Ways to Protect Your Digital Profile

You may not know everything published online about you. You post content about yourself; friends and colleagues share information about you as well. As the trend toward using social media to capture virtually all aspects of life increases, it's essential to maintain an online identity that reflects your professional image, and portrays how you want to be remembered after you pass away.

You can use social media tools to protect your digital identity, and help control what people see when they search for you. Consider these questions when you search for yourself on social media sites:

- Does this information portray me positively?
- Does it reveal information I prefer not to share?

To conduct a self-search on Google or Facebook, log out of your account, and then type your name into a the search engine. Click this link to: manage your online reputation using Google.

To view your public self on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+, follow these steps:

- Log out, or use a different browser without logging in, and then type your name into the search engine.
- Log back in to the site, and then view your profile as, "public."

To remove unwanted content, ask whoever posted it to remove it. If someone unknown to you posts it, contact the site owner, webmaster, or administrator for help. Deleted material may remain in search results temporarily, but will disappear as the site updates its search results.

A picture speaks a thousand words, so be sure to search for both text and pictures. Click this link: to remove content using Google. Click this link: to remove images using Google.

Follow these guidelines on other social media sites:

Facebook: Deleting unwanted content is your best option to ensure that no one takes a screenshot or makes your posts public without your knowledge. Click this link: to learn more about Facebook's privacy options.

Twitter: If you use your name as your handle, anyone can find you. Click this link: to make your Twitter account private. Twitter is among the most public of all social networks, so think carefully before you tweet.

Google+: You should hide anything you want to remain private. Click this link: to learn about Google+'s privacy settings.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn content often displays first in a search query, so post only professional content. Update your profile to keep information current.

Web-services are available for a fee to help protect your online reputation. For example, click this link: to learn how to protect your identity if someone is impersonating you online.

Delete older social media accounts that no longer reflect your preferred digital identity. Most importantly, think before you post. Try to consider how others might form an opinion of you based on what you choose to post online.

Social media sites may be making it more challenging to protect your privacy, but you can still maintain your professional identity, and portray how you want to be remembered by your loved ones after you pass away.