THE PERSONAL BRANDING TOOLKIT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

A CREATIVE PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION, AND MEDIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

HEATHER FULLENKAMP

DR. JENNIFER GEORGE-PALILONIS – ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2015

Table of Contents

Introduction

Today, social media is more popular than ever and an integral part of people's everyday lives. Countless studies and reports monitor the ever-increasing percentage of U.S. residents using the platforms (*State of the Media*, 2012; Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). As the Internet continues to grow as a widely used communication tool, a person's online reputation, including social media use, is often intertwined with the process of looking for a job. Many reports outline the positive and negative effects that online presence can have on job seekers ("U.S. College," 2012; Parmar, 2011; Kasper, 2012; "Bullhorn Reach," 2012). Several sources credit personal branding as an effective way to improve online presence and foster positive results for job seekers, career professionals and entrepreneurs (Peters, 1997; Ricker, 2014; Deckers & Lacy, 2013).

Online, a plethora of information can be found about social media, personal branding and online reputation management. For example, many colleges and universities provide an array of materials to coach job-seeking graduates ("Using Social," 2010; Hulse, 2010; "Career Counselor's," n.d.). Many blog articles outline the blueprints for social media or personal branding success (Arruda, 2015; Schawbel, n.d.; LePage, 2015). Some e-learning tools offer advice for career development through online professionalism (Levit, 2010; "Job Search," n.d.). Although a myriad of resources exist, few present interactive step-by-step tutorials on these three main subjects. Three online guides each focus primarily on social media, personal branding or online reputation management (Bolsinger, 2014; Patel & Agius, 2014; "The Ultimate," n.d.). However, there is no step-by-step guide that is both interactive and incorporates all three subjects.

For this project, I have developed an online toolkit that includes the necessary information for an individual job seeker to build an effective, branded social media presence; research to identify the importance of online presence while job seeking; interactive exercises for building a personal brand identity; guidelines for setting objectives and goals; steps to determine a target audience and choose the best social platforms; and tools and tips for cleaning, creating and optimizing one's online presence. This guide is available to job seekers through an interactive website at www.thepersonalbrandingtoolkit.com.

Literature Review

Growth of Social Media

The increased affect of social media in the U.S. is chronicled in assorted studies. Data derived from a study of 1,998 adult social media users in Nielsen's U.S. Social Media Survey 2012 provides insight into the depth of social media's rapid growth (*State of the Media*, 2012). One comparison indicates that users spent 89.7 billion minutes longer on social media platforms in July 2012 versus the previous year.

Additionally, regular reports from Pew Research Center present statistics about the most used social platforms as well as the gender, ethnicity, age, education, income, and urban, suburban or rural classification of each site's users. Comparing the most recent report (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015) to prior reports can be useful in measuring the growth of social media use among various demographics over time.

Positive and Negative Effects of Online Reputation

Several studies have indicated that a job seeker's online presence can have a direct effect – both negative and positive – on the outcome of employment. The findings of an AVG Technologies Digital Diaries study, reported in a Business Wire article ("U.S. College," 2012), states that half of hiring managers have declined an interview because of what they found online about an applicant. According to the study, inappropriate photos, bad grammar, posting negative comments about past employers and controversial personal opinions can all be detrimental for graduates seeking employment.

In addition to a user's own content, negative information posted online by contacts, friends and connections can also affect the chances of getting hired. According to an article in *The Washington Post*, even if a job candidate safeguards his or her information by using privacy

settings, content uploaded by others can still be harmful if that user's information is public (Parmar, 2011).

A Jobvite survey of 2,108 American adults conducted by The Polling Company, Inc. (Kasper, 2012) revealed that 23 percent of job seekers were asked for information about their social media accounts during an interview, giving the employer direct access to their online information. While unprofessional content led to negative consequences, the study also determined that many job seekers used social media to find jobs, with one out of six attributing employment to the platforms.

The 2012 Bullhorn Reach Rankings Report supports the findings of the Jobvite survey, providing statistics on jobs posted to social media sites. According to the report, more than one-fifth of job postings in the U.S. can be found on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, the most popular being LinkedIn with 77 percent of jobs posted there.

Importance of Personal Branding

According to experts, personal branding can be a useful tool in creating a professional online presence with positive impact. In *Fast Company* magazine, Tom Peters (1997) describes how – much like branding for companies – personal branding can be used to take control of one's public image and position as a leader in a given industry. Personal branding has become a mainstay in career building and has been used by job search and personal development experts as a crucial tool for success. Popular online job site CareerBuilder offers help to job seekers through articles in an advice and resources section of its website. In one article, Susan Ricker (2014) describes how personal branding can be used as a tool to stand out from competitors when applying for a highly desired job. She says it can also give the hiring officer a better idea of who the applicant is as a person, not only what skills they have.

Branding Yourself: How to Use Social Media to Invent or Reinvent Yourself instructs

readers how to combine personal branding and online platforms like social media to reach goals.

Authors of the book, blogging expert Erik Deckers and successful marketer Kyle Lacy (2013),

outline how career advancement and business objectives can be achieved through successful

personal branding. Many chapters include exercises or actionable steps that the reader can

execute.

Existing Resources

Reflecting the growing need for online reputation management, many colleges and

universities provide resources to their students, such as guidance from experts or tools targeted at

specific fields of study. For example, Dartmouth College ("Using Social," 2010) provides

students with handouts and video from E. Chandlee Bryan, a career management and job search

expert, to assist with maintaining a professional online presence. At Georgetown Law, Assistant

Director of Professional Development Kristen Uhl Hulse (2010) has created A Guide to E-

Professionalism for Attorneys, which includes tips such as not offering legal advice on social

media or blogs. Similarly, the National Association of Colleges and Employers ("Career

Counselor's," n.d.) offers a collection of guides for various social platforms that career

counselors can use to remain abreast of the impact on graduates and job seekers.

For non-students, instructions and tips for using personal branding and social media as

tools for career development can be found in abundance online. Social media websites like

Social Media Examiner, Social Media Today and Mashable all offer regularly published articles

on the subjects. Additionally, numerous experts offer their insights in other publications and

blogs around the web. A bestselling author and pioneer of personal branding, William Arruda

(2015) has written numerous how-to articles. One example, 10 Crucial Questions For Defining

Your Personal Brand published by *Forbes*, poses questions to help the reader define the

foundation of his or her brand. Another author and personal branding expert, Dan Schawbel

(n.d.) combines his own advice with other experts in the field in his Personal Branding Blog at

www.personalbrandingblog.com in addition to offering paid courses.

Some social media management tools also distribute ideas and suggestions for using

social media professionally. For example, an article by Evan LePage (2015) for *Hootsuite*

explains the differences in using social platforms for professional and personal networking and

outlines ways for individuals to present themselves professionally online.

Organizations interested in supporting career development for their audiences sometimes

offer or sponsor valuable resources. For example, Business Roundtable and HR Policy

Association funded an asset called JobSTART 101 (Levit, 2010). The interactive guide and

accompanying worksheet is a course in professionalism for college students, teaching

appropriate behaviors and attitudes. The GCFLearnFree.org program from the Goodwill

Community Foundation also offers free e-learning guides, including some on personal branding

and networking ("Job Search," n.d.).

Ultimately, there are three online guides that offer in-depth, step-by-step tutorials on

social media, personal branding or online reputation management. Although each resource is

very thorough, none of them integrate all three topics into an all-encompassing guide created for

individual job seekers.

The Beginner's Guide to Social Media for *Moz* by Kristy Bolsinger (2014) is an online

guide to social media that is primarily aimed at marketers for companies. The guide provides

extensive information on the various social media platforms. Section topics include content

types, crisis management, metrics, goal setting, target audience identification and etiquette.

Although this resource is very comprehensive, it can be difficult to apply the concepts and

exercises to an individual seeking to expand their own personal brand.

Another resource, The Complete Guide to Building Your Personal Brand by Neil Patel

and Aaron Agius (2014), is hosted by social media management tool Sprout Social and provides

an in-depth look at personal branding for individuals. Although social media is included as one

of many tools for personal branding, it is not interwoven into each step of the process.

Finally, www.reputationmanagement.com ("The Ultimate," n.d.) offers individual guides

targeted at high school students, professionals, job seekers, college graduates and more, each

focused on online reputation management. Although each guide references social media or

branding, they do not include steps for building a personal brand.

The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social Media

The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social Media is a website that contains information and exercises to help individuals and job seekers build a personal brand through the use of social media. The toolkit is broken down into 12 steps between six main sections, each focusing on a vital part of the process. Throughout the website, text fields invite to user to interact with exercises and record their own answers. Examples throughout provide insight into how each question may be answered. Buttons after each section allow the user to save his or her answers as an organized, branded PDF for future reference. Including this functionality creates an engaging user experience and increases the likelihood that the visitor will read the entire toolkit.

The single-page website is built using a flexible grid structure which allows the design to respond to changes in the width of the Internet browser. Whether viewed on a desktop computer, tablet or mobile device, the content will redistribute from columns to stacked sections for a seamless design. Infographics, images and videos make it more visually appealing while adding more instruction or explanation of a specific topic. Some elements are animated to show motion while scrolling down the page for a more dynamic experience. Responsive and mobile-friendly web design has become an industry standard and common expectation among Internet users. Building the site in this format will increase its overall impact and longevity.

Introduction Section

It is important to preface the tutorial by explaining the importance of online reputation for job seekers. The introductory section of the toolkit presents basic information about the rise of social media, as well as its role in the hiring process, using supporting statistics to outline how online behavior can have both negative and positive consequences. Additionally, the section

discusses legal matters such as an employer's request for an applicant's social media passwords and the "right to be forgotten" ruling in Europe.

Section 1: Who Are You?

In order to use social media as a personal branding tool, the reader must first define his or her brand identity. To assist in this process, Section 1 includes three steps to help the user establish his or her personal brand. In an accompanying video, author and branding expert Simon Middleton explains what a brand is and how it relates to a logo. The user is prompted to determine how his or her brand will be differentiated from the competition in Step 1. Next, Step 2 defines the emotional appeal, services and descriptive modifiers – the values that will become the basis for all future representation of the brand. The final step includes an exercise to craft a personal brand story, a biography that defines and inspires what the individual is trying to accomplish. The brand story written in Step 3 will be used when branding online profiles.

Section 2: What Do You Want to Achieve?

Outlining objectives and goals before cleaning or building content will keep branding efforts focused and purposeful. This section begins with a differentiation of the terms objective and goal as defined by the *American Marketing Association Dictionary*. In Step 4, users write the long-term objectives they wish to achieve. Next, the standard and often-used method of setting goals based on the S.M.A.R.T. acronym is used to pinpoint specific actions, timeframes and frequencies for short-term goals. If the goals are specific and attainable, they are more likely to be successful.

Section 3: What Social Media Are Best for You?

With objectives and goals in mind, it's important to determine a target audience before selecting which social media platforms to use. In Step 5, various questions about demographics,

values and lifestyle choices are used to identify an audience. Because there are dozens of social media tools capable of curating all types of content, individuals should take into consideration both the needs of their audience and the types of content they will be sharing. For Step 6, I created an infographic to outline the audience statistics for the eight social media sites in the U.S. with the most monthly active users. I've also included The Conversation Prism by Brian Solis and JESS3, a useful infographic that organizes a wider variety of social media platforms into sections based on how they are predominantly used. Users can record which social media will best reach their brand goals and target audience.

Section 4: Clean Up Existing Content

The next section focuses on managing existing accounts, restricting access to personal profiles and using search engines to discover additional information. This is an important part of the process because knowing what online information exists allows the user to minimize the negative results while maximizing the positive results. Step 7 includes tips for recovering lost social media accounts in order to compile a complete list before eliminating unwanted accounts in Step 8. Armed with a list of active accounts, Step 9 explains how to distinguish between personal and professional profiles and the different privacy settings suggested for each. Disregarding privacy settings altogether can be dangerous, as demonstrated in a video from YouTube Comedian Jack Vale. A brief discussion of leaked private information and unknowing third-party access leads into the next step. Because nothing online has guaranteed security, Step 10 includes ways to find and eliminate unwanted content on social media sites and lists several third-party applications built specifically for this purpose. A video from Facebook provides a quick walkthrough of the Activity Log tool, which can be used to manually review all content on

that platform. Finally, Step 11 explains how to conduct a Google search with unbiased, relevant results, reflective of what a potential employer may see.

Section 5: Build New Content

Finally, when building new content and branding existing profiles, it's necessary to consider best practices. The final section includes suggestions and ideas from various sources on how to achieve a professional online brand. Tips range from being consistent when choosing a name and photo to considering whether an employer has a social media policy. In a video from Business Insider, Matt Johnston provides advice on taking a professional profile photo. Additionally, making a commitment to continually optimizing and monitoring online presence is vital, so the section includes tips such as creating an editorial or task calendar to stay on track.

Construction

The single page website was built using a combination of HTML, PHP, JavaScript and CSS. Using various free plugins and codes when constructing the site not only saved time but also took advantage of the preexisting testing and cross-browser compatibility of each tool. For the base structure, I used FlexGRID by James Thomas. This responsive grid uses JavaScript and CSS to organize content into responsive, mobile-friendly columns. To move throughout the site, anchor text is used to jump directly to each section or individual step. SmoothScroll by Balazs Galambosi is used to make the page scroll rather than jump when moving to another section of the site. Using a combination of Daniel Eden's CSS effects library Animate.css and Matthieu Aussaguel's JavaScript WOW.js, certain objects move as the user scrolls down the site.

Text fields are included for the user to respond to exercises and questions. Before the user clicks inside the textarea, example answers are shown inside each box. The jQuery Placeholder plugin by Mathias Bynens makes the example text backwards compatible with older browsers. Behind the scenes, the user's answers are collected and processed by a PHP script called FPDF, written by Olivier Plathey. Once customized, the script collects, processes and outputs the answers as a downloadable PDF. Form buttons at the bottom of each section of the toolkit initiate the script. I also customized the output to provide a link back to the toolkit and to match the website's design.

Colors, fonts and other styles are defined using CSS. Infographics, icons and the main logo included in the site are my original work (except for The Conversion Prism) and were created using Adobe Illustrator. Stock images included throughout are from Pixabay or FirmBee and are licensed for free use. The four videos included in the website are embedded from and hosted by YouTube. All content that is not my own is sourced to its original owner.

Conclusion

As the reach of social media continues to expand, it will parallel the need for online reputation management. Individuals need to take control of their public image in order to prevent missed opportunities and to maximize the chances of finding employment. The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social Media fills a gap in self-guided online tutorials and is a crucial tool for job seekers to position themselves as leaders. By developing this toolkit and website, I have reached my goal of creating an engaging user experience and step-by-step guide that includes all necessary information for building an effective, branded online presence via social media.

Outside Evaluations

Evaluation by Eric Deckers

Erik Deckers is a published author, public speaker, expert blogger and newspaper columnist who writes on the topics of online marketing, social media and personal branding. He has co-authored *The Owned Media Doctrine*, *Branding Yourself: How to Use Social Media to Invent or Reinvent Yourself*, and *No-Bullshit Social Media: The All-Business, No-Hype Guide to Social Media Marketing*. Deckers has blogged since 1997, and is the owner and president of Pro Blog Service, an agency that specializes in writing blog posts and other marketing content for businesses. His column "Laughing Stalk" is published in 10 Indiana newspapers on a weekly basis.

I first heard of Erik Deckers while researching social media and personal branding. His highly rated book, *Branding Yourself; How to Use Social Media to Invent or Reinvent Yourself*, has been a great resource while building The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social Media. His expertise in both personal branding and social media marketing makes him the ideal candidate to evaluate the project.

Evaluation. Heather Fullenkamp's ThePersonalBrandingToolkit.com (TPBT) is a thorough look at what it takes to establish an online personal brand that can be completed in just a few hours. It guides users through the necessary steps to figure out their personal brand, and how they want to present themselves to the job-seeking world.

I enjoyed the simple theme, the colors, and the friendly, smiling stick figure avatar. It made me think this would be fun, or at least not threatening and stressful. Other "find your skills" sites tend to be stuffy, unenjoyable, and even stressful.

I also liked that this was on a single web page. For one thing, that makes for easy reading on any device. For another, users can save it to Evernote or other note-taking apps, and read it later.

I appreciated the warnings that HR managers and hiring managers will consider social media profiles in their hiring decisions. This is an important fact most college students don't realize, and don't understand why they're not landing the jobs they want.

Section 4 on outlining goals and objectives was one I wish we had included in Branding Yourself. It can help users break down the steps necessary to make people realize their Brand Identity, which they completed in Section 2.

While TPBT is a long read, it's still shorter than an entire book. For one thing, it assumes that the reader is already familiar with social media. It's a fairly safe assumption, since the site is only accessible online. Presumably someone who is a) familiar with computers, b) familiar with the Internet, and c) can find their way to the TPBT website, will have heard about social media. So the site was significantly (and gratefully) shortened by skipping "what is social media?" and in-depth explanations of how LinkedIn works.

People who worry the site and activities are too long probably don't have the patience to put the work into finding their ideal job. But for those who do, their patience and work ethic will pay off. It would be interesting to see what kinds of results people see in the year or two after completing the entire TPBT exercise.

Changes/Recommendations. These changes aren't really errors, but rather, are ways to beef up TPBT and make it even more robust. As it's used now, TPBT is an excellent resource. These are only "things I'd like to see," not "things that were done wrong."

1) If I were to add anything, it would be a section on "Who should I meet?" The section would show people how to use LinkedIn to identify potential real-world networking connections, as well as teach how to request informational interviews with professionals in the user's field. It would also include questions/text boxes where users can fill out either the names of likely connections or the kinds of job titles they should search for on LinkedIn.

However, it seems like TPBT should be self-contained and not take people outside the site to complete the work. (For that reason alone, I can see TPBT.com being turned into an interactive e-book that users can download and read/complete on their tablet or mobile phone.)

2) I would also like to see a way to summarize all the answers given so the user can refer back to them later, either as a one-sheet PDF or a results page. This way, users can even go back and change answers ads they need it. (However, doing that on the site would require a lot of server space, login and security features, etc. This is where having it as an ebook would solve those issues.)

3) Finally, consider adding Talkwalker.com alerts to Step 11, Find Other Content. This is a way to receive email alerts whenever a keyword or phrase — including a person's name — is used online.

Overall, I enjoyed ThePersonalBrandingToolkit.com and it's something I am happy to recommend to others looking for additional information on finding their personal niche, delving into it, and making a living doing something they love.

Response. Erik's first recommendation for the project is to add another section on identifying connections for professional networking. Networking is certainly tied to personal branding, so I think it's important to include it somewhere in the toolkit, however I currently don't have the time to build another section. Also, I consider networking to be part of the process

of building new content – which is already outlined in Section 5. For this reason, I will include the most important rule of networking (as outlined in Erik's book *Branding Yourself*, page 265) into the final section of the toolkit.

I followed up with Erik on his second suggestion to include a way for the user to download their entries for the various exercises, because this functionality was already built into the toolkit. He replied that he hadn't tried to download his answers, so he didn't realize that it was already a capability.

Until Erik suggested it, I was unfamiliar with Talkwalker Alerts from www.talkwalker.com. I will test out the service to see if it's a good fit for The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social Media. If it is, I will include it in Step 11.

Evaluation by Vicki Krueger

Vicki Krueger is the director of interactive learning at the Poynter Institute's News University, a leading online training resource for journalists that offers a collection of more than 400 courses. In addition to managing the development of new material, she has also authored a self-guided course on grammar and AP Style. A graduate of Northwestern University, Vicki has more than two decades of experience in news writing and copyediting at the Poynter Institute, the Tampa Bay Times and the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette.

I was introduced to Vicki through a colleague who formerly worked at the Poynter Institute. Based on Vicki's extensive background in e-learning, her evaluation of The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social Media offers a unique viewpoint of the project as an educational tool.

Evaluation. Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. I found it to be engaging and informative. It addressed key concepts in a professional way, while maintaining an approachable voice and tone. It was a pleasure to review the Personal Branding Toolkit.

Here are key points in this feedback. The Personal Branding Toolkit offers engaging information in a clean, easily navigable site. I felt easily drawn in by the value proposition of the project and the two forms of navigation. And the index at the bottom of the site is a nice touch.

The direct address and clear language of the site made it approachable and not overwhelming. I found it easy to read, watch, learn and apply—using so many of the tools available through the Web.

Site design is clean and simple. Visual tone was engaging through the graphics and drawings.

I enjoyed the use of graphics to convey information, as well as break up the text. They are clearly part of the instruction of the project and not simply included as "eye candy." I found the initial zooming in of the graphics as a distraction, but that is a personal preference. Others may find it engaging.

While the stock images could have been gratuitous, the addition of the captions to convey additional information gave them teaching value. It was a wise instructional choice, as well as creating additional engagement with the user.

The other interactive elements, video and text workbook, are used wisely. The lighting in the Simon Middleton video was poor, but his content was valuable to the course.

The site loadly a little slowly on my phone. But the overall mobile presentation was also clean with good information hierarchy.

This project does a sound explaining concepts and best practices. It's easy to merely list do's and don'ts or describe tools. This project sees the strategic purpose of those tools and process and presents it in an interactive, engaging format. It uses a variety of sources, rather than relying on one or two "experts."

As I read the project, it appears initially to be geared to students about to enter the workforce or those new to the workforce. I believe many of the sections of this course also relate to those already in professional fields, and, therefore, the project would have appeal and value to them. There are a couple of examples of the project addressing that broader audience ("No matter what stage of personal branding you find yourself in…"). I believe the project could be even stronger if the value to mid-career professionals were articulated earlier.

There are some small usability issues. Section 3, Step 6: Scroll bar at the bottom of the social media platforms works, but I couldn't get the arrows above the activity to work. Section 1; Section 4, Step 9; and Section 5, Step 12: Video description needs to align with video on the page.

I love the inclusion of the interactive workbook to apply the concepts of the toolkit. It's user friendly, with the ability to enter text, save it and print it out. It's a nice detail to have the PDF with the project branding and the link to the project at the top of the PDF.

In Section 3, I would like to see the social media platforms aligned more closely to the goals and tactics that the user identifies in Section 2. If the user is going to blog, but then talks about using Pinterest or Instagram, it requires the users to review the goals and tactics. Rather than one question ("List the social media platforms that you think would help your brand…") there should be a series of questions. The workbook functionality is perfect for this.

One trick with this project would be to keep the numbers and platforms updated so it has a sustainable audience and interest. SnapChat, for example, is not included here, but could be a possible addition.

One small editorial note: In the introduction about the value of personal brand, it would be good to include that a deeper discussion of how to review and clean your brand will be covered later in the project.

There are many personal branding sites, books, articles, etc., available. I like the accessibility and ease of use of this project. This project's contribution to the field is in its accessibility and the ability of users to create their own brand as they work through the content. It gives usable, practical takeaways that would be highly valuable.

The research seems robust and the topic is a good distillation of many key concepts: personal branding, strategic thinking, social media marketing, design and writing.

One note: The writing has the voice of a capstone project because of the references which may be essential for a classroom project. I can see that with modest rewrite, it would be appealing to a wider audience. It is a great foundation for a tool that would be of benefit to a public audience.

This project was a delight. It was informative, engaging, entertaining and gave key takeaways that are the hallmarks of effective teaching and learning.

Response. Vicki listed some usability issues that I will address. To make the site load faster on all devices, including mobile, I will implement the CloudFlare content delivery network and set up page caching. I will also install a new piece of JavaScript, FlexSlider by WooThemes, to provide arrows that horizontally scroll the infographics in Step 6. I will also consider

rearranging the page content so that the video descriptions better align with the embedded

videos.

Many of Vicki's suggestions were tied to the flow of content from one section to another.

Some changes will be easy to make and will help the user better understand the toolkit's purpose.

For example, in Section 1, I will point out the value of the toolkit to all career professionals and

mention that later sections will discuss reviewing and cleaning an existing online presence. She

also suggested making a connection between the social media platforms chosen in Step 6 and the

goals set in Step 4. To address this, I will ask the user to evaluate whether the social platforms

chosen are a good choice for reaching their goals.

As Vicki noted, future updates to statistics, top platforms and demographics will be vital

for the continued usefulness of the toolkit. Another future consideration is revising the overall

voice to appeal to a wider audience.

Evaluation by Kristen Uhl Hulse

Kristen Uhl Hulse is an attorney, recruiter and career counselor who has authored many

articles on professional development and appropriate online behavior. Currently at Coblentz

Patch Duffy & Bass LLP, she has also worked with Georgetown University Law Center,

Columbia Law School and University of California, Berkeley, advising law students in career

development. For Georgetown Law, Kristen authored A Guide to E-Professionalism for

Attorneys: Five Steps to Create and Maintain a Professional Online Persona.

Kristen's expertise in professional behavior and online presence as is applies to a delicate

profession, law, makes her a great candidate to review The Personal Branding Toolkit for Social

Media. Her feedback on the project provides insight into the toolkit's usefulness as a career

advancement and professional development tool.

Evaluation. Clearly a lot of time, thought, and research has gone into your project. I think it has the potential to be very useful across a variety of industry sectors and age groups. From my perspective, the topic is appropriate for a graduate capstone project and I believe it contributes positively to the field of personal branding.

You have provided a great deal of valuable content – its breadth is appropriate and useful. In particular, your data and statistics all seem relevant and relatively current (although I will note that they'll likely need updating, as privacy policies and user numbers change frequently). The graphics you have selected are eye-catching and impactful, yet they do not detract from your written content. Within the Toolkit, your questions are probing and thoughtful and not at all obvious – which I think adds value. These aren't topics of reflection that would naturally occur to someone conducting his or her own self-assessment, and this will lead to a higher-level end product.

Suggestions about your content. You might want to add an introductory paragraph about personal branding – what does it mean, and how does your online presence factor in to your personal branding? Although it may be intuitive, I didn't see a lot of connection between the concept of personal branding and your online presence.

I also think you could make it clearer up front about how the Toolkit can helpful whether you're job-seeking or not. In some portions of the site, the main focus seems to be about job-seeking, but you don't clearly articulate that at the beginning. To that end, you might even brand your product "An Essential Tool for Job-Seekers" or something like that. (That is if you wish to emphasize the importance of personal branding and online reputation management when job-seeking.)

I would suggest that the diligence and clean up stage (Section 4) should come before actively building your online persona (i.e., the Toolkit). It's a fundamental step and one that may serve as a good introduction for thinking about how you wish to present yourself online. The clean-up advice itself is very helpful.

Suggestions about your format. Should you wish for your Toolkit to become more commercial, I would suggest breaking your content out over multiple web pages (including an option to produce a standalone page for the Toolkit itself). Currently, your one page prints out at 42 pages in length. It would be more user-friendly to be able to isolate the Toolkit questions and make them more portable.

Regardless, I would suggest that you draw a clearer break between the background information and the active Toolkit starting in Section 1 – perhaps through a transition paragraph. "Now that you have some background and reasons why this should matter to you, we'll guide you through steps that you can follow to build your own roadmap for personal branding. Each step gives you the opportunity to complete questions that will form the basis for your customized report." Then you could link to a separate page where the Toolkit is contained.

I would also suggest clearer instructions on how to fill out the boxes within the Toolkit. Maybe even a simple ("Type your responses here. Examples include …") within each box, as it wasn't immediately obvious to me that I could even type in those boxes (even though the text leading up to the boxes gave that instruction).

I have not seen a Toolkit like this before and I think it provides a meaningful opportunity for job-seekers to consider their online presence and strategize on building a personal brand. Good job!

Response. Many of Kristen's recommendations, similar to Vicki's, are related to the flow of content between sections. For example, pointing out the value of the toolkit to all career professionals – not only job seekers – near the beginning would be beneficial. Additionally, Kristen advised making a clearer break after the introduction section and also further elaborating on the importance of personal branding. I will review the section to further outline these topics and make a better transition into Section 1.

She also suggested rearranging the content to place Section 4: Clean Up Existing Content at the top. I feel strongly that determining your personal brand should be the first step in the process, followed by goal setting. Because the user's identity is intrinsic, these core values should be determined at the beginning of the process. Also, as Section 2 states, "Having a defined strategy for your online presence keeps your efforts focused and purposeful." Cleaning an existing presence is a vital section, but I think it is better served later in the toolkit.

For the overall function, Kristen had two main suggestions. The first was to consider dividing the content over multiple pages, rather than including it all on a single page. In addition to being a personal preference, the one-page website structure is also necessary for the toolkit to function. The FPDF script used to output the user's answers draws the data from the first (and only) page of the site. Splitting the toolkit across multiple pages would require either a different, more complicated way of handling the data or outputting multiple PDFs. The second suggestion about functionality was that some users might not realize that they can type their answers into the text boxes. I will make this clearer in the first step by including a direct call to action.

Revisions from Evaluators

Revisions Made

In the evaluations above, Erik Deckers, Vicki Krueger and Kristen Uhl Hulse suggested some changes and additions that would positively strengthen the toolkit. I made the following alterations in response to this feedback. First, I used the CloudFlare content delivery network and page caching to increase the website's loading time. I installed FlexSlider, JavaScript by WooThemes that horizontally scrolls the infographics and provides working arrows in Step 6. I moved the video descriptions directly beneath the videos to help with alignment when the design responds to screen size.

Several revisions required the addition of content or sources. I included a transition paragraph between the Introduction and Section 1 that outlines all sections of the toolkit and who it aims to serve. I also added a call to action for the user to enter their answers into the text boxes and download the responses. After slightly rewording the instructions in Step 6, the user is now prompted to reevaluate his or her answers if they aren't aligned with the goals set in Step 4. In Step 11, I added Talkwalker Alerts from www.talkwalker.com as an alternative search tracker. In Step 12, I included a section on networking by helping others, derived from *Branding Yourself*, page 265.

Future Revisions

Due to time constraints, I was unable to make two revisions that I will consider in the future – the addition of a dedicated section on networking and revising the overall academic voice to appeal to a wider audience. In the future, I also plan to update statistics, platforms and demographics to keep the toolkit relevant and timely.

Works Cited

Arruda, W. (2015). 10 crucial questions for defining your personal brand. *Forbes*. Retrieved from www.forbes.com.

Bolsinger, K. (2014). The beginner's guide to social media. *Moz*. Retrieved from http://moz.com.

Bullhorn Reach U.S. social recruiting report: LinkedIn is #1 social site for jobs with 77 percent of opening posted there; Twitter ahead of Facebook. (2012, June 5). *Bullhorn Reach*. Retrieved from www.bullhornreach.com.

Career counselor's guide to social media in the job search. (n.d.). *National Association of Colleges and Employers*. Retrieved August, 2015 from www.naceweb.org.

Deckers, E., & Lacy, K. (2013). *Branding yourself: How to use social media to invent or reinvent yourself* (Second edition). Indianapolis, IN: Que.

Duggan, M., Ellison, N.B., Lampe, C., Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2015, January 9). Social media update 2014. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from www.pewinternet.org.

Hulse, K. U. (2010, May 5). A guide to e-professionalism for attorneys. *Georgetown University Law Center*. Retrieved from www.law.georgetown.edu.

Job search and networking: Personal branding 101. (n.d). *Goodwill Community Foundation*. Retrieved August, 2015 from www.gcflearnfree.org.

Kasper, K. (2012, June 19). Social job seeker survey 2012. *Jobvite*. Retrieved from www.jobvite.com.

LePage, E. (2015, May 21). A brand of one: On social media branding for professionals. *Hootsuite*. Retrieved from http://blog.hootsuite.com.

Levit, A. (2010). Jobstart101: Smart tips and real-world training. Retrieved from www.jobstart101.com.

Patel, N., & Agius, A. (2014). The complete guide to building your personal brand. *Quick Sprout*. Retrieved from www.quicksprout.com.

Parmar, B. (2011, January 23). Should you check Facebook before hiring?. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from www.thewashingtonpost.com.

Peters, T. (1997, August/September). The brand called you. *Fast Company*.

Ricker, S. (2014, July 18). Personal branding and your job search. *CareerBuilder*. Retrieved from http://advice.careerbuilder.com.

Schawbel, D. (n.d.). *Personal Branding Blog*. Retrieved August, 2015 from
    www.personalbrandingblog.com.

State of the media: The social media report 2012. (2012, December 4). *Nielsen*. Retrieved from
    www.nielsen.com.

The ultimate reputation guide for job seekers. (n.d.). *Online Reputation Management*. Retrieved
    August, 2015 from www.reputationmanagement.com.

U.S. college graduates who post inappropriate photos online are 84 percent less likely to get job
    interviews. (2012, December 12). *Business Wire*. Retrieved from
    www.businesswire.com.

Using social media in your job search. (2010, September 22). *Dartmouth Graduate Studies*.
    Retrieved August, 2015 from http://graduate.dartmouth.edu.