

Being digital

My digital identity: making a good impression online

1: Introduction

Do you use social networking sites to talk to friends online and share photos or videos?

Have you ever considered what image you are projecting when you communicate online?

This activity introduces you to some of the factors which contribute to your online reputation, and how to project the image you would wish.

Learning outcome

By the end of this activity you should be aware of who your audience is when posting in online spaces.

2: Who's reading my posts?

If you are a keen Facebook user you may have many online contacts from different walks of life and be used to sharing different kinds of information quite freely.

We're going to look at some of the ways people use social media to communicate with others. We're also going to think about who might be reading your posts.

Let's say you are friends with the following people:

- your aunt in Australia
- your school and college friends
- workmates
- people who share the same hobby as you.

Read the messages for each situation below, and think about which of the above people you would be happy to share that information with.

Holiday

What's on your mind? "Had a great time in Tenerife - can't say I missed anyone at work"

Hobbies

What's on your mind? "Just been to my weekly 70s disco dancing class. Love dressing up in pink sequins and glittery make-up"

Last night

What's on your mind? "Can't remember much about last night!!!"

Career

What's on your mind? "I'm planning to apply for promotion at work - really want to get ahead"

3: What are the implications?

Now read about the types of reactions you could receive from the information you share.

My school and college friends

Your friends may be interested in some of what you share.

However, think carefully about how much contact you have with them other than through social networking sites.

Remember how you feel when you get those 'round robin' newsletters at Christmas. How much do they really want to know?

My aunt in Australia

Your aunt may be thrilled to see the photos of where you went on holiday, interested in your career plans, bemused by your hobby of 70s disco dancing, and not that happy about your Saturday-night exploits.

Employer

Employers are increasingly looking at the online presence of both prospective and existing employees. In some cases job applicants have been asked to provide their log-on details for Facebook in order for prospective employers to check that people's online profile will not compromise the company's reputation in any way. Also, you may not always want your current employer to know that you are applying for a new job. In either case, employers are unlikely to be impressed by pictures or videos of your wild social life.

People who share my hobbies

People who share your hobby of 70s disco dancing may be very interested in relevant posts and photos, but less eager to know about other parts of your life.

My workmates

Your work colleagues may like to hear about what you did on holiday, but inappropriate comments or too much information about your private life could cause you to lose respect in the workplace. You may also want to be discerning when sharing work-related information in case it is sensitive in any way.

4: Keeping control of your online reputation

Your online reputation is formed not only by what you put online yourself, but by other people's responses to your posts and by comments they make about you in other places. People may also choose to tag you in their photographs. If you are not careful, this can create an unfortunate impression in situations where it matters, such as getting and keeping a job, or staying the right side of the law.

Your online presence can last long after you have forgotten the events in question. This is known as your digital footprint. Keep in mind that:

- your potential audience may be far bigger than you think
- once information about you is out there on the web it stays there.

Next steps

Think about your own online identity. Are there changes you want to make? For example, tightening the privacy settings on your Facebook account, or taking down photographs which do not portray you in the best light?

Further reading

[Landau, P. \(2012\) The anti-social network: why Facebook abuse is a matter for employers](#)

[BBC \(2012\) Checking you out online](#)

References

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