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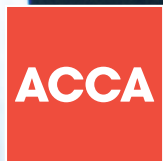
## MODEL OF SUCCESS

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# How to manage your brand online

When used effectively, social networking can play a key role in a planned approach to career management, enabling the 'hunted' to connect to potential 'hunters', explains **Patrick O'Brien**

**Talent attraction and retention is a key challenge for business today, and technology – in particular the growth in social media – can lend a hand.**

Organisations and individuals are now embracing social networking on a more regular basis and it can be very beneficial in helping individuals to manage their careers. The 'hunter', looking for the talent, uses the tools to find out who is available and to run background checks; it is amazing what people reveal online and what trails they leave behind! At the same time, the 'hunted' use social networking to put themselves into the right places, so that they can be seen when required and, hopefully, in the best of lights.

Humans are by nature social animals; it pleases us greatly when we socialise, it pains us deeply when we do not. Social networking tools tap into a deep, inner need for that socialisation. The American psychologist David McClelland picked up on this concept back in the 1950s. He described our 'need for affiliation', a motivational need that humans have to relate to others; we naturally do what it takes to nurture this need.

The growth in adopting levels of social media is therefore not surprising, and it has accelerated with access to high-quality tools. Email, MSN and blogs were the tools of choice in the early days, whereas nowadays one is more likely to use personalised web pages and micro-blogging tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Social networking is now less a tech-savvy, generational thing; it is more about solutions. When used effectively, it can also be a powerful enabler in career management.

Let's now look at three personal branding and marketing related



areas. It is helpful to keep these in mind when embracing social media as part of your planned career management approach.

## Getting started

'First things first' is the mantra of management and self-help expert Steven Covey. So begin by considering what your needs really are.

Face to face has its place, of course, so continue to take a portfolio approach to managing your career. Social networking is an extension to, not an exclusion of, all those other 'real-world' activities that you may have already been doing.

Begin by constructing a résumé that captures your brand, value and personality: the career path you've been pursuing; the strengths that you bring; the contributions you can make; and how you wish all those elements to be memorably represented.

Build positively using social media, adapting it for the powers it affords you, as it:

- \* Enables your innate personal yearning to socialise.
- \* Extends your reach to a wider audience over a 24/7 timeframe.
- \* Puts you into the target zone of those people searching for talented candidates.



\* Allows you to control, with consistency, that first impression you will make on them.

Social networking can be exceptionally empowering, too, as it allows you to own and manage your career, independent of your current organisation – and your boss. This can be a liberating experience, especially for those considering, or currently in, the process of career transition.

### Personalising your message

Facebook focuses on the fun and friendly side of personal relationships. For those who currently use it, there is no need to stop. That said, in terms of career management, it lacks that little bit of bite in terms of value-add; you need something built for the purpose.

This is where LinkedIn comes in, as it is a tool engineered for business. It is structured around your career, focusing professionally on helping you connect and share among your business network. Moreover, it is a well-known space where talent ‘hunters’ go to seek the ‘hunted’.

Going online is a little like placing yourself in a large department store window. When people pass by and look inside, they only see your avatar, don’t they? The real challenge begins in discovering how you can use your chosen tool to position yourself to your best advantage. A great first step is to stop and consider what you want them to notice, how you want to make them feel and, importantly, what you want them to say and do afterwards.

You only ever get one chance to make that first impression, so a little strategy and forethought will provide you bigger paybacks later.

**Patrick O’Brien is the managing director of The Amanuenses Network in Singapore**

## \*BUILDING ‘BRAND YOU’

**Like any new tool, there are good and better ways to use them. So as you start to build your online presence, keep the following eight points in mind. They will allow you to promote ‘brand you’ online in a much more captivating – and safe – way.**

### 1 Permanence

Whatever you say online will stay online; there is no eraser. So think before you publish. Not only are your words the first impression that you make, they will form the basis of very long and lasting impressions, too.

### 2 Truth

Be truthful and ensure that the words you publish are correct. Never publish anything you might have to explain face to face afterwards.

### 3 Consistency

Be consistent, by making sure that anything you say about your career aligns to everything previously said. Search engines very quickly flag inconsistencies; they are powerful, fast and unforgiving!

### 4 Realism

Whatever you say, always be realistic. Just because the words chosen are your embodiment online, they cannot be fantasy. A career may be desired with future possibilities, yet it must be grounded in present realities; what you were needs to connect with what you may become.

### 5 Look to the future

When people employ you, they won’t look for a better yesterday but a different and brighter tomorrow. Make sure to position your past so that it exemplifies areas where you can help your new organisation in their future.

### 6 Positivity

Often résumés are constructed in a neutral way, sometimes even coloured with negative tinges. When socially networking, choose to take a positive treatment of the past and frame it with optimism for the future. People hire people who are positive and have future potential, not pessimists with a negative past.

### 7 Show personality

People love to hire ‘people’ and expect those people to have personalities. So ensure that your avatar encapsulates your own personality. Unlike your résumé, the web affords you the opportunity to colour your character a little. Show a little positive attitude – seize that moment.

### 8 The essence of you

Capture the full essence of who you are, what you can do for others and the manner in which you go about things. Social media allows you to ensure your contacts get to know you as you wish to be known, so leave them with an impression that tells them ‘who’ you really are.

In closing, remember this: charisma is the colour of your character. Social networking tools give you the freedom to provide some warmth to your own expression, as you take charge to own and manage your career.

Perhaps the time is now right to embrace them?