What’s Your Brand? Teaching Students to Leverage Social Media to Launch their Careers

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**Background:**

Today’s students are digital natives and should be introduced to professional practices to leverage these platforms for career enhancement. Since 2012, Himmelfarb librarians have coordinated an instructional session for students designed to raise awareness of e-professionalism as they transition to the role of healthcare professionals.¹

**Evolution of the instructional session:**

**2012**
- January, first year medical students (MS1)
- Large group format; focus on raising awareness
- Expert panel
- Reflection paper assignment
- Incorporated student-submitted examples, active learning

**2013-2014**
- August or September, MS1 students
- Same structure and format as 2012
- Part of Professional Development curricular theme in new systems-based curriculum

**2015**
- Combined MS1 and PA student interprofessional session
- Small groups rather than large group format
- Medical residents and librarians as co-facilitators
- Same content structure as in earlier sessions

**2016**
- MS1 session returned to large group format
- Spinoffs: Virginia campus interprofessional session for pre-med undergrads, nursing students (BSN), and pharmacy students
- Physical Therapy (PT) graduating students with focus on creating a professional social media presence

**Session Format:**

- 1.5 hour session
- Attended by 45 PT students as part of their capstone coursework
- Short segment on raising awareness via real-life examples
- Expert panel discussion
- Audience question and answer

**Developing a similar session:**

**Start early**

We began planning with the PT Capstone director five months before the session.

**Select your panelists carefully**

We found individuals whose experience would resonate with PT graduating students who would soon be looking for a professional position.

**Aim for diversity**

Our panelists offered a variety of perspectives: student, faculty, employer

**Our panelists**

- Physical therapy faculty, health sciences faculty, PT program graduate, fourth year medical student, and a media relations staff who supports our health sciences programs

**Share experiences**

Encourage panelists to discuss different social media platforms they use, share anecdotes on professional opportunities and networking on social media

**Discussion: Social Media Action Plan**

- Create a profile on LinkedIn
- Identify leaders in fields of interest and follow them on Twitter
- Reach out via social media to find collaborators for research, writing for publication, or even job prospects
- Encourage students to think about their professional strengths and how that translates into an online identity
- Read blogs by professionals in the field
- Develop a ResearchGate page and OrCiD profile, and link to published articles
- Use strengths to create individual brand used across platforms

**Keys to leveraging social media:**

- Awareness of current social media presence
- Knowledge of available professional social media platforms
- Time to manage and grow professional social media presence

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¹ Alexandra W. Gomes, Gisela Butera, Katherine C. Christen & Terry Kind (2017). The Development and Impact of a Social Media and Professionalism Course for Medical Students, Teaching and Learning in Medicine, DOI: 10.1080/10401334.2016.1275971

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"I wanted to say thank you so very much for all the work you put into today’s session. It truly hit the mark!! I loved your examples and I think you asked some provocative questions to get the students thinking. The panel also provided some nice insights. Overall, a great success!"

- Capstone Director

"A quick survey after the class showed that the students clearly valued and learned from your presentation as well."

- Capstone Director