

Is your online brand hurting your job search?

By Wahiba Chair

Tom Peters, a pioneer on the topic of personal branding, once said, “Big brands know the importance of brands. Today, in the age of the individual, you have to be your own brand.”

In today’s digital age, whether you want it or not, you are your own brand. Your prospective employers will be searching for you online and finding everything they can about you before establishing that first contact.

So why not make the best possible first impression?

Social media is becoming a double-edged sword for job seekers

As the lines between personal life and professional brand get blurrier, social media is becoming a double-edged sword for job seekers. While 73 per cent of recruiters have hired a candidate through social media (the “good” news), 55 per cent have reconsidered a candidate based on their social profiles (66 per cent of the reconsiderations were negative!).

So here’s what you can do to make sure that your online brand will work in your favour throughout your job search and beyond:

1) Google yourself now (incognito)

Also referred to as a “vanity search,” this means Googling yourself without Google using your location, identity or past browsing history to make search results more relevant. Most browsers will provide this option. In Google Chrome, click the “Chrome menu” and select “New Incognito Window.” Now, take a close look at search results. Are there any old photos you don’t want the whole world to see? What comes up first? Ideally, you want your professional social profiles (e.g.



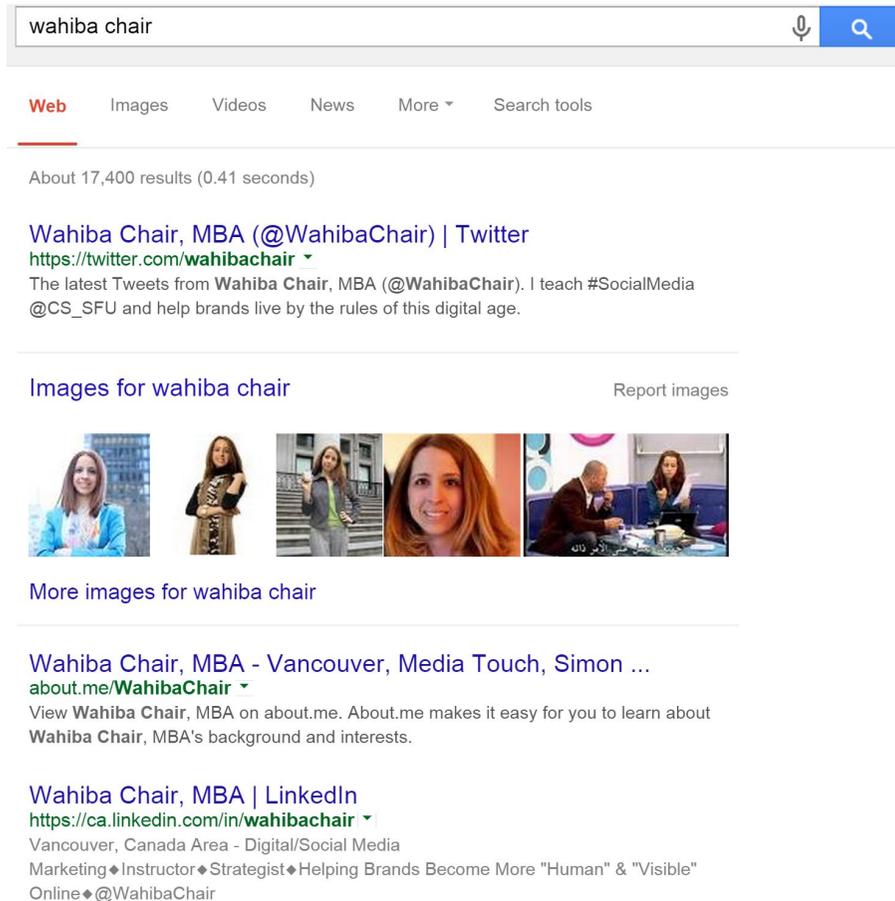
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wahiba Chair is an award-winning digital technologist with over 10 years of experience in marketing and communications including branding, public relations and digital marketing.

At her agency, [MediaTouch.ca](#), she helps companies build and improve their online presence through sustainable, measurable and scalable content and social media strategies.

Chair built her digital skills as the founder of [Carrotlines](#), Canada’s top health and fitness platform. She has an MBA from Simon Fraser University. Connect with her on [Twitter](#), [Google+](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

LinkedIn) or website/blog to come up first. If someone else has the same name as you, try Googling yourself along with where you live (e.g. "John Smith Vancouver") to make sure you are on top of search results. Here's what my vanity search looks like:



The screenshot shows a Google search for "wahiba chair". The search bar contains the text "wahiba chair" and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "Web", "Images", "Videos", "News", "More", and "Search tools". The "Web" tab is selected. The search results show "About 17,400 results (0.41 seconds)". The first result is "Wahiba Chair, MBA (@WahibaChair) | Twitter" with a link to "https://twitter.com/wahibachair". Below this is a snippet of text: "The latest Tweets from Wahiba Chair, MBA (@WahibaChair). I teach #SocialMedia @CS_SFU and help brands live by the rules of this digital age." The second result is "Images for wahiba chair" with a link to "Report images". Below this are five image thumbnails. The third result is "Wahiba Chair, MBA - Vancouver, Media Touch, Simon ..." with a link to "about.me/WahibaChair". Below this is a snippet of text: "View Wahiba Chair, MBA on about.me. About.me makes it easy for you to learn about Wahiba Chair, MBA's background and interests." The fourth result is "Wahiba Chair, MBA | LinkedIn" with a link to "https://ca.linkedin.com/in/wahibachair". Below this is a snippet of text: "Vancouver, Canada Area - Digital/Social Media Marketing ♦ Instructor ♦ Strategist ♦ Helping Brands Become More 'Human' & 'Visible' Online ♦ @WahibaChair".

2) Set up Google Alerts (for free)

What if something new comes up in your search results? This is where Google Alerts comes in handy. By setting up some keywords like your name, Google will alert you when a new link is indexed.

When setting up Google alerts, don't just set up your first and last name. Use variations, misspellings, etc. Also, if your name is rather common, you can set the alerts up by region so you don't get inundated with irrelevant content. Once you **set up the alert**, Google will send you an email when new results come up (based on your preferred frequency). It's that easy.

Here's what setting up an alert will look like:

Alerts

Monitor the web for interesting new content

How often: At most once a week

Sources: Automatic

Language: English

Region: Any Region

How many: Only the best results

Deliver to: [redacted]@gmail.com

[CREATE ALERT](#) [Hide options](#)

3) Check your social networks (and Klout)

For social networks that you may be using for staying in touch with friends and family, like Facebook, make sure you have checked your privacy settings. Remember, though, that everything you share online is “public” (and may be used “against” you).

Make sure you have consistent branding

For other social media channels such as LinkedIn and Twitter that you may be using for professional purposes, make sure you have consistent branding.

This means that you have the same photo (a professional headshot, hopefully), bio and creative assets.

Tools like [Canva](#) can help you create professional-looking social media headers and backgrounds (for free) without being (or hiring) a designer.

Check your Klout score

Finally, check your [Klout](#) score (it’s also free). Klout will give you a score (from 0 to 100) based on your social media engagement and influence.

What’s a good Klout score? It depends. Your Klout score may matter more if you’re considering a career in digital communications, for instance. But in general, a score of 50 or higher is a good benchmark (if you are active, that is).

In addition to your Klout score, look for the topics that come up. These are generated automatically by Klout based on what you share online (if you do not

see topics, this means your Klout doesn't have enough data yet). If these topics aren't aligned with your niche, then it's time to rethink the content that you are sharing on social media. Klout's **personalized content recommendations** can help with this.

Here's part of my Klout profile:

Wahiba Chair

I teach #SocialMedia @CS_SFU and help brands live by the rules of this digital age. Ex @StarsOfScience @CarrotLines. Healthy Chef Wanna Be

Edit

Advertising Expert Branding Expert Communications Expert

Digital Marketing Expert Marketing Expert Social Marketing Expert

Social Media Expert Air Travel Klout Online Learning Small Business

Have you tried any of these tips? Do you have any questions on personal branding for your job search? Ask below! Chances are, if you're job searching, you'll quickly reap the benefits of strengthening your online brand.