

HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH EMPLOYABILITY GUIDE 4: GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL BRANDING

Professional Branding is about presenting an authentic and consistent message about yourself in order to build and maintain an effective professional profile. Your professional *identity* is who you are as a professional and your **Why/What/How** (see below); your professional *brand* is how you communicate this to the world.

It is an integral part of work and career management and should permeate all forums:

- Digitally: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, blogs and so on.
- Printed material: business cards, brochures, handouts, letterheads and so on.
- Personally: networking, interviews, professional interactions and so on.

The value of professional branding

Articulating your Why/What/How in a way that speaks to your target audience; communicates your value proposition and expresses your unique professional identity will assist you in developing meaningful professional connections.

The benefits of clearly and consistently communicating your professional identity include:

- Building and reflecting the reputation you wish to portray, both as a researcher and professional
- Becoming known for your expertise, experience and achievements
- Connecting to other professionals (and employers) and managing online content to ensure they see what you want them to see
- Enhancing your ability to pitch your skills to employers, potential funders and collaborators to advance your career.

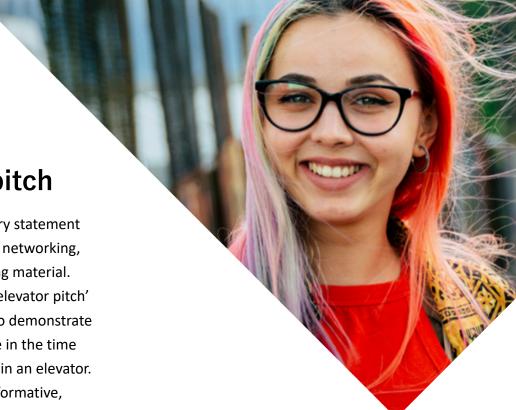
Developing your professional identity

Your professional identity is the core component of your professional brand, so it is a good place to start. This is less about 'creating' and more about 'identifying' your Why/What/How so you can establish an authentic professional identity.

Activity 4.1

Fill in each of the sections in the table using the example questions as prompts.

Your WHY	
 Why do you do what you do? List your core values: the <u>Life Values Inventory</u> can help you clarify these (free access after registering). Which of your values have been met through your research and which values do you want in your future career? 	
Your WHAT	
 What are you passionate/curious about? What interests you most about your industry, profession, or career options? What activities engage your mind so much that you lose track of time? What are your goals? 	
Your HOW	
 How do you act? What are your key skills, attributes and strengths? There are many online surveys regarding personality traits and character strengths, such as the <u>VIA Survey</u>. While the research behind these isn't clear, simply reading the lists and descriptions of traits can be useful for this activity. 	
Your YOU	
Your YOUWhat makes you unique?What makes you stand out from the crowd?How and why are you different from your peers?	
What makes you unique?What makes you stand out from the crowd?	



Developing your pitch

Your pitch is a confident introductory statement that can be used for interviews and networking, as well as your professional branding material. You may have heard this called an 'elevator pitch' because the purpose is to be able to demonstrate your professional identity and value in the time it would take to ride with someone in an elevator. Your pitch therefore needs to be informative, clear and succinct.

Activity 4.2

Write a first draft of your pitch using the following steps as a guide.

- Begin by highlighting common or recurring themes from Activity 4.1 and consider your professional context—for example, "what do employers in my field look for?"
- 2. Identify the objective of your pitch—what is it you want them to know about you? For example, you might want them to know about the value of your skillset for their organisation, or maybe about the application of your research to their organisational processes or products. What do you want them to remember most about you?
- 3. Fill in the blanks for the following:
- I am a... who has a passion for...
- I bring to any position the capacity to...
- I do this because I value...
- In addition, I...
- 4. Pull it all together!

Your 'Who'

It can be valuable to consider your professional identity and pitch in the context of your target audience.

Activity 4.3

Identify your 'Who' using the following questions as prompts:

- Who could benefit from your research/work?
- Who are the communities/stakeholders you aspire to reach with your research or skills? What are the products/processes you aspire to enhance?
- Who are the potential employers (people, companies and sectors) you want to target?
- Who are the people and/or organisations you admire in a professional sense (for example, their work ethic; their strategic approaches; the type of work they do; their innovative practices; how they treat their staff/clients /customers and so on)?

Developing your professional brand

Professional branding is more than just communicating your CV to the wider world. It is about strategically using the most appropriate communication tools and content to position your target audience (such as potential employers) to quickly and easily absorb your message, understand your professional identity and ascertain your value. This means using:

- clear language that succinctly conveys your message
- the most appropriate terminology and phrases for your target audience
- the most appropriate communication mechanisms (online vs in-person) and platforms (such as LinkedIn) for your target audience
- the most appropriate experiences and skills that highlight your capabilities and your value.

Spread the word

Consistently articulate your professional identity in all forums (including those mentioned in the introduction) by:

- integrating your keywords into your online profiles, written documents, job applications and business cards
- selecting, including and reordering content in your resume and application documents to emphasise your professional brand (covered in Guides 5 and 6)
- using your keywords or pitch as a way of introducing yourself to other professionals and in job interviews ("Tell me about yourself").
 It's important to appear confident when speaking about yourself—so practice this with friends and peers.

Profile content

Relevance should be your guide regarding what to include in professional profiles. Ask yourself (1) "Does it provide evidence supporting my brand?" and (2) "How does it relate to my chosen industry?". Arrange your content so the most relevant and recent information comes first.

Tip

Depending on the length of your career to date, information from more than 10 to 15 years ago should only be included if it is relevant to your current career aspirations.

Publications

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach for whether you include all, some or none of your publications in your professional branding. What you choose to include will depend on the type of employment you are aiming for; the amount of space available on the profile; the specific capabilities you wish to draw attention to and the number of publications you have.

The general opinion is that journal articles are more relevant for academic positions and other publications (such as blog posts, articles on LinkedIn, industry reports and so on) are more relevant for non-academic positions. However, the accuracy of this opinion is dependent on each individual employer and each individual role.

These considerations may be useful in helping you decide what to include or exclude:

- All reputable publications can be useful for demonstrating strong communication skills.
- A range of publication types can be useful for demonstrating your ability to tailor communication to a range of audiences.
- A long list of publications may detract from your other achievements and make your profile too long to read.

There are alternative approaches that can keep the length of your profile manageable while still providing an option for people interested in this work to take a closer look. For example:

- providing a link to your publications list (such as via ORCID)
- presenting your publications as project outputs
- quantifying your publications ("three journal articles from my thesis")
- limiting the amount of text included for each publication (listing only the title and year of a publication, with a link to the publication online).

Keywords for profiles

As with publications, there are no specific instructions for selecting keywords for a profile (although some profile platforms have rules regarding the number of keywords). However, the following strategies provide a useful starting point:

- Use your Why/What/How along with Activities
 4.2 and 4.3 to identify keywords that accurately paint a picture of your professional identity.
- Be careful not to use so many keywords that they bombard the reader or make the message about your professional identity ambiguous.
- Consider the language style used by your target audience and reflect on the appropriateness of including/excluding technical or academic language.
- Consider common words and capabilities used in advertisements for positions, sectors or fields you would like to work in (see Activity 4.4).
- Consider the types of keywords used on the profiles of colleagues or other professionals employed in areas that interest you.

Activity 4.4

- 1. Find two to five job advertisements for roles that interest you (Guide 2 provides some information on this).
- Copy the text from these advertisements and the accompanying position statements into a word cloud generator.
- Identify the types of words used by these potential employers and the frequency with which they are used. Reflect on their applicability to your professional identity and consider how you can incorporate these into your professional branding.

Stretch activity

- Repeat Activity 4.4 using advertisements for a range of positions within *one* sector/industry (for example, five different academic positions such as post-doc, senior lecturer, senior research fellow, associate professor and head of school).
- Repeat Activity 4.4 using advertisements for similar positions across a range of sectors /industries (for example, five project manager roles from different sectors/disciplines).
- Compare the word clouds and identify trends (similarities and differences) in the word frequencies and language used.

Photos

When you are required to provide a photo in a professional context (such as LinkedIn and some conferences) try to use the same photo to ensure consistency. This guide provides some useful information on taking and choosing a professional profile photo.

Business cards

This is an opportunity to communicate your professional brand through graphic design, colour and text. Business cards should include:

- your name (as the dominant feature)
- relevant qualifications (using abbreviated versions such as BSc for Bachelor of Science)
- contact phone number(s)
- email address (when creating your own business cards, consider the benefits of using a generic email address—see Strategy 2 of this Guide).

Optional features:

- the street or postal address of your workplace
- links to your digital profiles or websites (such as ORCID, LinkedIn, ResearchGate).



Additional strategies for enhancing the quality and reach of your professional brand

Strategy 1: Environmental scanning

Use your research skills to (1) identify existing content about yourself that may require modifying and (2) recognise how others present themselves professionally.

About you

An essential element of professional branding is making sure any information that exists about you online is appropriate, visible and relevant to where you are in your career and where you want to go next. You therefore need to keep your private and professional worlds separate! You can still have personal information on the web, just make sure it's only available to the people you want to see it. Adjust privacy settings on social media sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and check out these Facebook Privacy Tips. You can also use this Job Search Internet Checklist to ensure employers and contacts are finding only what you want them to find and that only appropriate information is available to view.

Remember that other people may have tagged you in posts or photos you may not be aware of—or would prefer not to be exposed in your professional space. Google yourself to <u>discover your digital footprint</u> and consider what you find through the eyes of a potential employer. Take steps to remove or hide any information that is not consistent with your professional identity.

About other professionals (decoding what works)

Search online for professionals in your preferred field or industry and people you have met during your candidature. Note the platforms and forums they utilise (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google scholar and so on). Which ones are *most* utilised and prevalent in your field? Are you active on similar platforms?

Consider and match the language used by professionals you admire or aspire to emulate. What do they include on their professional profiles? This will help you decide what's relevant and what to include on yours.

Activity 4.5

Ask a mentor, supervisor, respected professional, colleague or career-buddy (see our HDR Guide to Career-Buddies) to review your LinkedIn profile (or other professional profile). Have a discussion with them to unpack what your profile says about you. How do they see your Why/What/How? Compare and contrast this with your own ideas about your professional brand and consider what adjustments you might need to make to reconcile any conflicting perceptions.

Strategy 2: Maintain your professional brand

- Have a dedicated email address you only use for professional purposes. Creating a generic email based on your name rather than your university email will reinforce your professional brand and extend your reach beyond academia. This email address will also represent your professional persona—so choose something appropriate such as name surname@###.com.
- Your email messages should have a professional email signature which includes—at a minimum—your name, current position and company (for example, "HDR Candidate in the ABC School, XYZ University"). You may also like to include a link to your professional profiles (such as LinkedIn). If you are comfortable doing so, including a contact phone number in your email signature can also help promote opportunities for further contact.
- Watch your tone and language when commenting or posting online. Intense opinions can divide audiences, so regulate emotions and manage aggression. Try to remain objective online and back up your opinions with evidence. This will cement your reputation as a professional. See this article on the dangers of not carefully managing your online persona, as well as these community standards for tips on how to conduct yourself online.

Strategy 3: Manage your reputation

You can manage your professional reputation by carefully selecting referees or asking for endorsements from academics and professionals who know you and the work you have done during your candidature. Guide 5 can help you identify and maintain networks.

Sharing your pitch and career aspirations will also help your contacts say things about you that are aligned with your professional brand and relate to your chosen industry or career direction.

Strategy 4: Extend your digital reach

- Write a blog or start a YouTube channel focused on your area of expertise. Imagine the reach when other professionals begin to share your material!
- Develop your own website to showcase your brand. Highlight skills and qualities demonstrated during your research degree and career thus far.
- Use your name as your URL for your website and online profiles (such as LinkedIn) whenever possible to increase your presence in search engines.
- Actively engage in relevant groups on professional platforms such as LinkedIn; share, like and comment in relevant discussions and write content for reputable sites such as The Conversation.

Digital platforms for professional branding

The following are some of the commonly-used platforms you might like to consider as part of your professional branding strategy.

Platform	Examples
Social media (personal and professional use)	TwitterFacebook
Professional profile and networking (not research-specific)	◆ <u>LinkedIn</u>
Researcher profiles and publication sharing platforms	 ResearchGate Academia.edu University researcher profiles such as <u>JCU</u> Research Portfolio and <u>Griffith Experts</u>
Author/researcher identifiers	 ORCID Google Scholar Citations ResearcherID
Video or presentation sharing	YouTubeSlideShare
Blogs	 Wordpress Medium Tumblr Blogger



General considerations for all platforms

- Who is the intended audience (other researchers, employers, broader community)?
- How discoverable (e.g. via Google search)
 will the content be? How will you direct your audience to the content?
- Check journal copyright rules and sharing options for your articles before uploading to platforms such as ResearchGate or Academia.edu.
- Find a balance between privacy and exposure (consider separate personal and professional profiles).
- Check if your university has guides and guidelines for professional social media use.
- Consider the time commitment required for maintaining your presence on certain platforms (for example, the amount of time you can dedicate to social media).

Opportunities and risks of professional websites

In addition to providing opportunities, there are some risks associated with online sites. When choosing which platforms best serve your professional branding strategy it is important to consider the pros and cons of each platform.

Check resources at your university library or visit the following sites as a starting point for evaluating platforms for researchers:

- <u>Digital Scholarship @ Leiden</u> describes and lists pros and cons of platforms commonly used by researchers.
- The University of Melbourne: Researcher
 Profiles, Identifiers and Social Networks:
 Maximise your Impact and UniSA: Your online profile describe and list benefits and considerations or risks of platforms commonly used by researchers.
- University of Sydney Library: Raise Your Research Profile provides an interactive tutorial on increasing your profile through open research, data sharing and choosing appropriate online platforms.



Comparison of professional branding platforms and services

Platform	Opportunities	Risks/considerations	How to guides
LinkedIn	 Professional, career-oriented networking site with large, diverse user base Strong (public!) profile, highly discoverable via Google search—increases chance of being seen by potential employers Effective way to expand network via branching nature of connections Additional features: join or start a LinkedIn Group to start research discussions, foster collaborations Maintain connections with former colleagues /workplaces 	 Not all industries equally represented Designed for business (not academic) CVs (see links for how to build a strong academic profile) Be judicious about connections: quality over quantity 	 LinkedIn Help Leiden University: LinkedIn pros and cons UniSA: Why LinkedIn? Science Magazine: The keys to a powerful LinkedIn profile Impactstory blog: 7 tips to supercharge your academic LinkedIn profile How to become an academic networking pro on LinkedIn
Twitter	 Used for both professional and social content (less formal than traditional academic outlets) Easy to use/manage Short, real-time communication /discussion with researchers and broader community Information-rich: facilitates discovery of industry and academic news/updates 	 Blurs boundaries between personal and professional life Overloaded with irrelevant information (may be difficult for your message to 'cut through') Character limit Reach determined by number of followers (work on building an audience for your posts) Not clear how data used 	 Twitter help Leiden University: Twitter pros and cons

Platform	Opportunities	Risks/considerations	How to guides
Facebook	 Easy to share links and promote publications, news and awards Potentially large reach due to large user base (academic and non-academic) Expand your network Enables expression of personality 	 Personal information being available (consider separate personal and professional profiles) Some countries do not allow access (may limit audience) Unclear data and privacy policies 	 Facebook help Leiden University: Facebook pros and cons Impactstory blog: Explore using Facebook in a professional context
YouTube /other video platforms	 Engaging way to communicate research; brings research to life Potentially large and broad audience (academic and non-academic) Easy to share on other platforms or embed into blogs/other pages Low barrier to entry (don't need professional equipment to make videos) Free 	 May be time-consuming initially High-quality vs low-tech approaches (consider the goal of the video, your technical skills, and budget) Not a professional platform, so may need to promote elsewhere to build audience Consider copyright of all materials used in videos 	 YouTube help Leiden University: YouTube pros and cons Impactstory blog: Make a video abstract for your research Research Whisperer: Lights, cameras, science: Using video to engage broader audiences Nature: YouTube your science
Academia.edu	 Large academic user base (but anyone can join) Facilitates connections to academic (and possibly non-academic) audience Easy to share and access publications (may increase citations) Free account for basic features 	 Limited profile options May have limited reach outside academia Check copyright before uploading papers Limited facilities for engagement (predominantly for sharing publications) Engagement metrics unclear Commercial entity (despite .edu domain) 	 Academia.edu HelpCentre Leiden University: Academia.edu pros and cons UniSA: Why Academia.edu? Should You Share Your Research on Academia.edu?

Platform	Opportunities	Risks/considerations	How to guides
ResearchGate	 Facilitates connections with research peers Comprehensive researcher profile options Easy to share and access publications (may increase citations) Automated record updates with new publications Forums for asking and answering questions and collaboration (fosters engagement) Free 	 Limited interoperability with other platforms Check copyright before uploading papers Limited content available to those without an account Limited to current researchers (must supply institutional email address to register¹) Apparently large user base but membership numbers unclear Commercial entity Reported systemgenerated spam-like email activity 	 ResearchGate help centre Leiden University: ResearchGate pros and cons UniSA: Why ResearchGate
Google Scholar Citations	 Large academic user base Easy to search, edit and update profile and citations Includes range of publication types (not just journal articles) Metrics to track citations of your work Free 	 Consider data and privacy policies Profile minimally customisable Institutional affiliation required Automated publication list updates (may result in errors so authors must ensure records are accurate) 	 Google Scholar Citations Leiden University: Google Scholar Citations pros and cons UniSA: Why Google Scholar Citations? Impactstory blog: Create a Google Scholar Profile

¹ This may not be a problem for HDR graduates with access to an alumni email address, but this does limit viewers of your profile to those with a current research affiliation.

Platform	Opportunities	Risks/considerations	How to guides
Blogs (such as WordPress, Medium, Blogger)	 Persistent online presence from which to link to other profiles and networks Greater freedom in structure and ability to express opinions than in scholarly publications Minimal data and privacy concerns Engagement with the blogging community hone writing and communication skills and build profile by sharing ideas, commenting, providing feedback Share research beyond academia 	 Large time commitment Need to post regularly (and participate in discussion) Focus on core research theme (fewer, quality posts over quantity) 	 Wordpress Medium Blogger Leiden University: Blogging pros and cons The Thesis Whisperer: Why you should blog during your PhD The Guardian: Academic blogging — 10 top tips
ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID)	 High interoperability (easily link with other author identifiers and platforms) Independent, not-for- profit entity No privacy concerns, privacy settings highly customisable 	 Onus on authors to keep profile updated and current (although it provides tools to facilitate this) 	ORCID Leiden University: ORCID pros and cons

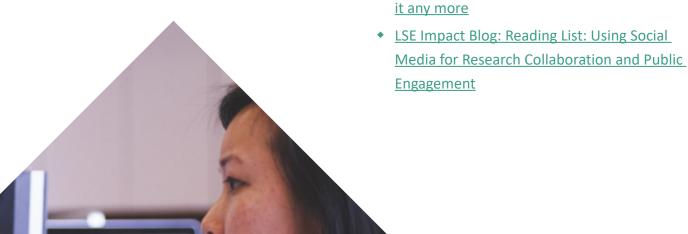
Additional resources

Videos and podcasts

- Why How What: youtu.be/qp0HIF3Sfl4
- University of Sydney Library: Smart Social Media
- University of Sydney Library: Social Media for Research Engagement
- University of Sydney Library: Increase your research impact outside academia
- Cheeky Scientist: Personal Branding For PhDs (industry careers for PhDs podcast)
- Vitae: Navigating your digital profile (requires free sign-up to view)

Articles and other resources

- 23 Things for Digital Knowledge
- Vitae: Use Brand Thinking to Build a Stronger You
- jobs.ac.uk: Digital identity health check for academics
- Science Magazine: Creating a research brand
- Science Careers blog: Building your personal brand
- The Muse: The First Step To Building Your Personal Brand
- University of California: A social networking site is not an open access repository
- Times Higher Education: Build your academic brand, because being brilliant doesn't cut it any more





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