

LinkedIn and Digital Branding Career Guide

Radford Career and Talent Development

Build your professional brand

Just as companies develop marketing campaigns to project their image, your online profile reinforces the brand you want to present. Understand your brand and reinforce it by keeping it consistent across your social media platforms, especially LinkedIn and Handshake. You can do this by using the same photo in your profiles, sharing consistent information, and using images and language that all convey a professional tone.

Controlling what Employers See

A key part of developing an online, professional brand is managing what employers see when they search for you online. Start by googling yourself and noting what comes up. Important things to look for include whether someone else appears before you, whether unprofessional content from your past or personal social media is visible, or whether the information is outdated or inaccurate.

While it may be difficult to completely remove unwanted content, a good first step is to make your personal social media accounts private. This prevents employers from seeing information that does not align with your professional brand. You may also want to update your profile photo and bio so that if employers do find your account, the visible content is professional and appropriate. Having a private profile that clearly represents you also helps prevent employers from confusing your profile with someone else's.

Creating Professional Content

One of the easiest ways to manage your online brand is to intentionally create professional content. Examples include a fully developed Handshake profile and a LinkedIn page. You should also create a professional email account that is not cluttered with other messages, so you do not miss communication from employers. When creating your email, include your full name but avoid using your birth year, age, or references to a specific job or industry. This allows you to use the same email throughout your career, even if you apply to different jobs or your career path changes.

Creating a LinkedIn Profile

Many people have LinkedIn profiles associated with their name but do not fully complete them. It is important to use LinkedIn as a tool to showcase your professional skills. One way to understand what a strong profile looks like is to view the profiles of prominent figures in your field. This could include figures you know such as your boss or coworker, as well as figures who hold jobs that align with your future goals.

- **Have a professional Headshot:** Choose a headshot that features only you, looking directly at the camera. It should be clear and professional. This helps people recognize your profile after meeting you and helps your LinkedIn connections identify you at interviews or conferences. One way to get a free professional headshot is to attend Career Fairs hosted by the Center for Career and Talent Development.
- **Include a meaningful Banner:** Choose a banner that is simple and represents you in some way. This could be a Radford University graphic, a photo of the region where you

hope to work, or a custom image with your name. Avoid leaving the banner section blank, as this can signal to employers that your profile is incomplete or inactive.

- **List all your work Experience:** Include your past jobs in the experience section. Fully complete each listing as you would on a resume. Include the organization, your title, start and end dates, and a summary of your responsibilities.
- **Complete your Education Section:** When entering your education, include all colleges or universities you have attended. This includes adding Radford, even if you have not yet graduated. Be sure to list your graduation date, major, any minors, awards and honors, and relevant activities. Make sure the institution name links to the official school page so you are added to the alumni network.
- **Update your URL:** Ideally, your LinkedIn URL, which can be updated for free, should be your full name or a close variation. This makes your profile easier to find and looks more professional on resumes and business cards.
- **List relevant skills:** Add skills that reflect your strengths and align with your career goals. A good way to identify skills to include is by reviewing job listings that interest you and noting the skills they require. LinkedIn, also, allows others to endorse your skills, which adds credibility.
- **Add other sections based on your resume:** LinkedIn offers sections for certifications, awards, coursework, volunteer work, projects, and more. Use these to highlight your achievements and provide a more complete picture of your qualifications. This is especially useful for students and recent graduates who may not have extensive work experience.
- **Share appropriate content:** Engage with your network by sharing articles, commenting on posts, or writing your own updates. This shows that you are active in your field and helps you stay visible to your connections. Keep your tone professional and your content relevant to your industry or interests. Even if you are not ready to create your own posts, try to engage with one or two posts from others so employers can see that your account is active. Engagement can include liking the posts, commenting, or sharing them.
- **Begin building connections:** Start by connecting with classmates, professors, colleagues, and supervisors. If you think someone may not immediately recognize you, include a short, personalized message to remind them how you know each other. Use these messages sparingly, as you only have a limited number of them available for free each month.
- **Write a clear and specific bio:** Your LinkedIn summary is your elevator pitch. Use it to tell employers who you are and what you are looking for. One way to do this is to use the following 4 sentence template.
 - Sentence One: Who you are. A clear summary of the type of professional you are. For example: I am a student at Radford University studying [major] with experience in [key experience] and seeking roles in [goal].

- Sentence Two: Where you've been. A sentence that notes some of the key highlights from your profile. For example: I have developed skills in [area of interest] through my internship at [job], my part-time work with [job], and my research in [topic].
- Sentence Three: What you've learned. A sentence explaining what you have gained or what you are interested in. For example: From this experience I have developed an interest in working on [question or cause that is important to you] with the [field name].
- Sentence Four: What you're looking for. A sentence explaining exactly what you hope to get from employers. For example: Once I graduate in [graduation date], I will be seeking full time roles as [job title] or [job title] in [field].

Feedback and Review

Your LinkedIn page should be a flexible and evolving representation of your professional identity. Continue reviewing and updating your profile as you progress in your career. If you would like someone to review your profile or help you develop and update it, reach out to the Center for Career and Talent Development.