# Professional Communication Leveraging Social Media

**LINKED COMPETENCIES:** Building Professional Networks; Leveraging Technology to Enhance Communication

Having your students leverage technology to enhance communication will support them in increasing the impact of their skills, competencies, and/or knowledge to a wider audience. Your students may already have a social presence through various platforms. However, if they reflect on their activity or impact in those areas, they may find that there is room for them to improve their impact through consistent and focused messaging.

For this activity, the learners can choose whichever social media platform they choose.

This learning activity is linked to **Building Professional Networks and Leveraging Technology to Enhance Communication** to support personal and professional goals within the **Professional Communication** competency. Upon completion of this learning activity, the student should have evidence of their competence in leveraging technology to enhance communication through building and actively engaging with others through their Social Media profile.

## Outcomes:

- Learners will determine what skills, competencies, and/or knowledge they would like to communicate to a wider audience.
- Learners will create a social media profile using the platform of their choice, to build professional networks and leverage technology to broaden the impact of their research.
- Learners will research and create a list of potential contacts they can connect with through their chosen social media profile.
- Learners will create and send appropriate invitations to relevant contacts through their social media profile (where applicable).
- Learners will set SMART goals for communicating through social media throughout the term.

| Building Professional Networks | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Exploring** | | | **Implementing** |
| I am aware of the importance of building professional networks. | I have identified relevant networks that will help me meet my personal and professional goals. | I have used networking strategies that help me create professional networks to meet my personal and professional goals. | I have demonstration of networking strategies that help me build professional networks with a significant impact to meet my personal and/or professional goals. |

| Leveraging Technology to Enhance Communication | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I rely on the use of one or two technologies for communication. For example, email and Power Point. | I rely on the use of one or two technologies for communication and can use advanced functions within the limited technologies. | I have leveraged technology to capture complex ideas in an accessible form. I have leveraged multiple technology options to communicate to a wide audience. | I have used multiple technology options with sophistication to increase impact, reach a larger audience, or enhance communication with diverse audiences. |

# TIME:

- Two 90-minute sessions, one at the beginning of the term and one at the end of the term. The space between the sessions will allow learners time to build their professional network and reflect on their progress.

## Learning Activity: Leveraging Social Media

This learning activity is intended to be introduced at the start of a term and followed up on at the end of the term. This structure is intended to give learners an opportunity to practice and build competence leveraging technology to increase communication through actively building their social media presence throughout the term.

The learning activity will follow Carolyn Mae Kim's Public-Facing Digital Technology Strategy Map[1]

## Public-Facing Digital Technology Strategy Map: Four Steps

| Step One | Step Two | Step Three | Step Four |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Determine Credibility Focus** | **Select Platforms** | **Understand Social Culture** | **Make a Calendar** |
| The leader should identify which dimension(s) of credibility they hope to particularly elevate through their public-facing digital communication. | The leader identifies a realistic number of platforms to use, understanding the time investment and expertise that will be required to engage specific stakeholders. | The leader learns the formal and informal "rules" that guide communication practices and behaviors on social media platforms to be able to naturally interact on those channels. | The leader develops a calendar to guide the overall type of content for channels, to ensure consistent and focused messages are delivered. |

IMAGE 4.2 Public-Facing Digital Technology Strategy Map: Four Steps

**Session Introduction: 90-min (60 min if learners are sending connections to their peers after the session)**

**Activating prior knowledge:**
By a show of hands or online poll (e.g., Poll Everywhere), ask students how many students use social media to increase their professional communication. For example, making future business contacts, sharing their research with potential employers, following a professional network that has similar interests.

**Follow-up question:**
By a show of hands or online poll, as students "How many of you think you are leveraging your social media presence to its fullest potential?"

**Facts to share – Here's what? So what? Now what?**

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[1] Kim, C.M. (2021). Leveraging Technology in Leadership Communication (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003224655

### Here's what?

Share the following findings from a BRANDfog[2] CEO, Social Media, and Leadership survey:

- 81% of respondents believed that CEO's engaged on social media are better equipped to lead companies in a web 2.0 world.
- 89.3% felt that CEO's who participated in social media could build better connections with customers; 84.7% felt that it would build better connections with employees; and 66.3% felt that it would build better connections with investors.
- 78% believed that use of social media by a CEO would result in better communication, and 71% felt it would improve the brand image.
- 82% of respondents said they were more likely (or even "much more likely") to trust a company with a CEO and leadership team engaged in social media.
- An incredibly high 94% believe that a leadership team can enhance the brand image by participating in social media.

### So what?

Not all your students will go on to be CEOs. However, a social media presence is an effective way to build connections and enhance professional communication.

### Now what?

Explain to the learners that they will have the opportunity to leverage technology to further the impact of their skills, competencies, and/or knowledge to a wider audience by actively engaging in a social media platform of their choice and that they will be using the Digital Strategy Map by Kim to support their competency in leveraging technology to enhance their communication.

**Provide students with the attached handout for this session so they can fill the top half out together. (10 min)**

**Step 1: Determine Credibility Focus**

- Have students make a list of all their skills, competencies, or knowledge that they have gained throughout their graduate career.
- From that brainstormed list, students choose their top two areas that they would like to increase the impact of their reach through social media.
- Next, have the students brainstorm any evidence that they have that would support the skills, competencies, or knowledge. This could be class papers, video presentations, volunteer opportunities that they are a part of. At this point they do not have to do anything with this evidence, they just need to start brainstorming a list.

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[2] https://brandfog.com/BRANDfog2016CEOSocialMediaSurvey.pdf

**Step 2: Select Platforms**

- **Think-pair-share:** Have students discuss potential platforms that would have the most impact (e.g., ability to connect, broad reach, user population, etc.).
  Note: If they are using LinkedIn they can use the following resource as a guide. However, it is important to provide students a chance to brainstorm other social media platforms that they anticipate having the most impact for your professional communication goals. For example, personal websites, podcasts, LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Medium, etc.

**Step 3: Understand the social culture of your chosen platform - Sending personal invitations to peers (20 min but this can be done outside of class to save time)**

- For any social media presence to be effective, learners must be active and create connections. The easiest way to start building connections is to start connecting with their peers. Their peers can be strong social connections long after they leave academia.

- Using a shared editable document (e.g., a Google doc), have students share the link to their social media profile. Have this shared document on the screen and/or instruct students to have it open as they will be using their peers' profiles to send personal invitations to connect with each other.

- When sending a personal invitation to others through LinkedIn, the following guidelines will be helpful.

- First, learners practice sending personal invitations to each other to connect on their social media platform. If you are comfortable, have the students send an invitation to connect with you as well.

- Encourage learners to respond to their peers when they receive a personal connection invite.

- If students are not using LinkedIn, encourage them to follow their peers on the social networking sites that were shared in the document.

**Step 4: Creating a SMART goal – Make a calendar of engagement for the term.**
Creating a SMART goal for consistent focused messaging throughout term on their social media platform. This will be the most important aspect of leveraging technology to increase professional communication. They can use the list of evidence that they brainstormed in the step above to plan to send out as part of their consistent focused messaging.

- A SMART goal is Specific, Actionable/Achievable, Measurable, and Time-Bound. Below are some example questions and examples of SMART goals.
- How many times will you engage before the end of the term? (once a month, every two weeks)
- How will you engage? (re-post, post original content, reply to others, like others' posts, etc.)
- Example SMART goal:
  - Before the end of the term, I will:
    - Create one original post (e.g., shortened class reflection).
    - Create one personal-facing post that shares a bit about myself (hobbies, community activities, trips, etc.)
    - Send at least 5 connections to people or organizations.

- Each week I will re-post someone else's post and like another's post.
- I will set calendar reminders for myself two days before each weekly goal and one week before each monthly goal.

Encourage students to interact with each other throughout the term through LinkedIn to support each other's goals.

**End of term follow-up: (55-min)**

At the end of the term, come together as a group to self-reflect on whether they were able to meet their goals and determine what evidence they might provide in their ePortfolio about their competency in leveraging technology for professional communication.

**End of term small group discussion:**

a. How well did leveraging social media for professional communication go?
b. What were some strengths and struggles throughout the process?
c. Provide each person in the group 5 min to review one partners social media profile and provide feedback on how they might increase their impact through the platform. Repeat for each person

Remind your students to reflect, add, and annotate evidence of competency to their portfolios.

- **Reflect** on their experiences and what they learned through the activities and feedback.
- **Add** evidence of competency to their portfolios.
- **Annotate** the evidence to highlight their specific competency.