

10 rules to post by

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Picture yourself headed to an interview, a date, or the first day of school; all times to make a great impression. You will have carefully chosen your clothes, behaviour and words. Is this the 'real' you? Sort of. It is a version of you that you want to show the world. I don't ever wear suits out but I'll be damned if I show up to an interview in my yoga pants talking about how the weather is crap. Oh no, it is all about that suit and how the weather has been quite dreary and cold lately. We all have different versions of ourselves that we share with different people, but what happens when people are put behind a computer screen instead of face-to-face? They tend to forget who they are talking to.

Your digital identity is your brand to anyone who hasn't met you. You'll want to make sure that your brand is authentically you, but also appropriate for all audiences.

Here are some rules to consider before you post...

Picking the right profile picture - or How to live like Louis the

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Fourteenth

[Louis the Fourteenth](#) was king of France in the 17th century. He was also known as the Sun King but for this purpose we can call him the portrait king. Though he wasn't the first royal to be painted, he had commissioned a LOT of paintings, like hundreds. Much like the celebrities of today, Louis loved his 'selfies'. Unlike those today, his were always calculated. His hair, clothes and facial expressions were all predetermined. He had weeks or months to mull over the placement of his foot. Even his backgrounds reflected his personality or character. The result? A perfect expression of how he wanted to appear. Can you say this about your profile photo?

1. Pick a profile photo you'd be willing to post on a billboard

Your profile photo is your most important photo on any social network because it is public. New smartphone software will pull this photo in whenever possible so your work colleague could end up seeing it even if you have never interacted with them in that network. You can certainly use a different photo for different networks, but in the end they are all public so your friend's address book may get your LinkedIn photo and your boss' could get your Twitter pic.

2. Wear something you'd wear down the street

Would you wear that bikini down main st? Out to a movie? To work? If the answer is no then it is probably because that outfit is not appropriate for all those situations, in which case it is probably not appropriate as your public mascot either. Post it in your protected account instead.

3. Be you

To thine own self be true. Your photo should say something about who you are as a person. Funny, grounded, professional. Whatever message you want to send, this is the place to do it.

4. Be aware of what is behind you

What information are you giving away in the background? The layout of your house? Your place of work? If the information should be private then it should not be in your profile photo or remove it.

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Post unto others as you'd want posted unto you

The scary part of the world we live in today is that anyone has the ability to take a picture of you at any time and publish it without your knowledge. It is everyone's responsibility then to be a good digital citizen. Consider these before posting pictures of others.

4. Do not post a picture of someone else doing anything illegal, immoral or questionable

Not that YOU know anyone who would ever do anything illegal! But there are cases of teachers being fired after having pictures posted publicly of them in drunken stupors. That reminds me of someone else who was caught in a drunken stupor... Think twice about photos in which your friends are compromised, even if you look awesome.

5. Do not post pictures of kids under 18 without their parents permission

My kids have shown up in lots of people's pictures online. Do I mind? No, not in that context. But some parents do. Some parents have worked very hard to keep their kids pictures completely off the internet so best bet is to make sure you ask a parent before you post.

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“Before you speak ask yourself: Is it kind, is it necessary, it is true, does it improve upon the silence?”

This is a great quote by Shirdi Sai Baba. It was written long before we had social networks but in my mind it applies even more today since we have the ability to communicate so broadly and without full knowledge of who is listening.

6. Be positive

The best way to be happy is to surround yourself with happy people. Keep your posts about the good thoughts as much as possible. If you are always complaining then people will not want to read your posts nor will prospective employers want to hire you. I will admit to removing one friend because her posts were a constant stream of negativity and another because she made a prejudiced slur.

7. Be kind

It doesn't cost anything to say something nice about someone else and often improves their day. No need to put down others in your posts. Making mean remarks or bullying is not only damaging to the target but also speaks volumes about you. This can tarnish your brand permanently.

8. Be authentic

Post words and items that represents you, not just what you would think others want to read/hear/see. It's fun to go along with the crowd but keep in mind that people outside your circles (future employer, dean of admissions etc) can also see your *public* 'Likes' so be prepared to stand behind them.

9. Inform

People follow you or read your posts because they want to know about you. A public forum (like Twitter) is a great place to share information about your business or public announcements. Networks with a private audience are great places to share life changes. Just keep the details to a minimum - no need to overshare data online. :-)

10. Improve the silence

Share something great. You are never going to entertain and enlighten your entire audience with one post, but you could change someone's day. Post a picture that makes someone say 'Awww', a funny statement that will make someone smile, or a fascinating article that will make someone think. Skip the stuff that may not be necessary. Share something that helps us all feel a little more connected.

Now go forth and build yourself a digital brand that represents the amazing person that you are. Oh and feel free to delete old posts and pictures that don't meet your new standards. They may not be gone forever but they will be harder to find.

DEFINE YOUR DIGITAL IDENTITY #DYDI