or a blog, is it getting a reaction? Is it a positive reaction? Then, also, I think probably having a personal slant is good.*

want people to perceive you? Do you believe that if you asked people about who you are and what you stand for, they would be able to answer the question in a way that is aligned with where you want to be in your career? According to Llopis, if you answer no to any of these questions, you need to work on creating an image that is more closely aligned with your objectives.

Quast (2013) contends that creating a personal brand is much like developing a brand for a product. Hypothetically, each product that is on the shelf in a store is different from the next in some way, shape, or form. The same differentiations are needed when one develops a personal brand to set themselves apart from competitors. On this basis, Quast observes that a significant problem people who are seeking to develop personal brands experience concerns the level of research they perform to learn about other people in the field. She recommends following six steps on the path to personal brand development:

1. Identify goals and objectives
2. Do research
3. Decide attributes
4. Assess current image
5. Develop a plan
6. Manage the growing brand

Let's look at a scenario that involves the first five of these steps for Lisa, a library school student who is about to graduate.

1. **Identify goals and objectives.** Lisa anticipates that she will have two full semesters left in library school. She has been working in the campus library using a special program to acclimatize students to the work of a librarian. Some of her responsibilities for this program have included developing a social media presence for the library that showcases its archives related to the life of a local activist. She has been offering tours of the collection, interacting with faculty members, and leading local expeditions. She feels this experience is important for her goals of becoming an archivist and special collections librarian. Along the way, her role has taught her some important lessons. She believes this information will be helpful to future students and budding special collection librarians. She would like to use her experiences and knowledge of procedures to market herself as an expert, participate in conferences, and land her first position.
2. **Perform research.** Lisa begins to engage in research to learn about other people who are working in a similar position to that she wishes

to secure. She reviews their social media profiles, visits their biographies on their library websites, and reads relevant job descriptions to determine the skills that are pertinent to the position she wants to acquire. She realizes that she is already performing many of the tasks that are required for the position. However, there are some additional areas in which she would like to gain some experience before applying for relevant jobs.

3. **Decide attributes.** Lisa decides that she wants to develop a strong reputation for her archiving skills. In addition to landing her first position as a special collections librarian, she wants to deliver workshops and conference presentations through which she shares her expertise on her topic. It is important for her to be perceived as a knowledgeable professional instead of a newcomer to the field. Eventually, she would like to write books and develop a YouTube channel to supplement her income.
4. **Assess current image.** Lisa begins to assess her own image and questions what she needs to do to be regarded as an expert. While she posts for the library and delivers tours, she is not widely known beyond her own campus. She also does not have a social media presence separate from the work she posts online via the library page or for her personal interactions with family and friends. She begins to think about the networking events she can attend during conferences. She also notes the attire she wears at these conferences and the pictures she has posted online. At the moment, they show her as a fun-loving college student. While these images are part of her digital footprint, she would like to start posting professional images and infographics that reflect her as a change agent and knowledgeable professional.
5. **Develop a plan.** Lisa develops a plan that spans a range of activities. She talks with her boss and requests that some of the tasks she is completing at work are broadened. She also begins to attend some of the professional development workshops that are offered by the American Library Association and its affiliates. During these classes, she meets many new like-minded people, that is, professionals who are aspiring to become archivists and special collections librarians. In addition, she meets an instructor who becomes a valuable resource for her. She follows the instructor online along with the other people she identified as being relevant during her research process. Her plan also involves creating a social media presence of her own. This presence is separate

from the content she posts for family and friends. To separate her professional and personal images, she privatizes the accounts on which she shares personal posts. She is a busy student but resolves that she will update her blog at least every two weeks. Occasionally, she will interview other people to enhance the materials on her blog.

The personal branding process that Lisa has engaged in is not new. [Khedher \(2014\)](#) credits Tom Peters with commercializing the term personal branding in a 1997 article called “The Brand Called You.” Since the Internet was very much in a growth stage at this point, Peters was not referring to self-promotion online. He was addressing how individuals present themselves and conduct business. Peters asserted that each person is the chief executive officer of his or her own company, “Me Inc.,” which has its own brand called “You.” To thrive, people must market themselves in a similar way to how companies market their products and services. They should not allow labels such as “student” or “junior,” to stop them from projecting themselves as professionals. Remaining within these confines will only serve to hinder progress and stop you from dreaming about your possibilities.

Peters encouraged everyone to think of themselves as a free agent who needs to establish a niche. Establishing a niche helps people to limit the opportunities they seek. This is important so that they don’t try to assume every responsibility they are presented with. By narrowing down the areas of specialization, as a free agent, you can establish yourself as an expert in what matters to you. Being an expert makes one marketable, primed to pursue training that fits their specialization, and an expert worthy of attention. As such, Peters remarks that a brand value acts as an indication of the quality of resources that one can offer.

When examining competitors, such as other people in the job market, people you admire, and experts in your field, bear in mind that you ultimately want to surpass their success. Consider the qualities they have that will suit you. Then think about what you know and have done recently that sets you apart from other people. These are strengths that should be emphasized during personal branding activities. Peters pointed out that Nordstrom stands out among its competitors because the store emphasizes personalized service. This personalized service is perceived as a benefit to customers. When thinking about your personal brand, identify the benefit you offer to others. What is the benefit of contacting you for your services? Think about the problems you can solve for other people. Think about how your approach to solving these problems is different from that adopted by other people (i.e., your competitors).

Let's look at the difference in the way people approach problems within the context of Lisa's situation. Lisa knows that Jane Doe works in an academic library and has become well known for the humanities research guides she creates. Jane posts her research guides online so that they are readily available. She is often invited to conferences to talk about the material she has produced and to share her expertise. The difference between Jane and Lisa is that Lisa has a degree in humanities. Not only can she create the same type of guide as those generated by Jane, but she can also essentially deliver a lecture about specific time-eras, and her work is frequently published in journals. Lisa's guides are embedded with multimedia resources, such as videos, that she has created from her personal knowledge and podcasts, during which she invites experts from the field to talk about various topics. In addition to creating guides about the humanities, she has established an audience of humanities enthusiasts and researchers due to her content knowledge. In addition to respecting her content knowledge about humanities, people like the way she has designed her mini-documentaries and podcasts and want to learn about the process she follows to create them. She has established a niche within which her skills are perceived to be superior to those of others.

According to Peters, in addition to identifying a niche, one must also find a way to market themselves to others. Lisa could have the best guides in the world, but if she wants to reach a greater audience beyond her immediate followers, she will have to find a way to tell people why her guides and services are so important and unique. It doesn't matter how great you are at what you do if you are unable to deliver your messages to other people.

Peters (1997) acknowledges that people do not have a huge marketing budget like large companies. He presented six affordable and realistic methods of teaching others about your skills and enhancing perceptions of your professional skills:

- Volunteer to help interesting people.
- Teach a class at a community college as part of an adult education program.
- Start your own company and teach classes.
- If you are working at a company, moonlight at another organization to demonstrate your skills and learn more.
- Become a speaker or panel member at conferences.
- Offer workshops at conferences.

Peters suggests that everything about a person communicates their personal brand. For example, communication in meetings should be well articulated, short, and meaningful. Emails should suggest that you have a strong command of written language. Phone conversations need to be professional at all times. Business cards should be well designed. Attire needs to look polished. Information that is posted online should communicate that you have a command of technology. Even what you decide not to do communicates your brand. For example, if you are invited to attend a panel on digital citizenship at a conference, and you choose not to accept, people will form the opinion that you lack experience in digital citizenship.

Word of mouth can also have a significant impact on how people perceive you. It is for this reason that it is important to nurture your contacts. You need people to say good things about what you have to offer. Think carefully before you act. Your reputation is your power. Protect and grow it. Peters suggests that one can grow their reputation by taking power trips that are unobtrusive and positive. Look for opportunities to shine. This may include taking on tasks that may be relatively mundane. You can also be the team problem solver. Consider the types of deliverables you can offer and how these may extend your bragging rights (Box 3.2).

BOX 3.2 How can librarians use social media to get noticed for jobs?

Greg Hardin—*Think about what your niche area is. All of us should have a certain area that we're striving to be an expert in or the best we can be. Concentrate on that area. If you are just talking about academic librarians on social media and try to be the best academic librarian, you are going to get lost in the sea of all the other academic librarians. You could narrow it down to the first-year experience or English composition instruction. What are you doing that you have experience in? How can you share that experience to help other people?*

Preplan your social media presence. I have seen a lot of people apply for jobs and put their social media links on their CV. When you go back to look at their presence, it either exploded in the past month or, it only started in the past month. You can tell that they are looking for a job and ramped their presence up just for the purpose of the job search. So, make your social media activity something that you are working on for the long run, even if it is just a little bit. Then you show history purpose, and intention. Your social media presence is something that you should take seriously. Posting on social media is not something you should limit to the period of your job search.

(Continued)

BOX 3.2 (Continued)

Make sure that you share links to your social media account on your CV. Make it part of your header. Make it part of your cover letter. That is one thing I did with my website. I utilized it to branch out and push traffic to my Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other online accounts.

KYmberly Keeton—*I believe that LinkedIn and having a website is the best bet. I have a digital CV too. I find that employers and potential clients have found me this way. I do not believe that Facebook is an option for employers to be searching for people for professional roles. However, I do believe that LinkedIn is taken into account and held in a higher regard than other social media platforms as it pertains to professionalism.*

Ayla Stein—*I think trying to interact and engage with conversations that are going on is probably the best way to get noticed.*

3.3 USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PERSONAL BRANDING

If you are reading this book and questioning whether you should invest time in setting up some social media accounts, the answer is yes. Of course, you should not be reckless with social media. This is a correct process for everything. However, social media is something that should not be ignored.

Talan (2017) highlights the importance of establishing a professional brand online. Will people find you if they perform an online search for your area of expertise? Talan, an assistant professor at American University, noted that approximately 75% of browsers do not search beyond the first page of results on Google. Are you on the second page? According to Talan, professors have brands that must be marketed to enhance their visibility. In the age of sites such as Rate My Professors, you don't want the comments published on crowdsourcing sites to represent the main contribution to the ultimate perception of who you are. Personal branding enables you to control how people view your work. Moreover, branding can even increase your access to professional opportunities, including speaking engagements, networking events, and job announcements.

Regardless of whether you decide to set up social media profiles or not, if you are a professional who works with the public, it is highly likely that you are talked about somewhere online, by an individual, news outlet, or organization. The key to making a difference through social media is being proactive about how you present yourself, thereby, influencing the information people find.

Talan suggested a variety of tools for professional branding purposes. For example, if you write research articles, Google Scholar offers a way to connect with other researchers. Creating a simple “About Me” page is a convenient way to give the world a glimpse of your resume. You can also quickly and easily develop a blog using tools such as Blogger or WordPress.

Talan also suggested taking the following steps to understand your personal brand.

1. Ask people who they feel you are and what they think of your work.
2. Reflect on how effectively you create emotional connections with others.
3. Assess why you are valuable and the skills you have that set you apart from others.
4. Examine your soft and hard assets. According to [Talan \(2017\)](#): “Hard assets are tangible things like your typing speed, knowledge of Excel, and ability to speak a foreign language. Soft assets are things like your ability to work with others and manage your time” (para. 8).
5. Define what you want to achieve.
6. Examine the extent to which your existing brand and goals are aligned with the needs of the current market and the needs you would like to address.
7. Write down your personal brand statement. The statement embodies what you want people to believe about you and the work you offer to the world.
8. Begin using your personal brand statement, the results about what you learned about yourself, and your goals to inform what you create, share, and promote online.

Talan likens the use of social media to the equivalent of “publish or perish” . . . the idea in academia that if one does not publish articles to make their name or brand known, they will not earn tenure because they are not relevant in their respective field of expertise. Unlike traditional journals, social media is available to a broader audience. While traditional journals are accessible to a small percentage of the population that has access to subscriptions, social media is typically widely available with social networks having a variety of access levels from free to premium availability. Even paid social networks have some type of comment that the public can freely access.

Talan encourages readers to understand that a personal brand can change over time. Think about it. Are you the same person you were as a

teenager or undergraduate student? Have you changed your career aspirations?

If you have developed over time, it is okay. Creating a personal brand is like going through a process of self-evaluation. As time goes by, you may find that you need to make changes to how you are perceived or the skills you market. For example, you may find that your library offers a new service that is in high demand. To be perceived as an expert in this service, you may need to change your brand. You may also find that you have skills that are underappreciated because your other skills are highlighted for your current positions. Sometimes, you may need to prepare for a job or career change by adapting your personal brand. If you continually market the same skills and never examine the possibilities of self-promotion, your career may become stale. Simply stated, sometimes we need to change with the times to remain relevant.

3.4 THE BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO GROW YOUR CAREER

Social media allows users to access several benefits that can help them to grow their career and understand their audiences. Some of the benefits are as follows:

1. You can learn about how people feel about various topics related to your specialty. Understanding a topic helps you to develop your own materials. By establishing a social media presence, you begin to understand the vocabulary that is associated with your area.
2. You can position yourself as an expert. Offer new insights into a subject by building on the foundation that others have provided.
3. You can grow a professional community around your interests. People use social media to find and share information that increases their visibility. Building a strong relationship with these people can turn them into your advocates in the future.
4. By using social media, you also learn more about what people need to know. What are the reoccurring topics? How can you solve the problems associated with these topics?
5. You can learn about how people feel about the services they are being offered. What competing products are available? How can you make the services and products better?

6. You can review current job postings to see the types of skills needed to get a job. See Appendix 9 for a list of organizations with websites and social media accounts that are focused on LIS job searches.

3.5 DEFINING THE PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK (PLN)

You no longer need someone to direct you to professional development opportunities. With the access that is available to a variety of online materials through blogs, websites, and social media feeds, one can build a robust agenda for professional development without the need to pay hefty fees or to sit in a class for hours. Sure, sitting in a class can be a valuable investment. Furthermore, all the information that is available online is not always credible. However, with some creative searching and evaluating, you can determine who you want to contact to build a personal learning network (PLN) (Box 3.3).

BOX 3.3 How has social media helped you with your professional development?

Kelly Hoppe—*I get advice from other librarians. For example, I had some ideas about professional development opportunities for the people in my department, but I was struggling with where to start and how to put it all together. I was just scrolling through Twitter one day, and another academic librarian Tweeted about something that she had done, and it clicked. It was kind of like, "Oh, this is sort of where I want to go with what I want to do." So, I commented explaining my questions and asked if I could connect with her via email. We connected via email, and she gave me more details about what I wanted to do.*

Ayla Stein—*I think it's made me much more aware of issues in librarianship, and really the broader news and pop culture and society, that I wasn't aware of previously. Social media is where I first started hearing about critical theory, critical librarianship, and critical digital humanities... all those critical theories, and intersectionality, feminism, et cetera. Of course, I'd heard about feminism, but I hadn't studied a whole lot about it in school. We didn't really talk about it very much in grad school. I think the other thing that I really like about Twitter is that you can meet people on Twitter and connect with people that you wouldn't necessarily be able to meet or connect with in real life.*

For the purpose of this book, a personal learning network is a group of people organizations that you interact with to increase your knowledge on a chosen topic. Think of a PLN as part of your professional development plan. Of course, you don't need one. Still, a professional development plan is nice to have. There is nothing like having an expert at your disposal. PLNs can be face-to-face or online. [Tour \(2017\)](#) writes, "A current generation of technologies offers spaces for social interaction, participation, generating and distributing multimodal content, networking, collaboration, sharing, exchange and creativity" (p. 12).

It is possible to build a PLN using social media. There is plenty of useful information available that you can access when you don't have the time or the resources to attend a conference or class. In fact, sometimes you can vicariously attend a conference through social media posts without being physically present. For example, the Online Learning Consortium has an intricate social media component with ambassadors and hashtags.

In 2017, the American Association of School Librarians hosted a conference but understood that many librarians could not attend. To share the experience, each day, awards were given to the librarians that had the best social media presence. Comments were posted about sessions, and the association members that were not in attendance at the event responded with questions and comments of their own related to the trending topics. Joining an organization can give you a connection with many like-minded professionals. However, you do not need to be a member of an association to interact with its members on social media when comments are posted to the general public. You just have to know the relevant hashtags or follow an organization to see the public posts.

If you can locate someone with a robust social media presence, you can also look at who this individual is communicating with and the types of posts they are creating. Based on those posts, look for organizations and other people with whom you might connect. Follow these individuals and try liking or retweeting a couple of their posts to build up interest in your ideas.

Another idea for increasing your online PLN is to connect with the people you work with. However, this is not necessarily a preference for many professionals. For example, [Sie et al. \(2013\)](#) found that most of the participants in their study formed personal learning networks, with their research collaborators, friends, and colleagues outside of work. Build a private community to explore topics that are common to you. It is suggested that the network is private to separate your personal life from your professional life on social media.

Networks like Facebook and Google Plus allow you to search for interesting people and organizations to follow. Moreover, you can research which people and organizations use the hashtags that you are interested in. Remember, you can lurk on a social media network to observe what a group is doing if their posts are not private. This is useful if you are not sure that you want to join.

When studying how teachers use online PLNs, [Tour \(2017\)](#) found that some teachers remarked that using an online PLN provided some of the best professional development opportunities they had ever encountered. Tour noted that an online PLN offers a place to engage in conversations, participate in debates, and access answers to questions. The interesting part about online PLNs is that age is often not a factor that influences perceptions of an individual's level of knowledge about a topic ([Ito, 2010](#)). In that way, there is no pressure to feel like you have all the answers because you have the most experience on the job. [Tour \(2017\)](#) also noted the benefits of using the PLN at times that were most convenient. The study participants also thought of the existence of a PLN as professional coaching.

Interesting enough, [Lankau and Scandura \(2002\)](#) note that when mentoring exists in the workplace, people are more likely to seek personal learning. Conversely, by encouraging you to invest in your own personal learning, PLNs can also be useful when you seek another job. Certainly, developing a PLN is better than a supervisor noting that you should look for professional development or seek a mentor to help you with your work. Another benefit that Tour pointed out in relation to PLNs is that they represent an active way of learning that is reciprocal. Participants frequently share just as much knowledge as they receive ([Sie et al., 2013](#)), thus making it a fulfilling voluntary activity for everyone involved. A PLN is a place to share resources and develop collective wisdom ([Box 3.4](#)).

BOX 3.4 Why did you join Twitter?

Kelly Hoppe—*Well, I knew it had been around for a while, but I was scared of it. For some reason, I felt like I was going to start uncontrollably sort of verbally vomiting all sorts of private information that I didn't want anybody to know, or I felt like somehow that people would be able to find out private information about me. I guess I just didn't understand it. I saw it being used more and more at conferences and things like that. I thought, "I have got to start doing this if I want to be the librarian that I claim to be," because all of the librarians who were at the forefront of things were using Twitter. I just kind of bit the bullet and created an account. I never looked back. I absolutely love it, and it's been amazing.*

3.6 DEVELOPING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE

Convey your life. Do you have a message that you are passionate about? Do you want to transform your career? One trait that many thought leaders share is an ability to communicate. Social media can help you to share your knowledge with the professional community. Used correctly, social media can provide you with a platform for giving back to the community and making connections with like-minded people who can help you to evolve into the professional you want to be. Employers like to see new professionals who are motivated and passionate about their profession. Social media allows us to glean information from experts and other people who have had similar experiences. What would you like to know? Share your truth while carefully absorbing the best of the knowledge that is available to you.

Before you start posting to social media, ask yourself some crucial questions:

1. To what level do you ultimately want to progress?
2. How can you change mundane work into something you find more interesting?
3. What is the *why* behind your work? (i.e., Why is it important?)
4. What potential lies ahead in your career?
5. What is your vision?

Developing and sharing your vision can breathe life into your ambitions. Use social media to share the concepts that mean the most to you with other people. It is possible for you to become a thought leader for the issues that sit within your core. You can do this because social media is an equalizing plain for those who are willing to work hard to promote their ideas. However, it is not without its downsides. For example, [Heid \(2018\)](#) describes how “people with anxiety or mood disorders are more likely to use social media compulsively, but that compulsive use may also promote these sorts of negative emotional states” (para.14).

If you want to use social media to brand yourself, adopt an entrepreneurial mindset. Learn to subsidize your knowledge with diverse streams of information. It is difficult to understand different viewpoints if you don't take the time to explore them. By studying multiple perspectives, you develop insights into the pros and cons of what other people are saying and can subsequently enhance your own viewpoint.

Create a team or personal learning network to support your vision. Don't let other people's notions of what your focus should be define your goals. Surround yourself with people who can complement your skills.

3.7 CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE

The benefit of social media is that you don't have to consistently monitor it every hour of the day. Of course, some people do. But you have work to do, right? You can step away from your computer, and your social media accounts will still work for you. However, you must create an infrastructure that can support the well-being of your career first.

Begin by identifying people on social media who you want to be like (see Appendix 8: Librarians on Twitter for a preliminary list). If you have yet to reach your desired level of success and continue to associate with people who are the same as you, you will continue to constrain yourself to a mindset that recycles the same ideas. Actively seek opportunities to interact with the people who have the attributes you want to exhibit and who have similar visions to your own; this will enhance your creativity. While the list of Librarians on Twitter presented in Appendix 8 contains details of librarians who you may want to follow, library and information science is an interdisciplinary field. It is perfectly fine to look outside the field to identify trendsetters.

It is natural to gravitate to people who are the same as you. However, when you connect with people who have different attitudes and perspectives, you challenge your own outlook and connect with your own values on a deeper level. Embrace diversity. Feed your mind with new concepts. Most importantly, create your career on your own terms; make your career meaningful (Box 3.5).

BOX 3.5 Has social media impacted your career?

Greg Hardin—*I have received invitations to present and collaborate on projects through social media. Also, I would like to think that it played a part in making myself more attractive in gaining a position here at UNT. I don't necessarily have hard evidence of that, but I've been told "You're known out there." So, that's a positive.*

Dr. Spencer Keralis—*One of the things that it does is it connects me to a network of people who are similar, or thinking about similar topics and interested in similar causes, and who are also in similar clinical positions within the academy. Because there's a lot of us with humanities PhDs who are working in advising and libraries, and other roles that aren't necessarily what we trained for. Social media gives us a space where we can have conversations about that. I can share resources, share job postings, and promote our own scholarship. That's one of the things that's been fantastic.*

(Continued)

BOX 3.5 (Continued)

You meet a lot of cool people; I've made social connections that have turned into collaborative connections. Now I am working on a quarter of a million-dollar grant proposal, with someone from another university who I've never actually met in person at another university. We got to know each other via Twitter. If you use social media strategically, and if you are not boring, it can open tremendous personal and professional connections for you.

3.8 TRENDS AND BRANDING

Match the current trends to your environment. What is the trend that will help you maximize your brand? When you recognize this trend, consider your environment and how you need to approach the trend. The trend must connect to your work environment and how you want to articulate your career aspirations. In the same vein, you don't want to embrace every trend that is around. The trends must hold meaning for you and your career.

3.9 LEARN TO FAIL

The basketball player Michael Jordan once stated, "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Sometimes the things that you choose to highlight on social media may attract negative feedback. Personal branding has an element of risk-taking. And the thing that differentiates leaders and changes agents from the rest of society is the ability to recognize trends, the opportunity for change, and the willingness to take calculated risks (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Continue to build your reputation and reinvent yourself as needed. This does not mean that you should completely change your brand every few months into a new form that is completely unlike the previous incarnation. You should actively seek opportunities to enhance the elements of who you are. Don't be afraid to abandon a path or strategy that is not working for you. Just as the eight-track tape has developed into digital downloads, you can continue to make improvements with the times. If you are not sure about the changes you need to make, get feedback from your personal learning network (PLN).

3.10 DECIDE ON YOUR NICHE

When you consider your personal branding, think about the niche you want to fulfill. From your observations, can you describe what people need? What problem can you solve? How do the problems that exist match your personal skills? How can you acquire the skills required to meet the needs of other people?

Help people to understand why their knowledge is valuable to them. People will find you valuable to the degree that your knowledge meets their immediate needs. Be careful how you invest in your branding efforts. If your efforts are not meeting the goals you have set for yourself, you should modify the idea. Measure the impact your efforts are having on your social media platforms. For example, you may wish to consider the following:

- Are your page views increasing?
- Do you have more friends?
- Are these friends adding value to your career development?
- Do you get presentation and speaking engagements if you are seeking them?
- Are you developing new ideas from your interactions?

3.11 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, developing your personal brand is just as much about knowing who you are as a professional as it is about knowing who you want to become. Personal branding is a process that can greatly improve your career and quality of life. However, to develop an effective personal brand, you need to invest time into curating your image.

Be honest with yourself about the work that needs to be done and how it can be achieved. Develop a strong foundation of people who are willing to mentor you and tell you the truth about how others may perceive you. In addition, study the individuals who have achieved success in your niche or whose careers you aspire to emulate. This can help you to assess your current strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas of growth.

3.12 CHAPTER CHALLENGES

1. Ask someone what they believe your professional brand is. Ask them how they have come to this conclusion. Based on their response,

- determine if you are projecting the correct image for the brand that you want to portray.
2. Look for five leaders in your area of expertise. Examine the social media profiles and resumes of these individuals. What qualities do they have that you would like to mimic? Determine some activities that you can complete to begin developing these qualities? Create a strategy for adding them to your PLN.
 3. Make a plan for your social media professional development. What would you like to accomplish? In what months would you like to accomplish these goals?
 4. Write down your goals for your career. Do they match what is needed in the current market of professionals? How can you adapt your goals to meet the needs of the current market?

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