# 12 Developing an Online Profile

Developing an online profile is a growing trend (Chen, 2013). The concept of personal branding suggests that, like brands, individuals can strategically select and highlight those attributes that will advance them towards their goals (Peters, 1997). Individuals should identify their unique value proposition and then translate this into a compelling personal brand statement (Chen, 2013). Personal branding can differentiate an individual within a competitive job market. The availability, low-costs and ease of use of a range of online tools enables individuals to effectively communicate across a range of digital channels. In the UK, a professional social networking site (PSNS) is LinkedIn. Other countries might have their equivalent site (e.g. Viadeo in France, Xing in Germany), and sometimes, depending on the profession there are niche PSNS as it is the case of Behance for those in creative industries. Weblogs or blogs are form of personal, easy-to-manage web site with content presented in reverse chronological order (Schiano et al., 2004). There are several free platforms that allow users to create a blog easily (e.g. WordPress, blogger). For students seeking to become digital marketers such tools offer a way to demonstrate digital skills and gain valuable experience. In addition there is enjoyment in engaging with the online audience and joining a growing community of online communicators.

## Blogging

Blogs can be published independently or as part of a job role within an organisation. Blog content creators are called bloggers, and tend to be younger, better educated, more likely to be urban dwellers, and avid online shoppers

(Guadagno et al., 2008). Reading blogs is a popular online activity among certain segments of Internet users. Statistics provided by Wordpress, a blog host, indicate that over 409 million people read 23.7 billion blog pages in their platforms each month (Wordpress, 2017).

A brand may decide to create a blog to increase its ranking in search engine results pages, since blog content will be scored highly for recency and authenticity by the search engine algorithm (HubSpot, 2017). Due to the popularity and the amount of views and traffic that blogs generate worldwide, blogs are an important media channel for marketers. Alghawi et al. (2014) examine audience response to four types of company blogs written by their CEOs: expert, friend, diary and textbook. They find that consumers prefer CEOs who adopt the expert blogging style. Blogs are a central part of a content marketing strategy, and in fact a survey conducted by HubSpot (2017) found that 53% of marketers are using blogs to disseminate content. Blogging, although traditionally done in the form of long pieces of text, has evolved into other types of media. Blogging can be image-based, as in the case or Instagram or Pinterest. There is also microblogging, which involves shorter posts (e.g. Twitter only allows 280 characters).

## ■ Blog revenue models



- Being paid for endorsing or linking to a brand
- Readers pay to access content

**Selling services**

**Selling content**

**Selling ad space**

**Selling information**

- Being paid for ad space on a website
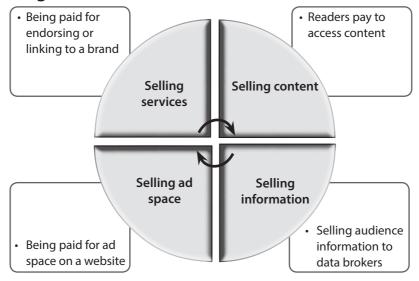- Selling audience information to data brokers

**Figure 12.1:** Four online revenue models

A revenue model describes the process by which money can be earned from the blog. Choosing a business model will help with decisions regarding how much resource to invest in content generation and promotion of the blog.

For example, if the blog is expected to generate the equivalent of a salary in terms of advertising revenue, then considerable time and effort will be needed to generate content to attract and retain a sizable and loyal target audience. It may be wise to pay to be listed highly in search engine results in order to grow this audience. There are four main revenue models: selling content, selling information, selling advertisement space and selling services (Figure 12.1)

## Selling content

Selling content online generates revenue. Pricing methods in digital environments allow for greater flexibility, either by paying a subscription (e.g. a monthly Spotify subscription to have access to an extensive number of artists) or through licensing (e.g. Microsoft Office 365). Selling content online can be challenging, as users are used to accessing content for free (Lambrecht and Misra, 2016). A survey conducted in 2002 by Pew Research Centre asked if users would be willing to pay for access to a site that was previously free, with only 12% of interviewees saying they would, while 50% would try to find a free alternative, and 36% would simply stop accessing the online information or service altogether (Crosbie, 2002). Since then, attitudes towards online purchasing have become more positive, with a more recent survey finding that nearly two-thirds of Internet users (65%) have paid to download or access some kind of content from the Internet (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Some industries have been more affected by resistance to payment than others. For example, media companies are facing increasing competition from other sources that create content for free (e.g. Huffington Post for news, YouTube for videos and music). One selling option that has been adopted by established media companies is to offer a combination of free and subscription-based content, a hybrid business model. Typically older or more general or limited content is free, while the most valuable content or the full article is available only to paying members (Wang et al., 2005). Examples of the hybrid revenue model have been adopted by established names such as *The New York Times* and *The Economist*.

## Selling information

Selling information is sending information about consumers' identities, habits, needs and online behaviours to specialist companies who use this data for activities such as programmatic advertising. Programmatic advertising is a digital advertising innovation where advertisements are placed before the user based on their previous online activity. Audience data is sold to third

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