45+

LTU

empowering older workers

empowering LTU older workers
through coaching & personal branding

EMPOWERING LTUs

Empowering long-term unemployed older workers through coaching & personal branding

Part 2: Handbook on empowerment strategies and training tools to motivate and activate tong-term unemployed workers back to work.

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TOPIC 3

Using Social Media for Personal Branding

"*If content is the fuel for your personal brand, social media is the engine.*"

Jayson DeMers - Founder and CEO of AudienceBloom

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This training material was developed within the framework of the project "EMPOWERING LTU´s Older Workers through Coaching and Personal Branding".

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is considered as a key aspect by experts for a successful personal branding strategy.

Nowadays most information, communication and relationships, either at business or private level, pass through the web and social media.

To re-enter the labor market, therefore, LTUs should take advantage of these powerful tools.

Nevertheless LTUs, due to their age or background, are often not really familiar with the web and social networks. Sometimes they even lack basic computer literacy - and in this case the first need is to provide them with adequate opportunities for learning. In other cases, LTUs are able to use a computer to search for basic information on the web and emails for communication, but lack the self-confidence and familiarity to take advantage of the full potential of the internet and all the tools and channels it has to offer. In other cases, they use social media but without an efficient communication strategy and therefore don't take the most out of it.

Within this part of the EMPOWER training pack, career advisors and professionals can find a framework and practical tips to encourage LTUs to use social media channels and networks to promote their personal brand.

The last part of this lesson is directly addressed at LTUs and presents practical tips on how to use social networks for effective personal branding.

1. SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PERSONAL BRANDING

Social media is a powerful tool for communicating one's own personal branding and finding a job. In fact, social media are considered by many experts one of the key aspects of a successful personal branding.

Let us take a look at the most popular social media platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. But there are plenty of channels, platforms and networks on the web, each of them with different characteristics and a different target audience. That is why it is important for LTUs to get familiar with social media and learn which platform to use and how, according to their personal goals and aims[1].

Here below is a list of the most popular social networks:

Facebook

Facebook counts over 2 billion of active users in 2017, connecting to each other every month for private and business purposes. Users can create an account, publishing personal information, such as their name, occupation, schools attended, interests and hobbies and so on. With an account, they can connect to other users, by adding them as "friends", i.e. by searching for them and sending them a friend request. If they accept, the users start following each other— which means that they may see each other's posts in News Feeds. More than 750 million new friendships are formed on Facebook each day.[2] Through Facebook, users share interests, photos, videos, thoughts, comments to each other posts, etc. They can form or join public or private groups, send private and public messages, follow public pages[3], etc.

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[1] Images of this chapter are from https://pixabay.com

[2] Facebook newsroom: https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/02/friends-day-awards/

[3] Facebook Help Centre - https://www.facebook.com/help/1540345696275090/?helpref=hc_fnav

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TIPS!

- Facebook is useful to get in touch with people with interests similar to yours as well as to follow companies and entities you want to work with/for.

- A smart profile of Facebook, built around personal info and photos can be a good and lively "business card". Be careful to not publish images that are too private and might be embarrassing.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn the social network dedicated to professional networking. Through LinkedIn it is possible to create profiles, publish CVs and build "connections" with other professionals, as well as to follow companies and organisations, which use this channel to advertise job opportunities. Founded in 2003, LinkedIn counts more than 546 million members worldwide, including executives[4].

TIPS!

- LinkedIn might be useful to professionals with a rich CV and recent working experiences in specific fields.

Twitter

Twitter is an online news and social networking service where users post and interact with short messages, so called "tweets". To post a tweet, users should be registered. A tweet may contain photos, videos, links and text, limited to 140 characters. A hashtag—written with a # symbol—is used to index keywords or topics on Twitter. This function was created on Twitter, and allows people to easily follow topics they are interested in. It should be used before a relevant keyword or phrase, as to categorize them and made easy to find them through the search tool. Users can retweet interesting tweets and follow each other to receive notification.[5]

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[4] LinkedIn page https://www.linkedin.com/company/1337/

[5] Getting started – Twitter Guide- https://help.twitter.com/en/twitter-guide

TIPS

- Choose Twitter to follow companies you are interested working at!

Instagram

Instagram is an internet-based photo-sharing application and service that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly or privately. Instagram lets registered users upload photos or videos to the service. Users can apply various digital filters to their images, and add locations through geotags. They can add hashtags to their posts, linking the photos up to other content on Instagram featuring the same subject or overall topic. Users can connect their Instagram account to other social media profiles, enabling them to share photos to those profiles as well[6].

TIPS!

- Instagram and other photo sharing platforms can be useful if you have something to show to your potential employers or costumers, e.g. recipes of your cooking, drawings, handmade dress, etc.

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing website which allows users to upload, view, rate, share, add to favourites, report, comment on videos, and subscribe to other users. On YouTube it is possible to a wide range of videos, from a wide range of topics, including also presentations, conferences and speeches, video-tutorials.

TIPS!

- A short video –biography can be a creative and catching way to present yourself!

There are many other social networks (https://www.reddit.com/, https://www.tumblr.com/, https://it.pinterest.com), some of them with a strong thematic focus, such as www.funcook.com, that are only about food and recipes that can be used to reach people with specific interests.

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[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instagram

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To learn more about using social networks for personal branding

The **European Personal Branding for Employment project** (EPBE) is an ERASMUS+ strategic partnership coordinated by Open University of Madrid (ES), with partners in Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Germany[7], which aims at supporting employability among **young students** by promoting access to and learning through **Open Educational Resources** (OER) in order to build up an on-line personal brand and using effectively job hunting 4.0 techniques.

Even if this project mainly addresses young people, you can take advantage of some of the materials and resources and adapt them to LTUs' needs.

EPBE project has developed two MOOC (massive open online courses) respectively on Personal Branding and Job Hunting 4.0. Enrollment in these courses is free on the Udemy platform.

Suggested activity: Watch UNIT 3 "SOCIAL MEDIA and JOB HUNTING 4.0" of the EPBE MOOC Course on Job Hunting https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLy6yn-jFZ8 and reply to the following questions:

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[7] More info at http://epbe.eu/project/

Questions:

1) What are the social networks mentioned in the video that seem to be more useful and suitable to you? Go to the web and explore!

2) Why is important to include your photo in your profiles?

3) Through social networks you can make known your CV to potential employers, but you can also keep yourself update with news about companies you're interested in working for. Search on the web the most important companies in your sector and explore their social network channels.

2. LTUs And Social Media

LTUs and more in general older people are often skeptical or even afraid of using the internet and especially social media, so first of all we need to understand how to overcome this situation and make LTUs more familiar with them.

A draft list of the most common obstacles that hinder LTUs by using Social Media is the following:

- No/scarce computer literacy (*I'm not able to use PC & emails*)

- No/scarce trust on social networks or fears to share information (Social media are dangerous! Through social media someone can steal my money, or my identity...)

- No/poor believe in your own capacities (I'm too old for learning how to use Internet)

- Job experience and/or perspective in a job sector which is not concerned by social media (I worked in a cleaning agency, social media are not useful).

But there are also some benefits in using social media at age + 45, for example:

- More working experiences to tell;

- Better awareness of their own strength and weaknesses;

- More connections who can help you with your career;

- Showing potential to employers about being are up-to-date and having ICT skills.

FOR THOSE MORE EXPERIENCED AND FAMILIAR WITH ICT

Personal branding is also described by many experts as a sort of storytelling, which means it represents a way to narrate a story about *yourself*. Therefore, older workers and LTUs might have fascinating stories to tell (more than young people, indeed!) and social media can be used to make these stories more interesting with pictures and photos, and to reach a wider audience.

For persons, more familiar and more experienced with internet it might be useful to create **a blog to narrate their professional and personal story, illustrated with photos, texts and (why not) videos about their professional experiences and their goals for the future.** A blog can be used as a unique platform to share content on social media, and therefore can make things easier. There are many free platforms to create e-run blogs: www.wordPpress.com and www.blogger.com are just two of the more popular ones.

3. BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

To be a confident and active user of social media is not enough. Many people have a lot of online interactions, but often without a solid communication strategy.

HOW TO SUPPORT LTUs TO DEVELOP A FEASIBLE, EFFECTIVE AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

Roberto Blake is a Creative Entrepreneur who runs a YouTube channel with educational purpose, about Creative Careers, Freelancing, Marketing & How-to Videos. Roberto's YouTube channels is really successful: with 226.000 subscribers; and almost 14.000.000 views since 2009.

Roberto publishes videos every day of the week on different topics, such as: Graphic Design, Design Education, Logo Design, Web Design; Technology (Apps, Software, Demos, Buying Guides); Photography & videos; YouTube Videos; Video Marketing; Small Business and Social Media; Vlogs, Book Reviews, Motivational Videos, etc.).

In this video Roberto explains how to build a consistent communication strategy on social media.
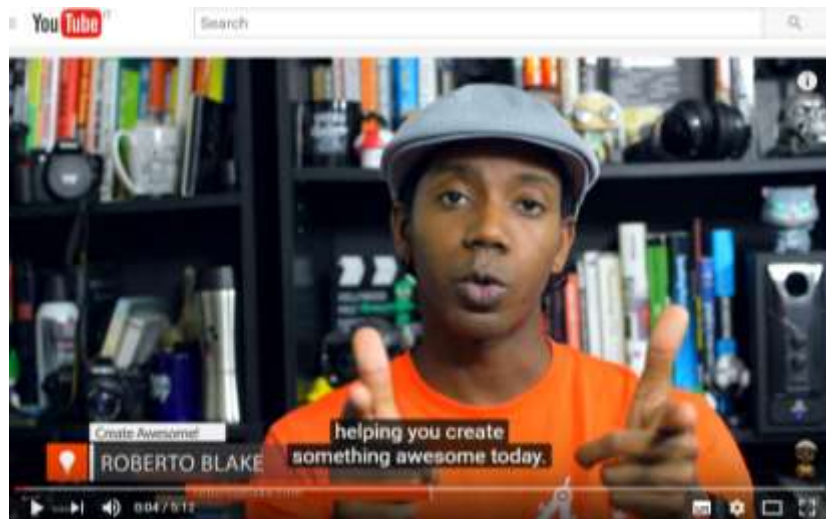
Watch the video on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BW-4XV2HblA

MAIN ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

To develop an efficient strategy some basic elements should be taken into account, as in the grid shown here below:

Aim/goal to achieve with the strategy
E.g. finding a job as a cook in a restaurant/starting a catering service.
Target audience to reach
e.g. restaurants, cantines, individuals interested in catering services.
Main message to diffuse
e.g. personal branding statement (e.g. I'm an efficient and experienced cook, fast and accurate at work. My specialty are healthy and tasty dishes for vegetarians) consistent profile picture, biography and goals.
Channels / tools to use
e.g. Funcook, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAREER ADVISORS

In order to support LTUs in building and implementing an effective communication strategy we suggest career advisors to work together with them according to the following steps:

1. Making a preliminary analysis:

   - Search LTU's name on Google, and analyze the results obtained:
     - What are the main results? Is she/he presenting on the web?
     - If yes:
       - What image do these results depict?
       - Who speaks about her/him on the web and why?
     - If no: dedicate some time in explaining her/ him what are the main social networks and how they work. In same case, a basic computer course might be necessary

2. Drafting the communication plan, according to the template above, and more specifically:

   - Define together what are the main aims / goals of the communication strategy, according to the her / his main interests and professional goals;
   - Identify the main target audience to be reached through the strategy;

- Select the most suitable channels/platforms that can be used to reach these goals and how they work;
- Make a realistic draft plan, detailing:
    - The main message to diffuse;
    - The chosen profile image and short biography;
    - What to publish;
    - How often.

3. Periodical monitoring and review of the plan:

- After a while, meet the person and analyse the main results of the strategy in terms of:
    - Consistency of the information diffused;
    - Regularity of publication;
    - Number of achieved contacts.

ONLINE REPUTATION

Online reputation is the image a person has on the web, which is built from two elements:

1. What she/he posts about her/himself.

2. What other people say about her/him.

When posting on social media channels, it's important to be careful to not publish embarrassing photos of private life, and to avoid taking strong political positions or to express strong negative opinions on public persons or facts.

On the other hand, it's also important to avoid posts and pictures that look too generic, so that the social channels look dynamic and interesting.

It's not easy to find the right balance between personal and generic!

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4. LEARNING ACTIVITY

Read the following cases and for each of them analyse the main obstacles that hinder the person to use social networks and the main benefits they could get from using them. Furthermore, for each of them develop a communication strategy following the template presented above.

CASE 1: MICHELE

55 years old.

Michele worked for many years as a truck driver, but he had to quit at 40 due to health problems (back pain). At that time, he had 2 small children and because his wife had a full time well paid job, he decided to be a "house husband".

Now the children have grown-up and he wants to find a new job.

Michele is good in fixing things (he's taking care of the house and the whole building) and has excellent social skills (participated in school & parent's associations). He would like a job that keeps him in touch with people, maybe in a bar or a restaurant. He cannot do hard physical labour however.

Michele has ICT skills, but doesn't use any social media. He thinks he is too old for social media.

Questions:

➢ What are the main obstacles for Michele to use social media for his personal branding?

➢ How can these obstacles be solved?

➢ Draft a communication strategy for Michele using the template above.

CASE STUDY 2: MONICA

54 years old.

Monica worked as a hairdresser since she was 30. She had to quit to take care of her children and later of her mother. During these years she temporarily worked as a babysitter and occasionally in a bar. Now the children have grown up, and she needs to find a job.

Monica is very good as a hairdresser but too much time has passed to apply for this job, as she has to compete with younger people.

She's also good at sewing and cooking.

With the help of her daughter, Monica learned how to navigate the web and use emails. Monica is not familiar with social media however. Furthermore, she is really anxious about giving away any personal details on the web (what if someone steals her data or identity?).

Questions:

➢ What are the main obstacles for Monica to use social networks? How can these obstacles be solved?

➢ What could be the main benefits for communicating her personal branding through social media?

➢ Draft a communication strategy for Monica using the template above.

CASE STUDY 3: LUCA

42 years old.

Luca is a very skilled graphic designer. He worked for a long time in a company but he quit at 38, when the company was sold to a new owner who radically changed its mission and style.

In the recent years Luca tried to open a new company by himself but without any success and occasionally worked as a freelancer.

Interests and skills: Luca's not only very good at graphic design but also in interior design and carpentry. He likes to renovate old pieces of furniture and he dreams of opening a B&B.

Luca uses social media (mainly Facebook and Instagram) to stay connected with his friends. Luca doesn't trust the social media for job hunting and self-promotion. To be honest, he doesn't really like to use social networks, he does it only because he "has to", to stay in touch with friends.

Questions:

➢ What are the main obstacles for Luca to use social media for personal branding and self-promotion? How can these obstacles be solved?

➢ What could be the main benefits for communicating his personal branding through social media?

➢ Draft a communication strategy for Luca using the template above.

5. PRACTICAL TIPS FOR OLDER WORKERS

5 STEPS TO BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

According to online experts, there are some rules to follow to build a successful personal branding strategy on social media.

On the web, you can find several articles, videos and tutorials on this topic.

Among all of them we have chosen the 5 following steps suggested by BUFFER experts[8].

1- CHOOSE 1 TO 3 AREAS OF EXPERTISE (NOT MORE!)

Buffers' tips:

- *What do you want to be known for?*

- *It isn't enough to choose a general field such as "marketing" or "human resources." Instead, it's better to develop yourself in a very specific niche.*

- *Search for which conversations and topics are happening around your chosen area/s (keyword search).*

- *Identify which people currently share things about those topics (the so called "influencers").*

2- KEEP THE SAME NAME, PROFILE, PIC, IMAGERY, AND LOOK ACROSS ALL YOUR SOCIAL PROFILES

- *Keeping a consistent profile helps others to find you easily, and it helps cement a picture of you in the minds of others.*

- *Use a consistent name and profile photos on all channels.*

- *Come up with a catchy, unique headline or bio & a consistent design look.*

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[8] BUFFER is an application to manage different social media channels from one single place. It allows to schedule and publish posts from a single place to different channels. BUFFER is free in the basic version for individuals, while upgrading and business versions are offered for a fee. Besides the application, BUFFER also hosts blogs and runs workshops providing tips and tutorials on how to use social media. BUFFER is used already by over 3 million people around the word, who form a sort of community. https://buffer.com/app

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- *Adapt the way you post to the different channels.*

- *(If needed) Keep separate personal and professional profile using different alias.*

3- POST EVERY DAY TO YOUR MOST VALUED SOCIAL PROFILES

- *Making yourself easy to find is the first step toward a great brand.*

- *Post regularly is a key to have followers (but be careful to not post too much) … the more followers you'll have! But also, be careful to not post too much!*

- *Share your enthusiasm and expertise with others.*

- *Make sure your posts are varied both in content & type… but consistent.*

4 - JOIN A CHAT, GROUP, OR A COMMUNITY TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS

- *Take a proactive approach to social media engagement by getting involved with your community.*

- *Ask for advice from everyone you stand to learn from.*

- *Ask your connections if there's anything you can do for them.*

- *Ask a lot questions…*

- *Be interactive.*

5- MONITOR MENTIONS OF YOUR NAME, AND REPLY QUICKLY TO EVERY MENTION

- *What is your "online reputation"?*

- *What is being said about you on the web?*

- *What is the image you have on the Internet?*

TIPS FOR ENHANCING YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

When you post something, you could try to make it interesting for your contacts to react on this.

You should try to follow these reactions and reply to all of them, either by thanking them when they appreciate you or by keeping calm or explaining your reasons when they criticise.

In addition, you should periodically monitor your reputation by searching your name on Google to see what is being said about you on the web.

Want to learn more about Online Reputation? Watch this video-lesson about from Erasmus+ Project EPBE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hNu1cwC90s&t=72s

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