Google You

You have likely Googled your favorite celebrity or a potential romantic partner, but have you ever Googled yourself? Your online persona can say a lot about you, but is it telling the right story? We are living in a digital age, one in which more and more people are sharing information with others through social media and the internet. The online environment makes it easy for people to find details about you through what is known as your "digital footprint." You need to understand what information is available online about you, because prospective employers will search for it.

Can you answer yes to any of the following questions?

- Do you have a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other social networking account?
- Do you post photos or selfies on social media?
- Have you ever been tagged in a photo on social media?
- Are there photos anywhere online showing you at a party or drinking alcohol?
- Have you been tagged in a photo taken at a bachelor or bachelorette party?
- Are there photos online in which you are smoking?

- Are there any online photos of you receiving an award?
- Have you posted graduation photos on social media?
- Have you made any social media posts or comments that could be interpreted negatively?
- Have you "liked" someone else's post that others might consider offensive?

If you answered yes to any of these items, you must understand that prospective employers and professional colleagues have access to this information. Is the image of you that they'll find online the one you want to share with them?

CHAPTER KEYWORDS

- Digital (or online) profile

- Digital (or internet) footprint

- Internet search

WEB BROWSERS AND SEARCH ENGINES

We often say "Google it" when we talk about searching for something on the internet, but multiple web browsers and search engines are, in fact, available. Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Safari are examples of web browsers. Each uses different algorithms and techniques to pull information from the Web. You use a browser to access a search engine, such as Google, Bing, or Yahoo! To maximize your search results, you should conduct searches using different web browsers and search engines.

SEARCHING YOURSELF BY NAME AND KEYWORDS

There are various ways to search for yourself online. The most common and straightforward is by keywords, since this is how search engines typically retrieve information. Start with your first and last name as search words. If you have a common name, you may not immediately get a lot of relevant results unless you have a popular online activity, such as a viral YouTube video or Twitter post. If you have had multiple names (e.g., because of marriage or other legal name changes), you should check all of them. If you use a nickname, search it, too.

What comes up when you search your name?

- Do you see your graduation pictures?
- Do you see your LinkedIn profile page?
- Do you see information about your home address?
- Did you find an online blog article you wrote?
- Did you find a social media post about a crazy party you attended?
- Did you find any photos showing drinking or hazing with you in them?

After you have searched your first and last name, try searching your name with different affiliated organizations or activities, such as your college, hobbies, sports (ones you play or events you attend), extracurricular activities, and jobs (exhibit 1.1). For example, to search your first and last name with your college, type "John Smith UF" or "John Smith University of Florida." Multiple searches will give you more results. Search your name with each organization and activity.

EXHIBIT 1.1: Sample Searches

Search term—name	Search term—keyword	Example
First and last name	College	John Smith UCLA
First and last name	Organization	Mitchell Williams American College of Healthcare Executives
First and last name	Employer	Jennifer Watson Blue Cross Blue Shield
First and last name	Volunteer organization	Julio Rodriguez American Cancer Society
First and last name	Job title	Lisa Jones administrative assistant
First and last name	Extracurricular activity	Helen Miller debate competition
First and last name	Student organization	Timothy Brown Health Services Administration Student Association
First and last name	Sport	Jaylen Johnson football
First and last name	Hobby	Tiana Wilson singing
First and last name	City	Jacqueline Torres Houston
First and last name	Arrest	James Davis arrest
First and last name	Mug shot	Marie Nguyen mug shot

Note: The names used in these examples are fictitious and not those of real people.

Anyone with basic information about you can conduct such searches, so it's good to understand what they will find. Remember that college party you attended—can it be found online by searching your name and alma mater? The schools you attended are listed on your resume and LinkedIn profile, so potential

employers and other professionals will have access to this information.

Repeat these searches using multiple web browsers and search engines. Log your results so that you can address any negative ones. (We'll show you how to fix these in chapter 4, "Digital Self-Branding.")

Searching your name online may also help prevent identify theft. If someone else is falsely using your name, you may find it online.

CHECK IMAGE RESULTS, TOO

When you conduct an online search, the search engine will include images and videos among the results. In most web browsers, you have to click on an "Images" tab to retrieve the image search results. Viewing these images is important because you may find some that you didn't know were posted online. Your friends and family may have posted photos of you on social media or on internet sites that can be searched using your name, especially if they tagged you in the photos.

The post you tag the person in may also be added to that person's timeline. For example, you can tag a photo to show who's in the photo or post a status update and say who you're with. If you tag a friend in your status update, anyone who sees that update can click on your friend's name and go to their profile.

—Facebook (2019)

> **Action Items**
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> 1. Search your name on the internet, with and without keywords.
> 2. Log the results for each search.
> 3. Repeat your searches using different web browsers and search engines.
> 4. Identify any negative or unflattering items.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Your digital profile should reflect who you are professionally. Understanding what exists online about you is the first step toward improving your online persona—that is, how others perceive you online. As you read this book, you will learn about your digital footprint and the importance of developing your online profile.

RESOURCE

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