

Paper 184-2013

## Branding Yourself Online

Kirsten Hamstra, Meg Crawford, and Shelly Goodin, SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC

### ABSTRACT

Your online reputation matters. Whether you are using social media for professional or personal reasons, it's important to understand and control your public persona. To further your career, build your business, or enter the workforce, you can maximize your positive exposure by knowing where and how to engage online.

This paper highlights some of the best practices for online engagement, provides suggestions for where to engage, and showcases some examples. For anyone engaging in social media who wants to better understand the impact of their contributions and control their online reputation, this paper is for you. Discover how to

- Craft an incredible bio
- Harness the power of search engine optimization (SEO)
- Strengthen your online reputation
- Engage—where and how to do it
- Make meaningful connections

### INTRODUCTION

As social media practitioners for SAS, we spend a lot of time online. Besides building communities and creating content of interest for SAS users, we also recognize the importance of online reputation management. It's essential for a business—and just as critical for professionals, students, and job seekers.

Whether you are relatively new to the social media scene, a seasoned veteran, or somewhere in between, you need to track, protect, and optimize your online reputation. In this paper, we have identified some best practices for maintaining your online reputation.

### CRAFT AN INCREDIBLE BIO (OR PROFILE)

You want to stand out for the right reasons. A professional, authentic, and engaging bio or profile (depending on which social media channel you are using) will play up your strengths and still allow for some personality and creativity. After you understand the requirements and goals of each social channel, you will want to incorporate these items in your bio: your photo; searchable key words; professional experience; and links to your blog or other online profiles. After you have carefully proofread your bio and made it consistent across social channels, keep it up-to-date.

### HARNESS THE POWER OF SEO

Wikipedia defines search engine optimization as “the process of affecting the visibility of a website in a search engine’s “natural” or unpaid (“organic”) search results. In general, the earlier and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine’s users.”

You can increase the SEO around you and “your brand.” Some tips include: searching for your name online; branding your online presence in a consistent manner; creating vanity URLs; researching keywords and integrating them in your copy; and increasing your social engagement.

## Harnessing the Power of SEO

### 5 KEY TACTICS FOR SEO

1. Words Matter
2. Title Matters
3. Links Matter
4. Words in links Matter
5. Reputation



## STRENGTHEN YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

Track, protect, and optimize your reputation. There are things you want everyone to see and things you only want *some* people to see (or perhaps things that no one but you should see). And to complicate things, there are things that others post about you.

Your online reputation affects your professional life: most recruiters check search engines and social media sites for information about potential job candidates; a bad online reputation or abuse of social media can get you fired; and a bad or non-existent online presence can negatively influence others' opinions of you. The good news is that you can set your own reputation by staying vigilant. Frequently check search results for content that surfaces about you, control your privacy settings, and educate friends and family about what is appropriate to share publicly. Take immediate action if you see questionable or unflattering comments or photos.

## ENGAGE ONLINE

Every good conversation starts with good listening. Start by reading your favorite channels and blogs. When you are ready to dive into a topic or social activity that interests you—comment, ask questions, and share others' content (giving them credit for their work). Publish your own content on blogs, post comments in discussion forums, and write articles. Then, share this content through your social networks.

Another important aspect of online engagement is understanding the unique characteristics of each main social platform. Contribute appropriate content and search these channels to find other SAS users or groups of interest.

ENGAGE ONLINE		WHERE TO GO	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Best for:</b> interacting on a more personal level</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> blog posts, videos, photos, <a href="#">infographics</a>, questions + answers</li> <li>• <b>Follow</b> friends, co-workers, interesting companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Best for:</b> short, to-the-point updates; monitoring conversations; interacting one-on-one</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> links to relevant content; comment on topics; use <a href="#">hashtags</a></li> <li>• <b>Follow</b> friends, thought leaders, co-workers, interesting companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Best for:</b> showing off your professional accomplishments</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> relevant content with all followers/join or create groups</li> <li>• <b>Connect</b> with co-workers, customers, thought leaders, interesting companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Best for:</b> improving your search results</li> <li>• Very <b>specific audience</b> so far: engineers, web designers, software developers, marketing professionals</li> <li>• <b>Create</b> a profile (appears when someone <a href="#">googles</a> your name)</li> </ul>

## MAKE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Networking online is easy if you know how to do it. Start by following people you interact with in your day-to-day life. Then, browse your followers' connections to find new interesting people or companies. Expand your network even more by following movers and shakers in your industry.

The best way to gain new followers or fans is to engage, follow interesting people, and be an active part of the community. Keep your followers happy by sharing valuable content and thanking them online when they have helped you .

## CONCLUSION

There are many pieces to effectively branding yourself online. However, we hope that our guidelines will help you create an authentic and engaging public persona —and a richer and more rewarding social experience.

## REFERENCES

“Search engine optimization.” Wikipedia. Available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search\\_engine\\_optimization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization). Accessed on February 5, 2013.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your comments and questions are valued and encouraged. Contact the authors:

Kirsten Hamstra  
SAS Campus Drive  
SAS Institute Inc.  
[Kirsten.Hamstra@sas.com](mailto:Kirsten.Hamstra@sas.com)

Meg Crawford  
SAS Campus Drive  
SAS Institute Inc.  
[Meg.Crawford@sas.com](mailto:Meg.Crawford@sas.com)

Shelly Goodin  
SAS Campus Drive  
SAS Institute Inc.  
[Shelly.Goodin@sas.com](mailto:Shelly.Goodin@sas.com)

SAS and all other SAS Institute Inc. product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of SAS Institute Inc. in the USA and other countries. ® indicates USA registration.

Other brand and product names are trademarks of their respective companies.