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Personal branding and the social media game

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Editor

Maybe the newsflash I'm about to give you is a little dated, especially since this is supposed to be an article in a newspaper. Regardless, here it is: social media is a game changer and is having a huge impact in all of our lives.

Enlightening, right? Unless you are in on a 10-year-long dare to swear off technology, or any number of more probable reasons, this is not news to you.

However, there are a few specifics of how social media is impacting our lives and what we should be doing about it, that I believe warrant revisiting, or stepping back from our phones and/or iPads for a second and taking a look at for the first time.

In this issue's article "New employment outlook shows mixed views," Dr. Mark Steckbeck, assistant professor of economics, talks about the need for students to brand themselves, and take advantage of social media to do so.

This is one way social media is a game changer: jobs. The other two worth mentioning are connecting with people in general and, for the sake of Valentine's Day, love.

In all of these areas, social media is changing the game. The skill sets on our resumes are no longer enough to land us a job in the increasingly competitive working world. Now the way to stand out in a crowd is to sell yourself and your brand on social media and in everyday life.

This goes for connecting with people and in relationships as well. More people are meeting online because our brands are out there. Others can get an idea of who we are within seconds just by viewing our posts and our profiles.

So how do we take control of the impact social media has, and put our best brands out there?

Forbes.com contributor Lisa Quast writes in her article "Personal branding 101" that one should have a goal in mind. Ask yourself what job you want, look at the social media sites of others who have been successful in that field, and tailor accordingly.

Another factor Quast emphasizes is consistency. Individuals should portray the same persona on Facebook as they do on Twitter, and LinkedIn, etc.

Quast writes, "Don't create a mismatched brand by conveying different or competing attributes in various social media outlets, such as tweeting negative opinions about gowns worn at the Oscars and posting comments on LinkedIn about your vacation when you're trying to brand yourself as a savvy cross-functional project team leader," (Forbes.com).

She also says to "extend" your brand to how you come across in person.

And what better time to put your brand out there than now, in college, when you're already figuring out who you are. With all of the opinionated content floating around out there, it's easy to be influenced, which is why it's all the more important to figure out who you are (what your brand is), what your goal is, and let that dictate what you post.

Social media is definitely changing the way things work, but we can put our make-up artist, sports enthusiast, or rock star selves out there and make this change work to our advantage.

