

Professional Communication

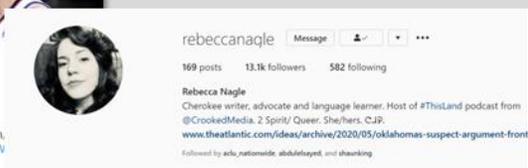
What Is a Personal Brand?

Your personal “brand” is how you represent yourself to the world. Without even speaking, your personal brand communicates who you are. Creating a personal brand and tailoring an online “presence” that represent you are pivotal to positioning yourself well for your next steps after high school. Even now you can start thinking critically about how you want to come across to others as you begin to pursue education and career opportunities beyond high school.

Think of a person or an organization you admire. Why do you admire them? How do you know what they stand for? How do you know what their mission is?

The following examples illustrate the online presence of some popular individuals and organizations. You might want to locate these profiles to learn how each brand represents itself.

Personal Brand Examples





High school is the perfect time to start thinking about what you want to communicate through your personal brand.

Build a Personal Brand

Education

- Where do you go to school?
- What field are you interested in pursuing?

Community Service

- What do you do for your community?
- What makes you passionate about giving back?

Extracurricular Activities

- What do you do outside of school?
- How have you demonstrated leadership in your activities?

Work Experience

- What would your work supervisor say about you?
- What do you like about this role?

Hobbies

- What do you do for fun?
- How might this set you apart from others?

A well-crafted personal brand makes you stand out when you apply for jobs and during interviews. Your brand communicates who you are, what you want to be, what you stand for, what makes you unique, and what you offer. And most importantly, thoughtfully building your brand helps you reflect on who you are, so you can share it with the world.

Social Media

While you're in school, your social media presence is personal and geared toward your friends and family, but after graduation, that will likely change. College recruiters, employers, and other groups looking for talent often screen social media accounts of potential candidates. Social media can be an asset or a detriment, depending on how you use it. Everything you post communicates something about what kind of person you are.

Email

The same goes for email. Consider your professional email address an extension of your personal brand. If you do not have a professional (not school related) email address, you need to create one. You may consider a simple email address with your name, such as `jsmith@`, `john.smith@`, or `johnsmith2024@` and a stable email

service domain address. Avoid using slang, cute names, and inside jokes in your email address. Use this email address for professional, educational, and formal communications.

Craft Your Online Presence

Consider the following to help determine the type of online presence you want to communicate:

- What would a stranger learn about me from my social media presence?
- Is my presence a good representation of my values?
- Is my presence a representation of myself that I can be proud of?

As people move through their professional careers, some maintain personal and professional social media accounts to keep their home and work lives separate. For your presence to become more recognizable, consider using the same name or handle across your professional social media platforms.

Strategically Choose People to Follow

After you create your online presence, follow and engage with people or organizations you admire and would like to work with. When you meet someone that you'd like to add to your personal network, your personal brand makes you memorable to them. Share your thoughts and ideas, contribute to conversations, and make real connections through these platforms. They might follow you back!

Email Communication

Whether you are reaching out to someone for the first time or following up on previous correspondence, clear and professional communication is crucial. In email, you can do this using the following structure:

1. Create a clearly understood Subject that states the purpose of the email.
2. Begin with an opening salutation, like "Dear" or "Hello," and their formal title, such as Mr., Ms., Dr.
3. Explain the reason you are contacting this person, in a clear and polite way.
4. State a clear objective, including requests and potential deadlines.
5. Avoid using abbreviations, text shortcuts, and slang.
6. Close your email with your name.
7. Before you send the message, proofread, proofread, proofread.

The example email on the next page illustrates this structure.

Real-World Application

- According to CareerBuilder®, a job search site, 34% of employers found content online that caused them to reprimand or fire an employee.
- According to Aberdeen Group, a marketing research company, 73% of millennials found their last job through a social media platform.



Clear Subject

Subject: Medical Research Job Shadowing Opportunity

From: [Your Name]

To: [Professional Contact Name]

Date: [11/11/24 10:08 a.m.]

Salutation

Hello [Title First Name Last name]:

My name is [First Name Last Name], and I am a senior at [Name High School]. During my high school career, I have [studied courses or been part of clubs related to...]. The medical field is my passion because [your reason].

Reason for Contact

I'm interested in pursuing a career in the medical sciences and would like to learn more about your profession and the career path you've taken. If possible, I would love to shadow you on a workday or interview you about your experience.

Request

Please contact me to discuss this possibility at [phone] or [professional email address]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,
[Your Name]

Professional Email Example

A final note about email structure is the optional “Cc” and “Bcc” lines that appear after the “To” line. Cc originally stood for *carbon copy*; you can use Cc to “copy” the message to another person, when they don’t need to respond. Nowadays, “Cc” is known as “courtesy copy.”

“Bcc” stands for “blind carbon copy.” Use Bcc to inform someone of the communication, but those to whom the email is addressed will not see that they are copied.

The term “carbon copy” originated when letters were typed on a typewriter with a sheet of carbon paper between two sheets of paper. The carbon left an image of the typed text on the bottom sheet, creating a duplicate copy at the same time.