

Student Hub Live Bootcamp - day 1 - Managing your Digital Presence

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KAREN FOLEY: Managing your digital presence is very, very important. And I'm joined now with Helen from the library, who's continuously telling me about how important it is to manage your digital identity and not give out your email address on Twitter and things like that. Helen, thank you so much for joining us.

Now the library are doing a series of sessions at these boot camps. And the one that we're going to talk about today is about managing your digital presence. And we've been talking about forums and connecting students.

And you would really like to talk about social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter and how to interact with students.

So we have a widget for you that we would like you to fill in now, which is which social networking sites do you use. So if you could select which ones you use. And we'll take a look at those. And you can tell us what you think of that, Helen.

So welcome. OK. So what do we mean then by this idea of a digital presence?

HELEN: OK. So you leave a digital footprint when you go online.

KAREN FOLEY: Like a cookie.

HELEN: Basically, yeah. And that can be, say somebody mentions you in a blog post or in a forum discussion. If you post photos of yourself online, if other people post photos of you, and then also you've got your social networking profiles if you have them, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter. So that's your presence. That's your footprint.

And you need to be aware of that, because potential clients, potential employers, they will Google you. So you need to curate that presence to make sure that it's how you want to present yourself to the world. So yes. So it's just being aware of that, I guess.

Yeah. And I would say that following on from what Georgina was talking about with the VLE and the module website and everything. If you do use Twitter and Facebook and would like to use them for study, then it's important, I think, to stress that these are optional extras. And it's not crucial. But it is nice to have.

If you feel that you don't want to engage in this way, or you might be overwhelmed, then stick to your module website and your module forums. And you'll get everything you need there.

But the fantastic thing about being online is that you can connect with people. You can connect with your fellow students. You can get fantastic information that will actually help you with your studies.

And also, going back to the employment theme as well, you can connect with clients. And you can connect with employers and move on in your career, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Well, we've asked people which social networking sites they use. Facebook is the most popular, as I think we would naturally expect, with 41% using that.

Do keep filling that in if you haven't already. You can just select the item that applies, and then press Enter. And the widget should return down.

LinkedIn is at 12%. LinkedIn is an increasingly commonly used device, as you say, for networking and connecting people. Can you tell us why that's important at the start of a journey?

HELEN: Well, I think putting together a professional CV, putting it online in that way, I think it's great because it can show your progress. So when you create that online CV, you're asked to list your skills or your knowledge. And then you connect with other people who have similar interests. And they can endorse your skills and your knowledge.

So for example, Karen, you might say, I'm experienced at delivering via live stream. And I could come along and I could endorse that and say, tick. Yes, Karen is.

But obviously as you continue your studies with the Open University, you're going to develop more skills. You're going to develop more knowledge. And you can add to that profile.

And then it's a fantastic way to showcase how you've developed as a professional via your OU studies. And then not only can employers and potential clients have a look at your profile on LinkedIn, you can have a look at theirs as well. So you can scope out if you're going for a job interview, you can see the profiles of people on the panel and see, well, is this a company I'd like to work for.

So yes. So LinkedIn is used, as you say, increasingly more in the job market.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's a good idea to get set up on that, get connected, so that you keep building those connections. And then when you're in a position you'll have lots of things already on the back burner then, I suppose.

HELEN: Yes. That's right. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: But Facebook is increasingly used by students as a way of connecting. And you mentioned this earlier. And as you say, Georgina and I were talking about this.

Now students can find these Facebook groups. And sometimes they can be really supportive. And sometimes they cannot be.

Is there anything that you'd like to sort of add to what Georgina was saying about that use of Facebook, because I appreciate that we really want to talk about how we use them in the library and using those various more academic, I guess, or more subject-specific sites as opposed to tutor group sites. But students do use those with varying degrees of effect for them.

HELEN: Yeah, they do. And I think there are some fantastic groups on Facebook. For example, there's the OU Dead Horse Group, which is brilliant, because it's run by experienced students. And they'll post questions and answers in one post. And it's a great way to, if you're feeling a little bit overwhelmed by the OU procedures and acronyms, then it will help you to maybe get up to speed with that.

I think sometimes we forget that being an OU student can be quite isolating. So if you're lacking any sort of motivation, or you're just feeling a bit down, want somebody to give you a bit of a boost, then it's a great way to just go onto a study skills Facebook group or something. And you'll have loads of students coming and saying, oh no. Don't give up. It's fantastic. Or I graduated last year. And it's well worth it. Keep going.

Because of course in a campus university, you get that by just going for a cup of coffee with your fellow students. Whereas we have to sometimes make the effort to build those communities when we're working online.

KAREN FOLEY: It's interesting. A lot of people are saying in the chat that they're worried about whether or not these OU - the Facebook groups at OU are genuine. And a lot of them are just set up by people as support networks, aren't they? So the OU don't actually run Facebook groups.

And some very good advice from a tutor out there, not to give personal information on Facebook. You can pick up and use, and you can come off them if they're not supportive. But they're not for everybody. But for some people, as you say, Helen, they are very supportive.

Another good thing to hear is that there's a lot of post being delivered. So I hear that a few postmen have very nearly been kissed. And there's a lot of excitement going on as some of the module materials have arrived. So do open those while you're watching Boot Camp. Don't let us stop you.

It is very exciting. And that's good to hear.

OK. So Helen, in addition to these various sort of supportive aspects, what is important in terms of keeping up-to-date with your subject in terms of social media and managing that digital presence?

HELEN: Yeah. It's a fantastic way to keep up-to-date with your subject, I think. So Twitter especially is very good for this. So I'm assuming that students who've chosen to study a module - I might be wrong - have an interest in that subject. And they want to keep up-to-date. They want to find out what's happening, any new publications.

Well, if you have a Twitter account, just follow a relevant organisation or a relevant person. And it's a great way to find out what's going on.

And also, I think using social media in this way helps with module choice, as well, because with a lot of subjects, you're asked to specialise at levels 2 and 3. And if you read around your subject, you can get an idea of what interests you. And that helps with module choice.

And also, at the higher levels you will be required to do some independent study. And this is a fantastic way to find out what's being published and any news in your subject area as well.

KAREN FOLEY: So I guess it's really immersing yourself then in the things that interest you, and just when you've got a few minutes spare and you can just flip through your Facebook feed. If you like the things that are going to sort of support that, then you can always go and find articles, et cetera.

HELEN: Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, so maybe spend a little bit of time finding out the key organisations and people to follow. So for example, as a history student, you might want to follow an academic or populist magazine like History Today, because they'll not only tweet about their upcoming articles and issues, they'll also re-tweet and link to stuff that's relevant to history.

And I also like the BBC Twitter feeds. They do Twitter really well. So they'll have Twitter feeds for their programme. So for example, In Our Time, with Melvyn Bragg on Radio 4, they have their own Twitter feed and podcast. And they'll advertise their upcoming programmes. But they'll also let you know about lots of other things to do with the topic they are discussing. So yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: One of the things I like about Facebook groups is that often they'll have suggested posts. So you'll like a few certain things. I like the Tate and the National Gallery, et cetera. And then all of a sudden you'll get suggested groups. And you can naturally build up a nice, organic array of things there to get up to speed with.

So those sort of things in terms of your subject are important. And as you say, you don't necessarily need to have them. But they're nice to know about just to support any knowledge, although you don't need to often do any reading. Especially not early days.

But in chance of employability, managing a digital presence, as you say, is important. Because people can check up on you, and they can see your feeds, et cetera.

So one piece of advice that I think you wanted to talk about was about separating identities. Why is that important?

HELEN: Well, I mean, it's not for everybody. Because we're all one person. We're not separate identities.

But what I do is I separate out my work - my professional identity - from my personal life. So I have two Facebook identities that I created with different email addresses.

So with the work one, that's where I respond to student queries on the OU library Facebook page. It's also where I log in to run the live Facebook chats that we do two or three times a year. And I do the same with Twitter, as well. I keep it separate from my personal life.

And that's because I can then control. For example, with Twitter, I can lock down my personal Twitter account. And so potential employers, they don't need to see that I live tweet Bake Off. It's not gonna do me any harm.

KAREN FOLEY: I thought it was going to be something else.

[LAUGHTER]

HELEN: But you know, it's perhaps not relevant to the people who follow me for librarian stuff.

KAREN FOLEY: No. But that's a really good point. For some of our students who are thinking about joining Facebook groups, in particular with all of these various issues around privacy settings, that might be a really nice idea so that their identity is to some extent protected. Especially when you've got often pictures of your animals and children and various things on your own Facebook page. You might not want other people having access to that, especially if you're joining a fairly large group.

HELEN: Yeah. Yeah. That's right. And that's a great way to do it is just to separate it out, decide that you're going to have just one account for OU study, and stick to that. And that can make your life a lot easier, I think.

And also there are some tools that can help you do this as well. So for example, there's a tool that you can use with Twitter called TweetDeck, where it's organised into columns. So for example, in one of my columns I have OU people. And all the tweets are from OU people. And then I have another separate column for university library Twitter accounts.

And it's just a quick way for me to quickly scan down, see what's happening out there, and then if there's anything I want to follow up on, then I can. So yeah. So think about having these separate accounts. Think about learning the tool, making it work for you.

But if you find that you're getting overwhelmed, then take a step back. Concentrate on the module website, the module forum, and then you'll be away.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Procrastination is one thing I know that people struggle with a lot when they're studying with the Open University. And this is obviously a very interesting way to go off on a wild goose chase of lots of interesting ideas. But as you say, it's important to be mindful that it's not always the right thing to do at that particular time. But it's nice to have on the back burner.

And I love your tip as well about making those two different accounts. I think that could really work for a lot of people.

HELEN: Yeah. I think that's a great idea. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, Helen, thank you so much for coming to join me today. Have we covered everything?

HELEN: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: I think we need to talk about that. And there's some resources on our website.

HELEN: There are. So we have a tool called Being Digital. There's a link to that from the Resources page. And if you go there you will find little bit-sized activities, so 5, 10 minutes long, where you can explore some of the topics we've covered.

So there's an activity on social networking, is it for me. Make the most of Twitter. Keeping up-to-date using online networking. That sort of thing. So you can delve a little bit more in-depth into what we discussed today.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well, thank you so much for joining me. And I'm sure our readers will take advantage of those resources, which are on the web page. So back on the Student Hub Live website. And you can find the resources for this and all of the other study skills sessions as well. So there will be lots of useful activities.

Well, Helen, thank you very much. You've sparked a conversation about cakes and Bake Off. So I shall let you bet on with your tweeting about such matters. Excellent. Sophie and HJ, how is it all going there aside from the obvious talk about cake?

SOPHIE: Well, that's sort of taking over just now. There's a lot of cake talk. It's making me very hungry. And we've also had a lot of study buddy pictures in, and quite a lot of cats. They appear to be quite good study buddies -

HJ: The popular ones, yeah.

SOPHIE: - by the looks of it, yeah. So there's been a lot of good suggestions for study tips. I know you've got a few.

HJ: Yes. I think one that I've really liked that Lorella said is she likes meditation as a study tip. So perhaps before a study session, if you're stressed out before an exam. So I really like that. So I'm going to pop Lorella's on our board as well.

SOPHIE: It's a good one, because it's only a quick a 10-minute meditation session.

HJ: I think Ann said, there's some meditation apps that you can get. So that's a good idea as well.

SOPHIE: Yes. Headspace I think is one of them. There's a few floating around.

HJ: So we'll look that up as well. I think Matthew came in with a really good point relating to online stuff and sessions as well, is that online stuff's great for making friends and support on modules and asking questions. But your tutor is always the main point of contact. And they'll know definitively what you need to do as well. So I think he's right on that point. It is good to keep in mind.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. Excellent. Well, I'm afraid we don't have a cake widget, popular as the battenburg and banana bread are. But I tell you what. We'll make one next time. OK.

So if you come back next week, I promise you we will make a wonderful cake widget. And we'll see what your favourite cake is. All right.

And if you'd like to tweet Bake Off, you can do so. Or you can also send us an e-mail to let us know what your favourite cakes are on Twitter. And the hashtag is [studenthublive16](#).

In fact, I know some OU colleagues who make particularly nice cakes. And I'm sure that they might send us some pictures in for next week of their wares.

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