



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 9 to 12
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Duration:	2 - 3 hours

Your Online Resume



This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

In this lesson, students learn that their online presence is like a resume that can help them – or hurt them – in their future personal and professional lives. The lesson begins by having students do a self-appraisal of their online resume. Students will review steps for limiting the negative impact of things they've posted online. Students then think about people whom they consider to be heroes or role models, identify the characteristics that make them admire these people, and discuss what those people did in order to be seen so positively. Finally, students learn tools and strategies for consciously building a *positive* online brand and develop a communications plan for doing so.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

Know: Students will learn the following essential domain knowledge:

- Privacy and security: Strategies for managing online reputation.

Understand: Students will learn the following key concepts/big ideas:

- Digital media have unanticipated audiences: The things we share online can be seen by people other than their intended audiences.

Do: Students will *use* tools to build a positive online brand, *understand* how the things we post online can create a positive or negative image of us, and *engage* with their self-conception and the impression they want to give others.

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the following handouts:

- *Your Online Resume*
- *Building Online Your Brand*
- *Online Communications Plan Assignment Sheet*



Procedure

Your Online Resume

Before you begin this lesson, distribute the handout *Your Online Resume* and go through the instructions with the class. Have them complete the handout for homework.

Begin by asking the class if any of them were surprised by what they found. (Don't push them to share specifics, but allow them to do so as long as they're appropriate for class.) If no students found anything surprising, you can share the following anecdotes:

- A student found a social network account in his name that he hadn't created.
- A student found a photo of her that had been given a caption suggesting she was drinking underage.
- A student got in trouble because he was tagged in a photo his friend took of his first time driving because he wasn't allowed to be a passenger in a car without an adult present.
- A student lost a job because her employer saw she had posted obscene quotes from a TV show on her Facebook page.
- A student found a photo of her that was being used, without her permission, in an ad.

Now ask the class if they've ever taken steps to *control online audiences* – in other words, to make sure that something they posted was only seen by *some* of the people they know online (by some friends but not others, for example, or by friends but not by parents). Ask them to volunteer tools and tactics that they use for this.

Make sure the following are mentioned:

- Controlling contacts (deciding who can Friend or Follow you) Point out that different social networks have different defaults for who can see your content: for example, on Instagram you have to choose to Friend someone before they can see what you post, but on TikTok you have to choose to block them if you **don't** want them to see what you post. Also make sure they know that privacy settings don't necessarily apply to **all** your content – for example, the student mentioned above who lost her job had posted the quotes in comments on her cover photo, which was visible to anyone with a Facebook account.
- Using different social media for different groups (Instagram for friends and Facebook for family, for example)
- Using privacy settings (blocking some of your friends from seeing a particular post, for example)
- Talking in code that some people you know will understand and others won't
- Using anonymous/pseudonymous accounts

Now ask: Would you change what you do/say/post online if you had no power to control who saw it (no privacy tools, etc.)? Why or why not? Let students discuss this for a short time without requiring a consensus.

Ask students to suggest ways that the wrong people could see your material, even if you control the audience using the strategies and tools mentioned earlier. Students can contribute either *ways* that this could happen or specific *anecdotes* about this happening; though in the latter case they shouldn't mention names of anyone but themselves.



Make sure to mention:

- Your friends who do have access might share your content
- Content can be moved from one platform to another (a TikTok video could be posted to YouTube, for example)
- Content you posted before you were “savvy” can come back to haunt you
- Anonymous/pseudonymous accounts can be tracked back to you (“doxxing”)

Review the “Cleaning Up” section of the *Your Online Resume* handout with the class.

Role Models

Tell the class that while there are ways to avoid creating a *negative* reputation and to *repair* it, it’s also important to actively work to create a *positive* reputation online. After all, when we create a resume to apply for a job, we don’t just avoid writing reasons why we’d be bad at the job – we write why we’d be *good* at it. Now students will do an exercise that helps them think about what good qualities they want their online resume to communicate.

Have students make a list of people they admire. These can be from any source (history, social media, celebrities, etc.). Make a list on the board and identify the *top four* people suggested by the most students.

Break students into 4 groups. Set up four “stations” with a section of the blackboard, a page of newsprint, or an Internet-connected computer with a word cloud tool such as [WordCloud](#) or [TagCrowd](#) open. Have each group start by going to one of the stations and writing one of the names from the list on the blackboard or newsprint. Each student should come up with *one word to describe that person* (encourage them to use specific words, like “brave” or “smart,” rather than vague words like “cool”) and write it down on the board or newsprint or enter it into the word cloud generator. Then have groups rotate to another station and do the same thing, and repeat this until all groups have been to all stations.

If you are using a word cloud generator, you can then have the groups go to the stations again briefly to see the resulting word cloud. If you used newsprint or the blackboard, have the final group compile the descriptive words and create their own *word cloud* for each person: write the words that were mentioned most often in the biggest letters, the next most often mentioned ones in somewhat smaller letters, and so on.

Now return to the full class and ask students to think about *why* they described these persons in that way. What is it about what the person does (or did), or *how* they do it, that created this impression?

Building Your Online Brand

Ask students:

If you could pick *three words* that people would use to describe you, what would those be? (Make sure students understand that these should be about who they are as people, not physical characteristics – so “athletic” is fine, but “strong” is not; “fashionable” is fine, but “pretty” is not.)

Distribute the handout *Building Your Online Brand* and have students read it and answer the questions. Then have them pair up with another student to share and compare their answers. Return to full class discussion and have students name all of the social networks that they listed and write them as headings on the board. Then collect the tools that students identified for each one under those headings.



Assessment/Evaluation: Online Communications Plan

Distribute the handout *Communications Plan Assignment Sheet* and have students follow the instructions. If they need help identifying three audiences who might see their content online, provide these suggestions:

- friends
- close family (parents, siblings, aunts/uncles/grandparents they see often)
- more distant family
- teachers and school administrators/university or college admissions officers
- current employer or possible future employers
- current or future professional colleagues (if they're active in an interest community, such as sports, gaming, art or fan fiction)



Your Online Resume

How people see you online is a lot like a resume you create to apply for a job. For a lot of people, it's the first – and sometimes the last – impression you make. A lot of the time, it's a real part of your resume, too. More than a third of university admissions officers look at applicants' social media pages and two thirds of employers do. (Under Canadian law employers are *not* allowed to make you give them access to your social networks, but they can access any public content.)

Here are some examples of things that employers look for in social media profiles:

- community participation, charitable service
- athletic accomplishments – lending credit to traits like perseverance and commitment
- giving back to their community
- articulate, professional and tastefully creative content
- thoughtful posting of articles
- kindness, compassion towards humanity issues

And some that employers *don't* want to see:

- negative comments about previous employers
- suggestive photos easily visible on Facebook. Not the image we want for our company
- a young man who had presented himself as very clean cut and well-mannered, had pictures of himself and his friends engaged in a fistfight with another group of individuals
- sexist postings objectifying women
- very angry face on the profile picture
- inappropriate posts that are opinionated and ill-informed

(Source: Bromstein, Elizabeth. "The Social Media Posts Canadian Employers Say Swayed Them For or Against Hiring a Candidate," *Workopolis*. April 9, 2015. <<http://www.workopolis.com/content/advice/article/the-social-media-posts-canadian-employers-say-swayed-them-for-or-against-hiring-a-candidate/>>)

So how do you find out what your online resume says about you?

A good place to start is to use a search engine to see what information about you is easily available. You can start by searching for your name – but don't stop there, especially if your name is a fairly common one. Think about what search terms someone else would use if they were looking for information about you. Would they use a nickname? Your middle names or initials? A likely misspelling of your name? Maybe they might add your hometown, or your school, or where you work, or some of your hobbies.

Don't forget to do an image search as well (most search engines have an "Images" tab at the top of the search results page). How far do you have to scroll before you find pictures of you? What do the pictures of you show? Are there any pictures of anyone else who could be confused with you?

Do the same thing with any social networks where you have an account. There may have been a spoof account created with your name, or someone with a similar name whom people are likely to confuse with you.



Things that can affect your reputation:

- what you post on social media
- comments you leave on other people's social media pages
- how you behave in online games
- things by or about you that are posted or shared by other people

It's important to press the pause button and take a second to think before you post anything online. Ask yourself:

- Is this how I want people to see me?
- Could somebody use this to hurt me? Would I be upset if they shared it with others?
- What's the *worst* thing that could happen if I shared this? (For example: my parents might ground me, my friends might get mad at me, I might look silly.)

Cleaning Up

Most social networks – like Facebook – have settings to control who sees what you post. Many of them also let you set privacy settings for individual posts, so that only the people you want to can see it. It's a good idea to stay up to date with Facebook privacy settings because they change all the time.

If you're tagged in a photo you don't like, most social networks will let you remove the tag. If you don't want the photo to be up at all, ask the person who posted it to take it down – this usually works!

If that doesn't work, you can find out which ISP hosts the site and ask them to take it down. ISPs will usually only do this if the material is *defamatory* (it is untrue and hurts your reputation), if it's hate material or if what the site is doing could reasonably be called cyberbullying.

Don't forget to think about the effect you have on other people's resumes, too. Always ask *before* sharing or tagging anyone in a photo – even if it's a good one – because you never know how they're going to feel about it.

Instructions

1. Do a search engine search for yourself, following the steps above. What did you find? Is it what you wanted to find? Why or why not?
2. Do an image search on your name. What did you find? Is it what you wanted to find? Why or why not?
3. Do a search for yourself on any social networks that you or your friends use (even if you don't have an account there.)
4. Find the most embarrassing photo that you've ever posted and upload it to TinEye.com. (Don't worry, they don't keep copies of your photos.) This is a reverse image search that will show you where on the web any image has appeared. Has your photo appeared anywhere you didn't know about?



Building Your Online Brand

Out with the bad, in with the good

If there are things about you online that you don't like – or if searching for information about you leads to information about someone *e/se* that you don't think makes you look good – then you need to make sure that there's enough positive material about you online to drown it out.

Blogging, posting videos, commenting, leaving online reviews – anything that leaves a mark online is good so long as it sends the message you want. Make sure to share activities that paint you in a positive light: post about the times you do volunteer work, play sports or do other activities. Don't worry that everything you do has to make you look good; so long as it doesn't make you look *bad*, it's building your online presence and flooding out any bad stuff that may be out there.

If there's another person online that people are mixing up with you, think about using a variation on your name. For instance, if there's another John Smith who got caught selling fake Stanley Cup tickets, you may decide to go by Johnny Smith or John Q. Smith instead of trying to tell people you're not him.

You can also create custom accounts on your social networks just for employers and college or university admissions – but make sure to do it at least a year before you're going to need it, so that it looks “lived in.”

Build a base

An important step in building your brand is to have a *home base* online. This could be a website or a blog. What matters is that it's a place where *you* control your message and where everything you do online links back to. Why is that important? Because a lot of search engines count links when they're doing a search, so the more you link back to your home base, the higher it will rank in any search for you.

Type your name into the searchbar and see what other search terms are suggested. (If possible, do this on a computer that you don't normally use.)

Also, you can try putting "yourname".com (or .ca) into the address bar and see if anyone else has registered that site. (In other words, if your name is “John Smith”, who owns www.johnsmith.com ?) If someone does, what's there? If nobody does, how much would it cost for you to register it?

You can have a “home base” picture, too: that's a picture of yourself that you like (if you don't want to use a real picture, there are lots of places online where you can create a cartoon version of yourself) that you use anytime you're asked for a picture online – social networks, commenting systems, and so on. Having a single picture that you use everywhere helps to build your identity online. Make sure that the filename of the photo includes your name: that will make it more discoverable to search engines.

Building Your Online Brand Exercise

1. Pick one social network that you could use as your home base. (For this exercise, we're using the term “social network” to mean any place online where you publish content. So while it can mean places like Facebook or Twitter, it can also mean a blog, an account on an image-sharing site, and so on.)
2. Think of *three* different tools or methods for building a *positive* impression of yourself on that social network.



Assignment Sheet: Online Communications Plan

For this assignment, you will be creating a *communications plan* to take control of your online resume. To do this you will identify *three different audiences* who might see you online, think about how you want each one to see you, and make a plan for communicating that image.

1. What do you want your brand to be? List the three words that describe how you would like people to see you:
 - a)

 - b)

 - c)

2. Identify *three audiences* who might see your content online.
 - a)

 - b)

 - c)

3. For each of these audiences, answer the following questions on separate paper:
 - a) **Platform.** How do you reach this audience online?

 - b) **Message.** How do you want this audience to see you? Which aspect(s) of your brand are most important to communicate to this audience?

 - c) **Tools.** What tools can you use to communicate this? (Identify at least three. Draw on the list of tools for different social media developed in class.)

 - d) **Crisis management.** What do you need to *avoid doing* to *protect* this? What can I do if I make a bad impression on this audience?



e) **Metrics.** How will you know if you've been successful?

For example:

Audience: readers of my fan fiction

a. Archive of Our Own, Wattpad, TikTok

b. Creative, friendly, entertaining

c. Publish my stories on fan fic sites and on my blog. Comment positively on other people's stories. Use TikTok to let people know about new stories and to interact positively with other writers in the same field.

d. Make sure I know the rules of my fan fic community and don't break them. Don't get in public fights with other writers. If I do, I'll let things cool down for a few days before apologizing.

e. I'll know by how many people read, comment on and share my stories.

