

Your personal brand and online presence

When you are looking for a job, you will need to communicate your knowledge, skills and experience to potential employers in a way that interests them in hiring you. This is like advertising yourself.

Personal brand

When potential employers search for you online, what do they find? Think of your online presence as an advertisement for yourself – your own personal brand.

Potential employers can use your personal brand to help them get to know you as a person and as a professional before they even meet you – and they will check to see what they can find about you online. Ensure that meeting you online is a positive experience. Here they can learn more about your background, interests and expertise – your story and your message.

Is your email address professional looking? Do you have social media accounts – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn? Even if you are not using them, they may come up in a search for your name. Do they show you as a professional responsible person? Consider changing your profile photo and deleting or changing privacy settings on anything you wouldn't want your new boss or potential employer to see.

There are other ways to increase your online personal brand. You may like to showcase your skills through a website or portfolio online, or you may set up an online profile on a job seeking site or other website connected to your industry.

Careers NZ has some good advice on setting up an online profile: www.careers.govt.nz/job-hunting/cvs-and-cover-letters/how-to-make-an-online-job-hunting-profile/

Try the activities at the end of this resource to find out more about your online 'personal brand'.



International student experience

“Make connections and build your professional network. After my work experience at Novotel Auckland Airport, I felt confident enough to contact the manager at Novotel New Plymouth via LinkedIn asking for a job. I was invited for an interview, and I am still there now.”

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional networking website that you can use to advertise your skills and experience and connect with other people in your industry. Employers can post jobs and search LinkedIn for potential employees as well, so it is a very useful site in your job search.

Careers NZ has detailed advice on how to make your LinkedIn profile great:

www.careers.govt.nz/articles/how-to-stand-out-on-linkedin/

Use LinkedIn to advertise yourself to local employers, to find out more about job opportunities in your area and to get to know people who work in the industry you are interested in. When reaching out to people, particularly those who don't know you, tell them why you'd like to connect with them.

You can also use LinkedIn for career exploration and research. Join relevant groups in it and consider posting in them. Consider commenting on, liking and sharing the posts of others. Doing so professionally and constructively can help you to get noticed.



International student experience

Networking can help you find your dream job. Ernest found out about his job as a Senior Accountant through word of mouth. He says your network can help you advance your career.

Networking options

Here are some networking options for people based in Manawatu, Whanganui and Taranaki. These might be groups set up to support migrants and international students, business networks or volunteering opportunities.

In Manawatu you can find out more about local groups and organisations here:

- ▼ Welcoming Communities in Palmerston North work with the migrant community and international students www.pncc.govt.nz/council-city/what-were-doing/ongoing-projects-and-programmes/welcoming-communities/
- ▼ 'Student Connect' events are run throughout the year, co-ordinated by CEDA, PNCC, tertiaries and secondary schools. Follow @StudentCityPN on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/studentcitypn/?hl=en>) to keep up to date.
- ▼ Global Ambassadors www.pncc.govt.nz/council-city/about-council/international-relations/global-ambassadors/

- ▼ Manawatu Chamber of Commerce and the Young Chamber are great networks to be a part of, where you can join into Business After 5 events and meet local businesspeople. Find out more about which group suits you best www.manawatuchamber.co.nz/young-chamber

In Taranaki, you can find out more about local groups and organisations here:

- ▼ www.newplymouthnz.com/Council/Community-Partnerships/Taranaki-GROUPS-Directory
- ▼ www.southtaranaki.com/our-community/community-groups-and-organisations
- ▼ www.sporttaranaki.org.nz/support-and-development/regional-sport-organisations/
- ▼ Taranaki Young Professionals www.typ.co.nz

In Whanganui, you can find out more about local groups and organisations here:

- ▼ www.organisations.communityhouse.org.nz
- ▼ www.sportwhanganui.co.nz
- ▼ www.whanganui.govt.nz/About-Whanganui/A-Whanganui-Welcome
- ▼ Community news and events www.whanganui.govt.nz/Your-Council/News-Notices-Events/Community-Link
- ▼ Whanganui Chamber of Commerce www.whanganuichamber.net.nz

Activities

Activity 1 – Where am I online?

Whether you like it or not you already have a ‘personal brand’ online – even if that brand is Mr. or Ms. Invisible.

Complete the following.

Keep a detailed record of everything you find and the links. You can take screen shots, or copy the text from the search pages.

Google search your name.

How many pages does it take to find yourself? You can give up after four or five pages – everyone else will.

Take one or more keywords from your CV and Google search them with your name.

What words did you use? Where do you show up in the search results? What about combinations of your name with other keywords?

Search LinkedIn using your name.

What comes up? Keep links to profile and any other references.

Choose at least three key NZ websites for your industry or field – professional body, industry Facebook page, worker or educational organisation, etc.

Which sites did you choose? What do you find?

Search your name.

Thinking about what you have just found, answer the following questions.

Could a potential employer find me online?

- Yes, quickly and easily
- Yes, but it does take a bit of extra searching
- I am here, but you really must look for me
- I am almost impossible to find

Where do I show up?

- Google page 1 or 2 with just my name
- Google page 1 or 2 with my name and an obvious keyword/s (from my resume) e.g. John Smith, marketing, coffee exporter
- LinkedIn search
- Industry or professionally relevant and respected New Zealand website/s search
- Social media sites (even if just a profile pic to a private site)

Some of you may find that you are an online ghost. A CareerBuilder study found that, “more than one-third of employers are less likely to interview job candidates if the companies can’t find information about the applicants online” (Brooks, 2015).

Do you need to focus developing the scope of your personal brand? If so, LinkedIn is a good place to start.

Activity 2: Who am I online?

It is not just that your potential employer can find you online, but what is she looking at when she does find you? How well does it compliment what she reads in the CV and cover letter?

Take the list of links you made to your online presence, assuming you come up at least once. Give each link a number: 1, 2 or 3.

1. I like it. This is how I want people, including potential employers and professional peers to see me online. **Keep it.**
2. Ouch! This is not who I am any more. This is not how I want people to view me today. Maybe it is time to retire those pictures I posted of parties during university days. Maybe some of my old Twitter posts really need to go! **Scrub it.**
3. Okay? But not really how I want to be seen professionally. Time to **update my online presence**. Maybe I should use privacy settings on my personal social media. Maybe I should replace the 'silly face' profile photo I have on my Facebook page with something more neutral.