

Personal Branding & Media Use Guide

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CAREER CENTER OVERVIEW FOR THIS GUIDE

While this guide focuses on general branding tips, networking, LinkedIn, digital portfolios, and personal websites, your entire online (and offline!) presence contributes to your professional identity. Whether your social media accounts are public or private, we encourage you to be discerning with what you choose to post. Employers are increasingly likely to search your online presence and consistently demonstrating your values across the Internet is generally a good practice.

For more information and/or to learn about additional platforms for developing your personal branding or networking through Social Media and direct engagement, make an appointment with a Career Advisor through the Career Center or email careers@suffolk.edu today!

Career Readiness -

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), “career readiness is a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management... Career readiness is the foundation upon which a successful career is launched” (NACE: “What Is Career Readiness?”).

At Suffolk University, we are dedicated to the success of our students and alums, and we believe every graduate should engage in the following to be career ready:

- [Ongoing Career Planning](#)
- [Articulating Professional Value](#)
- [Building Social Capital](#)
- [Social Identity Reflection](#)
- [Experiential Career Development](#)
- [Strategic Career Transitions](#)

We acknowledge that the word “professional” or “professionalism” has been used in ways that perpetuate systemic bias and inequity. We strive to empower seekers to recognize the importance of context and make informed decisions based on their background, goals, and priorities. We welcome you to have a conversation with us regarding “professionalism” and to access our resources on [Equity and Access](#).

Being *career ready* requires inquiry and inventory of your goals, interests, priorities, strengths, and areas of growth. Being *career ready* encourages ongoing reflection and exploration. Being career ready strategizes your next steps as you learn more about yourself and the organizations you aspire to join. Networking and building your personal brand are a couple of ways you may embark on your journey to career readiness!

Networking -

Networking is the intentional act of developing relationships with the purpose of building up your career readiness. Both formal and informal networking opportunities may contribute to your long-term career success.

“Professional networking is when you build relationships with other professionals both in your career field and in other related fields. Networking allows you to foster relationships with others that are mutually beneficial to the careers of you and those in your network. The goal of professional networking is typically to be able to ask favors of people in your network and to help them in return. For example, if you are looking for a new job, you may ask

someone in your professional network to put in a good word for you at their firm.” -
Professional Networking: What It Is and How to Master It (Indeed.com, 2021)

Networking allows us to unlock various opportunities by connecting to others in the field and learning from a community of individuals who share some common field interests, experiences, and perspectives. Networking helps build rapport and credibility.

“Active” Social Network -

Having an active social network will mean different things for different people. There is not a specific number of LinkedIn connections, likes, comments or posts that you need to be considered active. Instead, an active social network is one that allows you to find, build, create and sustain meaningful relationships that contribute to your professional wellness.

In January 2021, Forbes published an article titled “Eight Benefits To Being Active On Social Media” which covered some of the ways an active social network contributes to a strong and successful identity. You are encouraged to use social media as a tool leveraging it to find opportunities, engage with resources, and meet valuable connections.

Professionalism -

Professionalism, according to NACE is “knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace” (NACE: “What Is Career Readiness?”).

Through the Career Center we want students and alums to confidently identify, articulate, and translate skills from their past experiences to current pursuits. We want those seeking new opportunities to recognize how every experience you have had has helped shape the individual you are. From there, we want you to be able to recognize where your goals and interests resonate with organizations, where you can grow, and where you can innovate.

We want to empower the concept of professionalism for our student and alum community so that you can leverage your lived experiences, industry skills, educational qualifications, and personal identity to enhance the organizational environments you join and learn from them by building new networks.

Personal Brand -

The first step in networking is to create a “personal brand” representing your dynamic combination of skills, experiences, and perspectives you offer. Your personal brand should be intentional and strategic across your application materials (resume, cover letter, statements of intent), LinkedIn, and other social media. Think of your personal brand as what you want others to remember you by; it can include identification of *what you do* (your current or prospective roles or activity), *how you do it* (your method of engagement and work ethic), and *why you do it* (your source of inspiration and dedication). Using the language templates below to begin reflecting on your own personal brand!

Sample Personal Brand Templates:

- *I use my _____ and _____ for _____.*
- *Known for _____, I _____.*
- *Using _____, I _____, by providing _____.*
- *Through my _____, I _____, when I serve _____.*

Ultimately your brand is “the difference that only *you* can make for others because of the unique value your purpose, strengths, expertise, and experiences bring to others. People with strong personal brands get noticed because they share their passion for what they do in a way that is relevant to the people they want to serve” (Megan Dalla-Camina in [Psychology Today](#)).

Think of personal branding as “your smile is your logo, your personality is your business card, how you leave others feeling after an experience with you is your trademark” (Jay Danzie).

OVERVIEW OF PERSONAL BRANDING AND NETWORKING

To engage within an industry of interest or career community, it is important to determine what your values, interests, and goals are. Reflect on the following:

- What are hoping to study or currently studying?
- What catalyzed your decision for your field of interest(s)?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- What are your greatest accomplishments and how do they relate to your visions?

- What do you like most and least about the field of study you are pursuing?
- What would you like to explore more in your field?
- To whom do you look up to in the field and why?
- What question do you want answered today or most immediately for yourself? Why?

Upon reflecting on your core interests, goals, and priorities: what do you want to be remembered by and/or most associated with in your career? Could it be your attention to detail? Your passion and dedication to a sense of community? Your analytical capabilities?

Once identified, begin developing documents from resumes to statements of intent; media profiles such as LinkedIn; and even direct communication with peers, mentors, colleagues, and prospective employers framed with that theme or goal.

The more you share your drive, mission, values, and expertise, the more you are able to build a relevant network and connect to your next opportunity sooner!

Did You Know?

- According to [Forbes](#), about **80%** of jobs are not on job boards. This is referred to as the “hidden job market” and is one of the top reasons it’s important to effectively network with other people.
- According to the [NACE](#), **80%** of employers reported using social media in their recruitment efforts. The top three social media platforms used by employers and in terms of effectiveness were LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.
- According to a survey by [CareerBuilder.com](#), **70% of employers** use social media to screen candidates before hiring.
- According to a [LinkedIn Global Survey](#), **80%** of professionals believe that career success can be elevated through professional networking and more than one third (35%) say that a casual conversation on LinkedIn Messaging has led to a new opportunity.
- According to a study by [Aberdeen Group](#), **73%** of job seekers between the ages of 18 and 34 found their last job on social media.
- According to [Buffer](#), visual content is **40x** more likely to get shared on social media than other types of content.

Importance of an Elevator Pitch

Elevator Pitch Overview

An elevator pitch helps introduce yourself to a new connection while also making relevant the relationship you will build together.

For networking opportunities, it is important to identify who you are, why you are speaking or connecting, and what you are hoping to gain from the encounter.

An elevator pitch can be adapted for in-person communication but also for email or LinkedIn introductions!

Effective Elevator Pitches

- **Provide background:** identify in 1-2 points what you are studying or where you are working currently; provide brief geographical context if the individual with whom you are speaking does not know about your current setting
- **Announce your interest in the connection:** establish how you learned about the person or opportunity and your enthusiasm for networking
- **Highlight relevant experiences:** share how you can contribute to the company based on 1-2 experiences or qualifications that you hold that are most relevant for the role or connection
- **Wrap it up:** thank them for their time and opportunity to connect; inquire whether you may follow up via phone, email, or LinkedIn

Sample Elevator Pitch

“Hello, my name is Sonya. I am graduating with a biology major in May 2024 and have been engaged in my community through Missions of Mercy outreach and clinical shadowing at local hospitals – passionate about healthcare. I would love the opportunity to learn more about different careers in healthcare administration as I am considering healthcare career pursuits in non-clinical roles. I know that you have a variety of experiences working in different hospital administrations and would value your perspectives. Please let me know if you’re available for a call or coffee in the next 2-3 weeks. I will be reaching out through LinkedIn as well.”

The order of how you present your points can vary depending on the method of communication (in-person, email, LinkedIn) and your level of familiarity with the person

(i.e. whether you have spoken prior or whether they know anything about you from another connection). Nevertheless, create a base of what you would like to highlight depending on your immediate goal or priority and then adapt yours accordingly with different interactions.

Building Your Brand on Social Media

Social media can serve as a powerful tool to establish your personal brand, build your image, and stand out among your desired industry by demonstrating your skills and values in the digital space connecting you to a global audience. Your social media accounts, both for personal and/or professional usage, are a reflection of your personal brand. Building your brand on social media doesn't happen overnight, it is a constantly evolving process. It requires consistency, effort, and strategy. It's important to remember that your level of engagement on social media serves as your 'ad campaign' to your personal brand. An active social network increases your visibility and credibility to others online. **Check out these 5 tips for activating your brand on social media:**

1. ***Define Your Values and Goals:*** define who you are and what you want to be remembered for. Personal branding is fueled by passions. Think about your vision and your voice. What do you stand for? Articulate what you want to accomplish by amplifying your brand on social media. Which platforms will you utilize to begin?
2. ***Be Ubiquitous and Consistent:*** having a strong social media presence will enhance your personal brand. If you have multiple social media accounts (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.), you can better reach your desired target audience on a larger scale. Having consistency in your voice, image, and tone will make for a more impactful brand across your social media channels. It will also likely make you more memorable and trustworthy. Be intentional with your posting strategy and find a consistent pattern that works for you.
3. ***Take Advantage of Features:*** social media is ever evolving and expanding its features. Maximize the use of "stories" to keep your audience engaged with updates on your experiences, projects, skillset, certifications, etc. "Save" articles, posts, or content that you want to refer to or engage with later. "Reshare" or "repost" digital content that aligns with your personal brand values. If the platform allows, check out your social

media analytics to evaluate your personal brand strategy. Seeking feedback on your brand is critical to your development.

4. ***Connect and Build Relationships:*** find other experts, alums, and thought leaders in your industry, analyze their networks, posting activity, and content to help you evaluate what you could be doing better. Crowdsource for best practices on personal branding strategies and execution. Build key relationships with these individuals to expand your network. Joining niche groups that are relevant to your area of expertise or field of interest will help increase your knowledge base, expand your network by connecting with like-minded individuals, and develop new ideas for content creation on your social media channels.

5. ***Tap into Resources and Tools:*** building a personal brand helps you market yourself, build on your skillset, and experience to make you a stronger candidate in the job market. For more information, visit our [Career Center “Resources & Tools” pages](#) , or [make an appointment to meet with a Career Advisor](#) to discuss your personal brand strategy. You can also check out the [Digital Marketing Institute “10 Steps to Building Your Personal Brand on Social Media”](#) and [“Build Your Personal Brand” on LinkedIn](#) articles to learn more about the importance of building your brand on social media.

USING LINKEDIN

What is a LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is the largest global professional online network. Through LinkedIn, you can expand your career-related skills sets, contacts, and organizational affiliations. You may also actively promote your own personal branding and achievements as well as search for new opportunities from internships to part-time and temporary jobs to dedicated careers.

Getting Started

Profile Photo: include a photo that is relevant and recent to your career pursuits. You may include a brand logo or an individual photo. Since this is a platform designed for career engagement, for an individual photo consider business attire or field-base attire – for

example, if you are in the field of healthcare, you may wear your lab coat. Your photo is an opportunity to express your identity and intentionality in pursuing your career goals.

Headline: think of a few terms or ideas that connect to your top values or career pursuits; these can also represent your current role title or topics you are passionate about. Use these as part of your headline separated by punctuation or symbols such as dashes, pipe bars, or bullet point variations. [See some options from LinkedIn here.](#)

Summary: similar to your personal brand statement, narrate what your experiences have been in your industry of interest by identifying 1) who you are or where you are in your career, 2) what and how you have achieved different growth along the way, and 3) what you hope to do next. This summary allows for narrative format and bullet-point listings for highlights. [See the LinkedIn Student Sample here.](#)

Experiences: transpose all experiences as noted in your latest resume for consistency. Include role titles, date ranges, and descriptions as in your resume for accuracy. Every entry should remain strategic for the purposes of your networking goals and community engagement. Even if an experience is outdated, for example from high school, but your plan is to engage with that specific community through prospective employment or volunteering, then you should be sure to include the relevant connections across your documents and profiles. LinkedIn experiences range from work and volunteer experience as part of LinkedIn's "Background" highlights but also projects and publications as part of LinkedIn's "Accomplishments" highlights.

Skills: include a list of key skills you possess including technical, analytical, and interpersonal; LinkedIn allows you to list up to 50 skills. Relevant skills will vary by industry, so make sure you know your field's top skills! Check out [The Balance's Employment Skills by Jobs](#) for some ideas of what to showcase. Later on, you may [select to have your skills endorsed or endorse others.](#)

Privacy Preferences: finalize your public profile preferences and change them at any time by selecting the "Edit Your Public Profile & URL" option in your main profile display. There you may create a shortened, custom URL for your profile that is easier to share. You may also select which parts of your profile from photo to experiences to groups you follow are visible

to those who are connections and those who are not when your name is entered into a search engine. Determining which sections to showcase publicly should be at your discretion based on your level of comfort, career priorities and purpose. If you are actively seeking opportunities, the more you can showcase upfront, the higher the visibility. However, having at least your name, number of connections, and region are required.

Engaging

Companies, Groups, Hashtags: follow organizations, groups, and key phrases most relevant to your industry interests. The more you customize, the more targeted your feed updates will be. LinkedIn will provide you some suggestions of what to follow based on the language of your profile content from role titles to descriptions as well as your connections and their backgrounds or current affiliations. Additionally, you may search and follow major organization names from your schools and their academic or administrative departments of interest, including [Suffolk University](#), as well as other institutions from news sources, favorite companies, state societies, and professional associations.

Job Alerts: save job searches you conduct and create regular alerts as well as recommendations through LinkedIn. Filter opportunities by different job titles, industries, locations, and more! Let recruiters know you are open to pursuits by setting your preferences through your main profile page ([#OpentoWork](#)) as well as the [jobs alert section](#).

Recommendations: ask for and provide them yourself! In building a more strategic network, ask 1-2 individuals from 2-3 of your most significant or relevant roles to provide a recommendation for you on LinkedIn; offer to also return the favor if the person is interested or in need. Such recommendations help build your credibility within your fields of interest. [Learn more about LinkedIn recommendations here!](#)

Tip Corner

For more samples of profiles, tips, and resources, review the following pages:

- [LinkedIn Help Center for Overviews and FAQs](#)
- [LinkedIn for Students](#)
- [LinkedIn Profile Checklist](#)
- [LinkedIn Professional Groups](#)

- [LinkedIn Tips from The Muse](#)

Your LinkedIn exists as a live profile, constantly evolving with your experiences and goals, so make it a point to update every 2-3 months with your latest achievements or newest interests.

CURATING DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS AND PERSONAL WEBSITES

What Is a Portfolio?

A digital portfolio or personal website is an online collection of work that showcases your skills and abilities in a particular craft. You may choose to showcase a series of production reels, a collection of original animations, or programming projects that you've worked on. Regardless, it is important to remember that your portfolio tells a story about who you are as a professional. Include your best work and commit to updating your portfolio regularly.

Getting Started

There is no shortage of platforms when considering where to house your digital portfolio; however, some platforms are better suited to achieve your particular needs as some are more common for certain fields of study. For example, [Muck Rack](#) is a portfolio platform targeted towards journalists and public relations professionals. [WordPress](#) allows users to publish and maintain online blogs. [Behance](#) is an easy-to-use interface design tool predominately used to compile the work of photographers, artists, and user experience (UX) designers. [GitHub](#) and [Tableau](#) are best suited to showcase software development dashboards, visual data analytics, and coding skills. Remember to do your research before choosing a platform. Other platforms to consider include [Squarespace](#), [Wix](#), [Journio](#), or a professional [Instagram](#).

Here are some questions to consider when narrowing down your interests and determining your purposes for creating different digital portfolios:

1. What medium of work are you planning to showcase?
2. Who is your target audience?
3. What is the purpose of your portfolio?

Generally, consult with colleagues in your field of study, a faculty mentor, or a career advisor to ensure your portfolio is as strategic as possible for your personal interests, your career goals, and your industry values.

Engaging

Just like other professional documents, a digital portfolio is not static. You should update your portfolio with regular frequency. For some students, updating your portfolio every 4-6 months or after each semester is a good idea. Remember to choose your strongest samples of work that best demonstrate your skillset. It is okay to remove work that no longer represents your best ability. If you choose to use your portfolio to house all of your work, you might consider organizing the flow chronologically so that viewers can see your progress.

Tip Corner

- **Consider Flow:** The overall arrangement of your portfolio or website should be logically consistent. Use tabs and other devices to organize your work into something that is easy-to-follow and user focused.
- **Content & Style:** While the content you produce is most important, the way you choose to display it will be a reflection of your ability as well. In particular, design portfolios will be judged based on the artistic medium as well as the overall arrangement. If you use a template, be sure it complements your work well and does not distract from the purpose of your portfolio.
- **About Me:** Be sure to include an “About Me” or “Contact” page/section so that your target audience can get in touch with you. If you are submitting your portfolio as a part of your application materials, be sure that the email and phone number match what is listed on your resume and cover letter. Also, remember to hyperlink your digital portfolios or personal websites to your resume.

CAREER CENTER CONTACTS

Department Line: 617-573-8480

Department Email: careers@suffolk.edu

Website: <https://www.suffolk.edu/career-center>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/suffolk_careers/

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sucareers/>



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