

Expert Tips For Parents To Help Their Children Declutter Their Digital Brand

(NAPSA)—Today, what people see about us online is as much of who we are as what people see in person. The prevalence of social media and our need to record nearly every aspect of our lives place an importance on maintaining a positive and professional online identity and brand. Oftentimes, how we appear online can impact our real lives, including getting a job, earning an education or building relationships.

This is especially important for today's younger generations, who will soon apply for college or start careers. Young professionals and high school and college students are comfortable living as much of their lives online as they do in person. While sharing their experiences online has become a normal aspect of life, it may have negative implications if what they post is seen as lewd, unprofessional or juvenile.

There are countless examples of how online identities can cause someone to be fired or expelled. Parents can lead the way in smart online practices by helping their children declutter their online presence. Dennis Bonilla, executive dean of University of Phoenix's College of Information Systems & Technology, compares digital brands to tattoos, and warns that the content we post online can never be fully erased.

"It is vital for parents to review digital brands with their children, especially as they prepare to enter the professional chapter of their lives," Bonilla said. "It may not seem cool to children to censor online content, but they will appreciate their parents' help in the long run."

Bonilla shared four tips for parents to help their children declutter and improve their online identity.

1. Perform an online audit. One of the easiest first steps that parents can take is to perform an online audit with their children to help them see what personal information about them is available online. Young adults may not think about all the information that is available or how it can impact their life and career. Inappropriate comments or photos could be the deciding factor in an interview or scholarship application. A quick search of their name, school or job can provide a good idea of what others can find about them.



To put their best self forward to prospective educators and employers, young people should review and repair their online presence.

2. Clean up and learn from social media history. Encourage your child to revisit old posts, photographs and comments across social media sites and take time to remove anything that might be questionable. When it comes to career-focused sites like LinkedIn, make sure their information is professional, career relevant and up-to-date. If your children's content is immature or unprofessional, teach your children to learn from their post history and avoid similar future mistakes.

3. Update—and diversify—passwords. Cyber protection is as important as a clean identity. A hacked account or leaked information can make a person appear unprofessional, despite the industry. The 10 to 15 minutes it takes to review your child's accounts and strengthen and diversify their passwords across sites could very well save them the hours or days it would take to deal with a stolen identity—let alone the hundreds or thousands of dollars that could cost. Make sure your child's new passwords are long, complicated, and use a combination of letters, numbers and symbols.

4. Serve as an example. As established professionals, most parents understand the proper content to post to social media sites. Use your accounts and online identity as an example for your children. By posting professional content, limiting the amount of information available online and positioning yourself as a hireable candidate, you set a good example for your children to follow to ensure they improve and maintain a good online identity.