8 Steps to Create and Manage a Strong Virtual Presence:
A UNC Student Guide

Did you know that *95% of recruiters actively use LinkedIn*? Your virtual presence matters! Here's a step-by-step guide, in which Career Counselor across UNC and UCS highlight curated resources to help you develop your online brand – which is what people see when they find you on the internet. Think of it as a checklist! Extra tools from career departments and schools across UNC can be found at the end of this document.

STAGE 1 Create an authentic *personal brand*

But first, what is a personal brand? Personalbrand.com defines it as follows: *"A personal brand is a widely-recognized and largely-uniform perception or impression of an individual based on their experience, expertise, competencies, actions and/or achievements within a community, industry, or the marketplace at large."* You want it to be authentic, to sincerely highlight your greatest strengths. Here are steps to build your brand

1. **Design your personal brand strategy – how do you want to be seen?**

   Utilize online tools to develop your brand with authenticity - Based on the book Platform: The Art and Science of Personal Branding by Cynthia Johnson, and compiled by a UCS Counselor, here are some resources including: steps to take, a worksheet, some checklists, and other resources

   Demonstrate Career Readiness Competencies in your brand – Based on a survey, hundreds of employers share what competencies they seek. Make sure your competencies shine. Read more about Career Readiness Competencies under the extra resources section at the end of this guide.

2. **Align your social media to match your brand**

   LinkedIn – The number one tool, no matter what industry, is LinkedIn! Here is UCS Information on How to Use Linked In. Also check out this University Student LinkedIn Checklist. Don't forget to make an appointment with your career counselor to get your profile critiqued.

   Other social media matters too– Depending on your industry and trends, consider using the following:

   Twitter – Read Hubspot's guide on How to Build a Memorable Personal Brand on Twitter

Facebook – If using Facebook, consider having a separate personal and professional account. Here are [13 Ways to Use Facebook for Personal Branding](#) from Social Media Today

Instagram – The Muse shares [Your Ultimate Guide to Using Instagram for Personal Branding (without being fake)](#)

Handshake – [Handshake](#) says, "80% of students who share their interests receive a message from a recruiter on Handshake." Think about what you want them to see when arriving on your profile. Here are Handshake's [Three things students must do](#)

More: Pinterest/Tiktok/Snapchat/YouTube – [How to Build Your Brand on Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube Without Spending Any Money](#)

3. **Audit your digital footprint for congruence with your brand**

Organize your social media audit – Consider reading Hootsuit's Guide on [How to Do a Social Media Audit](#), which includes a free template. UCS Counselor Chloe Benjamin's [Personal Branding Guide](#) also includes a web-audit checklist.

4. **Amplify your brand**

Resume & cover letter branding – One tip: Consider using your resume header as stationery for your cover letter! The website, StudentLife Network shares [Cover Letters, Resumes, and Personal Brands: What's the Difference?](#)

Email signature branding – Have you ever considered what should go in your default email signature? That's a part of your brand. Uloop UNC has an article on [How to Setup an Email Signature for College Students](#).

Business cards – If you have business cards made, consider matching them to your brand too. Your department at UNC may be able to work with you to get a [UNC Business Card](#) made. If you have questions, check out UNC's business card website.

STAGE 2 Make your personal brand work for you

Once you've laid the foundations of your personal brand, it is time to maintain and grow your professional reputation.

5. **Networking & Career Fair prep: Learn techniques to network online**

Build relationships – The word "networking" can be intimidating. Try to replace that word with "relationship building." You want to form professional relationships in which you can

share and exchange resources over time. Think about people you've worked with on projects or jobs, and professionals you know. Add them on LinkedIn. See about maintaining those relationship in Step 8.

Virtual career fair prep: Prepare yourself to shine at virtual career fairs. Use the UCS Virtual [Prepare for the Fair Checklist](#) to make sure you are ready! Get to know the software used for virtual career fairs before you arrive! You can learn about CareerEco, the system we use for the majority of our career fairs, using our [CareerEco Tip Sheet](#), which includes a tutorial.

Save the dates for upcoming career events! Add all relevant fairs and information sessions to your calendar and RSVP to attend live [online](#)! You can find [UCS sponsored fairs on Handshake](#). All sessions will be recorded, and can be accessed on the [UCS YouTube channel](#). See top tips, and look for the UCS [Prepare for the Fairs](#) series in the Extra Resources section below.

Career Fair Cram Sessions - offered prior to many UCS Virtual Fairs. Upcoming events can be found on [Handshake](#) and on the [UNC Events](#) pages. If none of the dates work for you, all sessions are recorded, and you can also make an appointment with a career counselor.

Research before the fairs - Before attending a fair, see which organizations will be present and what opportunities they are hiring for; prioritize who you want to speak with, prepare your questions in advance, and write your [elevator pitch](#).

Prepare specifically for virtual job fairs – Here's a UCS selected article: [Wear Pants – and Other Advice on How to Prepare for a Virtual Job Fair](#) from the Penny Hoarder

6. **Build Expertise in Your Industry**

   Associations, conferences, and employer info sessions - Get familiar with associations in your profession to learn about your industry and consider joining. Attend industry conferences. Utilize [Handshake](#) or check in with your department to identify employers who are offering information sessions, or that are participating in career panels. These can help you prepare for entry into your industry. Also check out the [career guides on Vault.com](#). UCS provides UNC students with access. Our [Personal Branding Guide](#) also includes a checklist with opportunities for association and recognition.

7. **Interview prep: Prepare to land jobs and internships during virtual interviews**

   Practice – Do mock interviews with career services, or use [Big Interview](#) – which offers a bank of commonly asked interview questions, coaches you on best practices for answering, and lets you practice with the ability to record yourself in mock interviews at

beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

Read Best Practices on Virtual Interviews like How to Ace Your Virtual Interview by the Vector Impact. See the UCS page on Virtual and Phone Interviews for in-depth information.

Attend UCS workshops and panels – UCS and other departments host several workshops and panels every semester that can help you prepare. Stay tuned in with department's career services or keep an eye on the UCS events pages.

Learn the BAR or STAR method – Learn how to answer behavioral interview questions by using one of these methods. For example with BAR, you respond to questions by presenting the Background, sharing the Action taken, and concluding with the Result. For the STAR method, you respond with the Situation you faced, the Task at hand, the Action you took, and the Result that you are proud of.

Utilize virtual backgrounds – Avoid clutter and distraction in your background by using Virtual Backgrounds in Zoom. For example, here is a UCS created virtual background and here are instructions for using virtual backgrounds.

Follow-up after interviews – Within 24 hours, send a thank you note, ideally to everyone you've met with. If you haven't heard back within about a week, a check in may be appropriate. No Response After an Interview? Here's How to Follow Up By Email? Career Sidekick shares tips on what to say.

8. **Stay engaged**

Reinvest in your professional associations – If you're not involved with professional associations, these can really help with a targeted job search, with networking, and with giving you a community to engage with professionally. To get started, check out this job-hunt.org article on How to Find Jobs Using Associations and College / Corporate Alumni Networks.

To explore how LinkedIn can help advance your brand with professional associations, read The Linkedin" Strategy to Networking Through Professional Associations on careerprofiles.info.

Post regularly and make sure your posts are seen. Use hashtags to amplify your posts. See slide 30.

Maintain relationships - You've planted the seeds for professional relationships, now time to nurture them. After your first job this is especially important – LinkedIn is one place you can do this. Check out these Four Tips to Network on LinkedIn, paying special attention to

steps 3 and 4. Also write recommendations for deserving people you've worked with, and endorse others' skills. They just may reciprocate that favor!

Extra resources

More Tools to Help With Your Personal Brand

- **Other guides on personal branding**
  - **How to Feel Authentic While Building Your Personal Brand**: Many people recoil when they hear the term personal brand. If that's you, Susan Muchin, an adjunct lecturer at Northwestern, suggests that you think of it more as your story. She writes, "The most incisive question you can ask yourself is "What do I want to be memorable for?" If you ask that question—which is ultimately a version of "what makes me special?"—your stories will begin to surface." Read Muchin's full article to learn more.
  - **LinkedIn Learning Course** – Creating Your Personal Brand – 33m – Free to UNC Students https://www.linkedin.com/learning/creating-your-personal-brand?u=42563596
  - How to Use Your Personal Brand to Land Your Dream Tech Job (or other jobs too!) - https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-use-your-personal-brand-to-land-your-dream-tech-job
- **Elements to consider in personal branding**
  - Career Readiness Competencies - As you think about your brand, you may want to consider demonstrating Career Readiness Competencies. The National Association of Colleges and Employers surveyed more than 600 hiring organizations across nearly 20 industries to identify what makes a job candidate "career ready." As you develop your digital brand, consider how you can highlight your competencies.
- **LinkedIn Resources**
  - Aside from the student checklist shared in the guide, there are many other resources out there to take your LinkedIn to the next level.
  - For example, you can customize your LinkedIn banner.
- **Resumes and personal branding**
  - Vault.com article - *This Trick Will Make Your Resume Stand Out*
  - LiveCareer shares 3 components of personal brand to execute in your resume – Resume Branding Statement – Tips for Job Seekers
- **Virtual Career Fair Prep**
  - **Get Your Resume Seen & While You Take Advantage of the UNC UCS Prepare for the Fair Series!** When you attend our fair prep workshops, not only do you learn how to make the most of UNC Virtual Career Fairs, but you can also get your resume highlighted in a Resume Book that UCS shares with employers. Learn more by checking out our Prepare for the Fair Series, which is typically offered each semester.

- o **Dress to impress**! Professional attire boosts confidence. Or at least [wear pants](#) and a [Zoom shirt](#).
  - o **Replace handshakes with a pleasant demeano**r! Smile, introduce yourself, and ask the interviewer how they are doing.
  - o **Have your [elevator pitch](#) memorized**, and use it, ending with a question for the interviewer to answer.
  - o **Make eye contact** as best you can. To do this online, try to move the employer's image near your webcam so that when you talk, you are virtually looking the speaker in their eyes
  - o **Create a nice space to meet.** Try as best you can to log in from a professional space. Minimize distractions and consider using a [virtual backgrounds](#) if that would be preferred.
  - o **Follow-up**: Ask your interviewer how you can follow up, and what next steps they recommend. Send a thank you note reiterating your intention to take their advice.
- **Virtual Interview Prep**
  - o **How to Ace Your Virtual Interview** by The Vector Impact: https://www.thevectorimpact.com/virtual-interviews/
  - o **Do's and Don't of Virtual Interviews** by Vault.com https://access.vault.com/recordurl?nid=257038&wid=148294&vid=1
  - o **Top Interview Tips:** Check out The Interview Guys' [Top 10 Interview Tips for 2020](#)

Curated Events to Help With Your Personal Brand – Fall 2020
All events are recorded and can be found on our [UCS YouTube Channel](#).

- **August 17th** – 5:30-7pm – [Level Up Your Virtual Brand During a Virtual Recruiting Season with Vanguard and UNC Computer Science](#) (CS). UNC CS will bring a lineup of events to help you be successful in a virtual recruiting environment. To kick things off, Stephanie Johnson, UNC CS's Career Development Lead, will be joined by Vanguard's Erika Fosu. In this workshop, students will hear what they can expect for the UNC CS Recruiting season and how to create their virtual brand to set themselves apart.
- **August 20th** – 4-5pm – [Employer Meetup: Stand out on Handshake](#): Did you know that employers are searching for candidates for jobs and internships on [Handshake](#)? In this virtual meetup, learn key tips on how to maximize Handshake by speaking directly with employers. We will discuss what to include in your Handshake profile, how to search effectively for job and internships, and where to find information about upcoming employer events. By the end of the session you will be ready to update your Handshake profile and apply for positions!
- **September 22-24** all day each day – [Your Career Toolbox: Using Big Interview](#): Follow us on Instagram @uncucs and get tips on how to make the most out of this tool to help you gain the interview advantage.
- **October 15th** from 10:30-11:30 am [– Expanding Your Professional Network on LinkedIn](#): LinkedIn has become one of the primary career exploration, job searching, and networking tools available

on-line. In this workshop, you will learn how to best utilize LinkedIn to explore career options, effectively network, maximize your profile and connections, and communicate your subject matter expertise. Additionally, you will learn how best to connect with UNC-CH alumni and strengthen your professional brand through LinkedIn.

- **September 8th, September 14th, and September 15th** from 4-5 pm *Career Fair Cram Sessions -* offered prior to many UCS Virtual Fairs. Upcoming events can be found on [Handshake](#) and on the [UNC Events](#) pages.

RELATED FILES
Workshop schedule
https://careers.unc.edu/sites/careers.unc.edu/files/documents/NEW%20Fall%202020%20Virtual%20Events%20Schedule.pdf

Elevator Pitch Worksheet
https://careers.unc.edu/sites/careers.unc.edu/files/documents/Elevator%20Pitch.pdf

Career Eco Tip Sheet
https://careers.unc.edu/sites/careers.unc.edu/files/documents/Career%20Eco%20Tip%20Sheet%20for%20Students.pdf

Prepare for the Fair Check Sheet Brochure
https://careers.unc.edu/sites/careers.unc.edu/files/documents/Prepare%20for%20the%20fair%20checksheet%20brochure.pdf

Accessing and Using Virtual Backgrounds in Zoom Instructions
https://careers.unc.edu/sites/careers.unc.edu/files/documents/Virtual_Backgroud_Instructions.pdf

Tips for Telephone Interviews
https://careers.unc.edu/sites/careers.unc.edu/files/documents/Phone%20Interviews.pdf

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Virtual and Phone Interviews
https://careers.unc.edu/students/interviewing/virtual-and-phone-interviews

= Create & Manage Your Virtual
Presence: A UNC GUIDE

STAGE 1. CREATE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

1. DESIGN YOUR BRAND STRATEGY

Your personal brand is the first impression people have of you when they find you online

Be intentional: what strengths do you want people to recognize you for?

Use tools and worksheets to ensure your brand is solid

2. ALIGN YOUR WEB PRESENCE TO MATCH YOUR BRAND

LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, TikTok, Snapchat and more

3. AUDIT YOUR BRAND

Make sure your digital footprint matches your personal brand

4. AMPLIFY YOUR BRAND

Amplify your brand through your communications. Look at your Resume, Cover Letter, Email Signature, Business cards, website and more

STAGE 2. MAKE YOUR BRAND WORK FOR YOU

5. NETWORK FOR MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Build relationships online

Share resources with your connections

6. BECOME AN EXPERT IN YOUR INDUSTRY

Join industry social networking groups

Share articles and resources in these groups

Attend employer information sessions to learn about culture and expectations

7. BE PREPARED FOR VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Practice online using tools like Big Interview

Participate in mock interviews with a career counselor

Consider using virtual backgrounds

8. STAY ENGAGED

Reinvest in your professional associations

Post on social media regularly

Maintain and deepen professional relationships

Visit careers.unc.edu for more tips.

www.careers.unc.edu/virtual-presence