

Eastern Michigan U - DivComm | Career Corner Podcast - Episode 6

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This is Eastern Michigan University's *Career Corner*. Here are your hosts, Brad Minton and Logann Dolan.

Welcome back to the *Career Corner* podcast in our series "From Class to Career Ready Through COVID-19." I'm back with my co-host and fellow career coach, Brad Minton, for our second to last episode of the series.

And Logann it's hard to believe, but we are almost done with this series. And today's episode's actually going to be a little bit different than our past episodes because we actually have no guest today. The subject for today's podcast is personal branding and networking, specifically in this evolving and turbulent job market where it's so needed. These two concepts are actually separate but they're kind of interrelated in a way.

And I know Logann and I are both huge advocates for creating a great personal brand as a way to serve as a prerequisite to help support your networking, but for those of you who don't know a little bit about Logann, Logann actually came to EMU with an MBA in marketing. She's an entrepreneur herself and actually has incredible merit in the realm of self marketing and personal branding and we really couldn't have a better speaker to discuss this particular issue. So Logann, let's start off with this aspect of personal branding, so what the heck is it? How would you define it?

Absolutely. So to make it super simple to understand let's think about someone that we know and love which is Batman. So thinking of Batman's personal brand-- and I chose him because he's not really any special super hero like others, he doesn't have any superpowers. He's just his own unique being who has intellectual abilities, knowledge of science, technology, indomitable fear and intimidation, and even has some martial arts to fight crime.

So he swings around in this black suit with that yellow insignia of a bat, he values justice and always does what's right. And so now I know we all can't be Batman but we can think of ourselves in our unique qualities that really those are the things that make us super. So thinking of things like your brand colors, your values, interests, your culture, background, and any unique experiences that you've had and then you put all of that together and it really makes up your personal brand.

I love that metaphor. It's such a great way to think about it because you're right, when you do think about Batman there's certain images that come to mind that are uniquely Batman and so that makes

it really, really clear. So now with that in mind, what steps do you think should students take to help build their own personal brand? Because that part can be really, really difficult when thinking about, well, you know, obviously, I'm not a superhero but what do I stand for? What message do I want to portray and how do I want to reflect that to the public? So what tools and resources would you say would be great for them to help build their own?

Yeah, of course. So I think during COVID-19 there's definitely three things you can do right now from your phone that can contribute to your personal brand, and that first and foremost being you should definitely be meeting with a career coach. I think it's really important when you're starting to develop your personal brand that you understand more about yourself. So meeting with a career coach you can walk through a few assessments like your personality and interests, values, and really help understand and start building that brand.

The second thing I would say is work on cleaning up and maintaining your digital image and this is something you probably don't think about too much. So I would recommend doing a simple Google search of yourself and see what comes up, and if you are not happy with those or you're worried about an employer seeing that, that's probably something you should take the necessary steps to take down.

So embedded within the second tip I would say there's four terms that you should think about when it comes to your digital image and that's professionalism, relevancy, consistency, and privacy. So thinking is this post professional and appropriate if an employer saw it? Is the content relevant and consistent with other information that you're also sharing on the platform? And what are the privacy settings on the platform? Should you be taking some necessary steps or should you be changing the privacy settings so it's a private profile versus a public profile?

And my last tip is I would absolutely 100% recommend working on building your LinkedIn profile if you have not already. So some things you can do on LinkedIn right from your home is get a professional headshot, OK. So you don't need a fancy camera. A lot of the newer phones have some type of portrait mode that works really, really well in front of a plain background.

The second thing is on LinkedIn you have that cover image similar to Facebook or Twitter and I would recommend using a free resource like Canva design center to make one and brand it to represent you. So whether you add some images that represent you, some text, maybe three words that represent what your industry is or what your knowledge base is and throw that on LinkedIn.

And the last thing I just want to mention is that you can also complete your LinkedIn profile to get LBC Group 4 credit. So there's more info on that on our website but definitely just to kind of recap I would say meet with a career coach, work on cleaning up and maintaining your digital image, and then lastly work on that LinkedIn profile.

Absolutely. I love those tips and particularly about the part about consistency and I think that's really where that LinkedIn profile and everything that you portray on your various platforms be it LinkedIn or anything else can really hit home the point of who do you serve, what are you qualified to do, and who's your market? And I think you can really accomplish that, so excellent tips.

So kind of switching things up, Brad, with all of what I just said in mind, can you actually speak to what networking really is and how students can be taking some steps to approach networking during the global pandemic?

Absolutely. I think networking is really the hidden gem of the job search and research backs that up and has consistently done that. Depending on the source 70% to 80% of all jobs are filled via networking. So what I like to think about when I'm thinking about networking is really the cultivation of relationships.

And I think what a lot of people have a tendency to do is hear work in the name and think that this is actual work, this is hard, this is something that I'm forced to do. And if you can get out of that mentality and think about it as just cultivating relationships, just building relationships, then it's can be really, really seamless.

So there's a couple of basic principles that I really try to touch on here when I'm talking about networking and I think the first one is really seeking quality over quantity. We've gotten into this digital age where it's all about followers, followers, it's all about numbers and I have to have X number of friends on Facebook, I have to have all these connections. But you really have to think how many of them really know what you do? How many of them know your personal brand like what we were just talking about there and could really speak on that and could share your message?

So a great quote that I reference back to a lot is "opportunities come when people know that you know what you know," and networking is your way to do that. And so your connections really have to be built on quality. And so a really, really great action step or a great way to build that quality connection is through an informational interview. An informational interview is a reverse interview where you get to interview somebody in your chosen field.

And what's fantastic about that is you get to build a memorable valuable connection. And what I mean by memorable is every informational interview that I've ever had I've always remembered and they've always remembered me in return because it's a little bit more than just, hey, enter my network, hey, I'd like to connect, right. That's a little bit superficial and so you need to dive in deeper and learn more about them and then you know what you can do.

And that leads me to step two which is make your network reciprocal. And so I really challenge you to think about how you can give back and provide depth to somebody else. How you can help build up their brand for example, because favors are always going to work their way back around.

So a couple of ways that you can do this is really think about how can you provide leads to somebody else's business, right. If they're already operating in a space that you want to enter into, hey, you can help them out you can build up their brand. Also if they're sharing content, if they're producing content, share it with other people. They would love that. And then also think about maybe how you could volunteer, just chip in to support their cause, right.

The third point that I want to make is using multiple modalities and my rationale here is the fact that we live in a multi-generational workforce, right. We have baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, and Gen Z all in the same space, right, and we're all fighting to make a paycheck but we all have different ways of communicating so you have to be able to modify your communication around what they like.

So it's important to remember that some people prefer phone calls, some people love face to face, some people love virtual, and so being able to modify accordingly is always great. And make sure that when you're establishing that connection you segue into their preferred, you know, you need to be adaptable.

The last thing that I want to mention on networking and one of the best principles is really do it different. Think about how you can go above and beyond a simple message on a computer screen. The more that you can think about how to step out of that and really make a value impact to somebody else, then you're really going to be serving your brand a little bit better. You're going to be advancing yourself and your career development farther.

So really think about how you can add that value. Another thing is to make sure that you offer new insights and think about how you can simply go above the like, click, and just say, yes I agree. Add a little bit more depth to that. And so you're going to be advancing your network by improving somebody else's quality of content in doing so.

Yeah, and I think all of those tips are super important, especially now being in the current state that we are and I especially think that number four is really important, that be different piece because there is hundreds and thousands of students graduating with degrees right now, OK. So you all have the same degree but what makes you unique and what is different about you than someone else who's going to be going against the same jobs, you know? So I think that's really important.

And if any of you need help with anything that Brad and I have talked about, personal branding, networking, whatever it may be just know that we're here and we're here to help you with these really challenging components. So if you need help make sure you schedule an appointment via Handshake with a career coach or corporate relations manager.

Absolutely, and the last thing that I would add on that as well is that all of you are individual and the tips that we talked about today and how to build your personal brand and how to network effectively are excellent foundational tips, but they need to be customized based on what you are trying to accomplish in your own career. So that's where we come in and can help advance you in that regard.

Don't forget to tune in next week where we're going to learn the best practices on interviewing in a virtual format from John Carlson. So you've been able to take these messages that we've applied over the last couple of weeks in job search and understanding the job market, being able to package up a great personal brand, really think about how to network effectively, how to put together a cover letter and resume, and then now you're getting to that point where you're applying and you're getting some of those offers. And John's going to go in depth about how to maximize your interviewing effectiveness. So until then, stay safe, stay healthy, and remember--

We're here for you, and we support your goals.

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