

Digital Leadership in Higher Education

Purposeful Social Media in a Connected World



Chapter 3: Plugging Digital Skills into Your Professional Practice

Digital Literacy Checklist

APPLICATION EXERCISE 3.1

This application exercise has several parts that will guide you through exploring your digital literacy and fluency status. We'll recognize our feelings about technology, then put into action methods for ongoing tech education that will fill our digital literacy gaps. Also, learning will come from paying attention to others, including those who are digital influencers in the field and for our campuses/organizations. By the end of the exercise, you'll be tasked to play with new tools and create sandbox scenarios for you or your team to act out.

Part A: Mind, Spirit, Tech Connection

Get to know yourself and tech. Pause and think about how you really “feel” about tech, especially social media. What emotions do certain applications evoke? What do you like, love, or hate? Some platforms and tools may be a trigger for you personally, which will impact how you approach implementation in your programs or even how you educate your students or staff. Let's tap into your mind, body, and spirit, connected to tech, and recognize the first response. Notice the differences using the framework below. We'll bring this back up later as we create tech terms and conditions for our lives.

Platform or Tool	Mind	Body	Spirit
<i>Example: Email</i>	<i>Scattered, frustrated</i>	<i>Hunched forward, tightened</i>	<i>Tired</i>
<i>Example: Pinterest</i>	<i>Explore, enlightened</i>	<i>Relaxed, hungry</i>	<i>Laughter, light</i>
Platform or Tool	Mind	Body	Spirit

Part B: Holistic Lens

Step “outside your body” in a holistic sense with a researcher lens. If you find you are meeting resistance to your technology-related ideas (or you are resistant to tech yourself), let’s use an external view of what is at play with possible data points. It’s time to look beyond anecdotal evidence about the tool and back up your assumptions with data and research.

- Set up a Google Scholar alert that notifies you about the latest published research and scholarship with key words such as “social media higher ed,” “virtual reality (VR) pedagogy,” or “college students Snapchat.”
- Looking for more academic substance on social media and tech? If you’re employed by a university, you can call on library resources for further research, for free!

Part C: Lurk and Learn From Your Digital Influencers

Scroll through a leader’s Twitter timeline to learn how they use the platform, what’s important to them, and how you are interpreting their overall presence.

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- Find three people you admire who use social media and/or technology tools. At least one of them should be in higher ed, ideally in a position you aspire to attain one day. I would also challenge you to include someone from your current campus or organization.
- Find three places where they have a digital presence, including social media and digital storytelling platforms like blogging, YouTube, or a podcast. Pay attention to who they follow, what they share, the hashtags they use, and so on. As you learn from their online activity, think about how their digital leadership choices could inspire your own online activity.

Record your observations in the table below.

Digital Influencer	Platform Discoveries	Platform Discoveries	Platform Discoveries

Part D: Get to Know Your Campus Digital Influencers

Look for social media activity from staff in your university library, information technology department, university relations, teaching and learning center, instructional design, and communications-related divisions. Most likely, at least one person on your campus already has

advanced knowledge and the ability to evaluate certain types of tech built into their position description. Still no luck? Look to additional internal resources in subgroups—for example,

- if you are in a state system, look at your other system campuses;
- if you're in a faith-based institution, like a Catholic university, look to other Catholic universities;
- and so on.

The goal is to find a peer who has unique insights based on your campus culture.

Part E: No FOMO Allowed

Learn to keep up with tech by attempting to stay in the know about technology—but no fear of missing out (FOMO) allowed. Being attuned to all tech all the time would be exhausting, even if you are an experimenter. I would also venture to say that your human resources professional development series may not always meet your tech needs.

- Select one specific platform you are willing to learn more about, and set up a Google alert for it.
- Find free educational videos on LinkedIn Learning, YouTube, Khan Academy, or other sources to which your university or professional association(s) may subscribe.

Part F: Seek a Reverse Tech Mentor

This part of the application exercise can be especially helpful if you fall closer to the resister side of the continuum.

- Find someone who can guide you on tech in a one-to-one setting, which will be less intimidating than large group scenarios. This could be based on campus role, such as an expert from central marketing or information technology, or based on platform usage, such as a teen introducing you to Kik or Marco Polo. Let's have some fun with this challenge by celebrating your reverse tech mentor. Post a picture with them with the hashtags #DigLead #TechMentor. Can't wait to see them!

This tactic works well if you are in a senior-level position and your daily calendar may not normally connect you with midlevel or younger professionals who could have a pulse on tech.

Part G: Advancing the Application

Create sandbox spaces, which are formalized spaces in one-on-ones, department meetings, and retreats.

- Give your experimenters time to teach, but challenge them to preevaluate technology and gather data.
- Allow space for resisters to express concerns while they learn tools with no expectation of immediate adoption. This may be a time to bring in someone from outside your department (even if they work on your campus) to guide a tech tutorial or design-thinking workshop.

Part H: Be a Futurist

This final part of the application exercise will especially appeal to you if you identify as an experimenter or influencer. I want you to think ahead by looking behind. By this, I mean that you should plan for the future of higher ed by looking to K–12 education in both curriculum and student adoption patterns. Especially with social and mobile technology, trends tend to start with 13 to 18 year olds. Snapchat, Kik, and Marco Polo are good past examples, and at the time of publication, an app called TikTok was predominantly being used by 10 to 18 year olds. As a higher ed professional, this usage pattern should be on your radar, but you don't necessarily have to run out and create a presence there yet (even though I totally think enrollment management/recruiters should).

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Be a Digital Explorer

APPLICATION EXERCISE 3.2

One of the first tasks in digital identity is to understand your current online presence. So, let's be digital explorers! Search your legal name, as well as any other version of your name that could be used. For example, I would search "Josie Ahlquist;" "Dr. Josie Ahlquist"; and my maiden name, "Josie Hutchinson." I may also search using my middle name.

Part A: Internet Investigation Tactics

Search for your name in the platforms listed below, whether or not you have an account on them. What came up when you conducted these searches? If you want to use more advanced or creative internet search tactics, try a reverse image search, a search for your current address or phone number, or a search for your name on all social media platforms. In the final section, list any action you need to take, such as closing an old account, untagging yourself from a picture, and so on. What came up when you conducted these searches? Are you finding any patterns?

Bing	
Facebook	
Google	
Reddit	
Tumblr	

Twitter	
YouTube	
Other	
Action Required:	

Part B: Control Your Privacy

As I noted earlier in chapter 3, some things related to digital identity we have control over, and some we don't. Your choices include what you post as well as some privacy settings that might publicly hide your data/activity.

- Go into every social platform on which you have an account, from LinkedIn to Facebook Messenger, and review your privacy settings.
- Go further and review the terms and conditions of each platform to try to understand their privacy and data settings and what their privacy policies really mean.

Part C: Identify Your Core

This part of the application exercise goes beyond digital tools into identity and the congruence and consistence between online and offline versions.

- Think about the core parts of your identity. How you would describe yourself to a close friend, from your background to hobbies to business-related interests? What values do you hold salient in your life that carry over to your work in education?

- Consider these core parts of you, and find out whether they appear when you search your name on Google or scan your Instagram or Facebook accounts. Are these conscious choices or happenstance collections over time?

Part D: Platform Presence, People, and Privacy Settings

List every social media application on which you have/had an account on the next page. Replace any that do not apply, and add others more relevant to you. Include the privacy settings you discovered in Part B, or note what your account looks like to the public. Go into each of your pages to summarize what content you share and what you do on each of these platforms.

Also, decide who you'll friend or follow. To date, most higher ed professionals get to personally choose who they will or will not connect with online. Please use this activity to reflect on and document your current choice of who you'll connect with on each platform. This exercise is

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intended for you to explore your ideal audience on each platform, as well as discover opportunities or gaps.

Platform	Privacy Settings	Posting Themes	Ideal Audience	Who Won't You Connect With (If Any) and Why?
Facebook				
Twitter				
YouTube				
LinkedIn				
Instagram				
Snapchat				
TikTok				
Platform	Privacy Settings	Posting Themes	Ideal Audience	Who Won't You Connect With (If Any) and Why?
Pinterest				

Other:				
Other:				

Part E: Set Digital Feedback Loops

It's time to call in support and feedback. A powerful tactic for understanding how your digital identity is being received is to ask others for feedback. Just like you request critiques on your curriculum vitae or résumé, request caring but critical advice from someone who knows you well, such as a supervisor, colleague, or close friend, or even try engaging an executive search firm consultant. It's important to have a number of people do this, as just like with résumés, everyone will have a different opinion!

Now that you have gone through so many exercises, I want you to seek out feedback from two people you respect (supervisor, mentor, instructor, family member, or close friend) on what they see from your public digital activity. Have them attempt an online search for you by any means possible, from Google to specific social media platforms. Ask them to share perceptions they took away from just your Instagram page, search results, or Facebook feed. Give them a few days to do this, then jump on a call and/or take them to coffee or lunch. I don't recommend receiving feedback in just digital form, as the conversation will bring additional light to their insights and ideas.

During your conversation, use the table on the next page to write down the highlights of what they found and their insight into your online presence. Finally, collectively reflect if you will modify anything about your approach to these platforms and/or actions you need to take.

Feedback 1	Feedback 2

Based on this feedback, what, if any, changes will you make?	

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Digital Branding Wish List

APPLICATION EXERCISE 3.3

To start intentionally growing and refining your social media presence and overall brand, we need to know your current impact and actions online. This will come from conducting an advanced search of your digital identity on platforms and looking for patterns of your past activity. Don't forget to share your discoveries from working through these digital skills exercises. Find the Digital Leadership Network (<http://bit.ly/DigitalLeadershipNetwork>), and head to the chapter 3 topic.

Part A: Advance Your Awareness of Self on Social Media

In this part of the exercise, you'll practice social listening. Even if you don't have a profile on a social media platform, you may already have a digital presence and reputation on it. Checking for it is like hearing your name being mentioned in a crowd in digital form. Flip back to chapter 1 to review current platforms, then search your name on them. I'd suggest doing this at least on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, and YouTube.

For example, on Facebook, you're looking for not only your Facebook profile but also public posts that connect to your name, such as group membership or being tagged in a photo. Another example on Twitter that is common, especially if you've presented at a professional conference, is that an attendee may have cited or quoted your presentation, including your name. Knowledge is power when it comes to your reputation, and this type of social listening will aid your skills of knowing.

Part B: Social Media Feed Audit

I challenge you to complete a social media audit, where you will scroll through the past 30 to 90 days on at least one platform you are on. Write down three observations.

Platform	Observations From the Last 30 to 90 Days

Part C: Peer Social Media Audit

Find at least three professionals who have an active online presence and who inspire you. You may have called them your digital role models. They may be different from the three digital influencers you wrote down earlier. Ideally, you'll connect with the content they share and their genuine approach on the platforms (and in the profession). In other words, you dig their digital brand. Pay attention to the type of content they share, as well as the original content they create. Learn more about their strategy by paying attention to what they post and when, and ask the following:

- What hashtags do they use?
- What other pages/people do they choose to connect with?
- Do they post during workdays, on weekends, or both?
- Do they lean on or avoid specific topics?
- How does their personality come out?

Use the table to add your observations about these three peers' brands.

Activity	Professional 1	Professional 2	Professional 3
Hashtags			

Connections			
Posting Days			
Topics			
Personality			

Part D: Connect Your Institution Brand With Your Own

This part of the exercise recognizes that some universities have clear policies on campus-branded pages and personal social media accounts for staff and faculty. Go find them, as soon as possible. For example, there may actually be a policy that requires you to add a statement on your Twitter account or blog that reads, “Opinions are my own and not the views of my employer.” Let’s take this from a policy to a shared philosophy between your campus/employer and your digital reputation. Review your university and/or department mission, goals, and vision. How do these elements already fit into your brand, and how could you use them to guide your own professional brand?

Part E: Humanizing Your Brand

This final part of the digital branding exercise is emoji-onal. If you had to select three to five emojis that describe you, what would they be? What emotions do these emojis communicate? In what cases would these make sense to include in a post, your bio, and so on? Did you know there is actually published research on the meaning of emojis (Barbieri et al., 2017; Tigwell & Flatla, 2016), a textbook (Danesi, 2016), an encyclopedia of emojis (emojipedia.org), and a dictionary of emojis (emojidictionary.emojifoundation.com)? Check them out if you want to feel accurate about your choices! This exercise is especially fun and easy to share in The Digital Leadership Network. If you haven't already introduced yourself, this is a fun way to do so!

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Warming Up to Digital Leadership

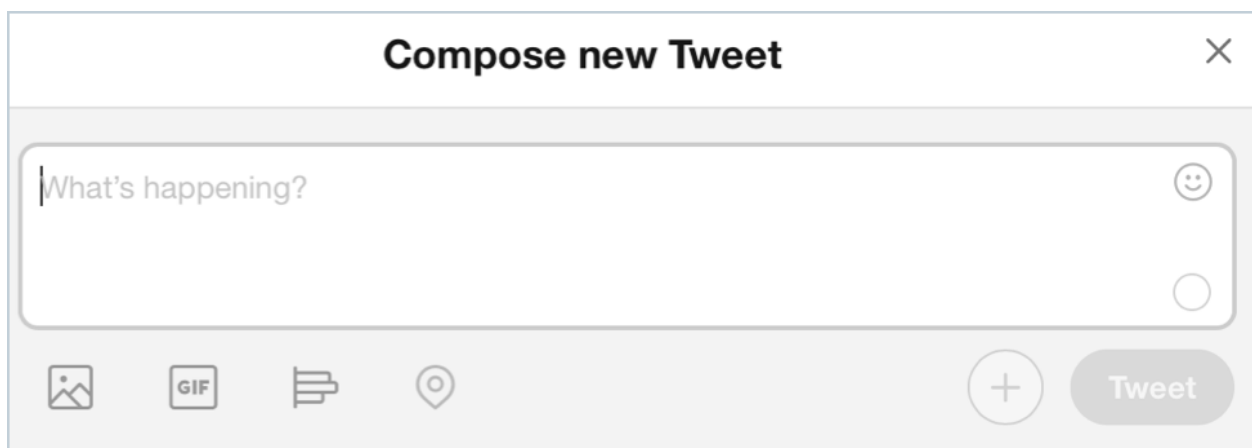
APPLICATION EXERCISE 3.4

Since *digital leadership* is a newer term to higher ed and I will always be, by training and heart, a student affairs educator, this application exercise is an icebreaker. You'll start to look at your leadership abilities differently and dream about possibilities for your online impact. Connecting these dots entices you to own digital leadership in your life.

Part A: Discovering Your Leadership Online

In this part of the exercise, you'll identify the highlights of your social media experience. What has been your best social media experience? What about it made it a positive memory? Who was involved? Why did you feel this way? As a leader, you may feel that every tweet or piece of content should have been perfectly composed or have 100 likes/comments. As a digital leader, you should instead think more deeply about making meaning of your online presence—most likely it involved impacting and interacting with real people. Maybe you helped them, added humor to their day, or even gave them hope through a time of struggle or stress.

What would be included in your best tweet ever? What message, action or understanding would you love your community to know or be part of this week? Using the 280-character limit, as well as options for GIFs, polls, and pictures, what else would you include that would communicate your message? Start crafting that tweet below.

A screenshot of the Twitter 'Compose new Tweet' interface. The window has a title bar that says 'Compose new Tweet' with a close button (X) in the top right corner. Below the title bar is a large text input area with the placeholder text 'What's happening?' and a smiley face emoji icon on the right. Below the text area is a row of icons: a picture icon, a GIF icon, a poll icon, and a location pin icon. To the right of these icons is a plus sign icon and a 'Tweet' button.

Part B: Measuring Your Internet Impact

Write out an exhaustive list of how you have made or how you want to make an impact because of what you've posted in digital spaces. Maybe it will include a GroupMe message you sent to your recruitment counselors after Greek recruitment, a weekly email to your division that celebrates the hard work of your staff, or Instagram stories that shared resources to your community during a hurricane. Are there particular comments you got back, direct messages you received, or community members who shared their appreciation with you the next time you saw each other at a campus event that stand out? To this day, I have a box full of thank-you notes that I crack open on days when I need a pick-me-up. Listing at least three of these internet wins below will remind you of how tools have worked in the past, and if you run into roadblocks or conflicts in the future, they can remind you to not go silent. Digital leaders stay the course in the present by making note of what has worked in the past in their use of digital engagement tools.

Internet Wins

Win 1
Win 2
Win 3

Part C: Digital Impact Expectations Versus Hopes and Dreams

Dream a bit more about your hopes for social media platforms. As you progress through this book, you'll gain knowledge and skills to create and implement, with confidence, a clear and realistic strategy for social media. To begin this process, brainstorm a list of expectations, hopes, and even dreams you have for your social media presence in the table. What are your expectations versus hopes of integrating social media communication tools into your practice? List one to three. These can be very specific, like "Grow to 3,000 Twitter followers," or relational, such as "Be more approachable to current students."

Expectation	Hope	Dream

Part D: Your Role and Rationale as a Digital Leader

In this part of the exercise, you'll identify teachable tech moments. Are there colleagues, friends, or family around you who seem to be struggling with technology or social media? Not just formatting a Word document or creating a graphic in Canva—I'm talking about those who use tools without reflection, such as staying on their phones during dinner or a movie or who seem to show up on Facebook through only negativity and harm. Embracing digital leadership means speaking up in an empathetic, empowering, and kind way. We need to take care in how we use technology that intersects with daily life. Digital leadership should also move you to role model 24/7 your own tech use in person and online. In the next week, is there a teachable tech

moment where you can nudge someone who needs guidance and maybe even inspiration with their use of mobile and social media? You can also think about what overall tech-related behaviors, choices, and actions you could focus on to role model for specific audiences. Brainstorm your teachable tech moments and role modeling possibilities, then list at least three of them below.

Opportunities for Digital Role Modeling

Opportunity 1	
Opportunity 2	
Opportunity 3	

Part E: Your Why for Leading Online

Answer the question “Why are you online?” Break it into smaller facets: What do you hope to accomplish? With whom do you want to connect? Will it matter if you have a presence on Instagram—or further, what is the difference you hope to make because you are on Instagram? These deeper questions crack open the philosophy behind digital leadership. This statement should be uniquely personal. Be inspired by the answers from each digital leadership feature for their Why for Leading Online, but resist the temptation to duplicate them. How can you have a bigger intent and impact if you align your values and goals with your social media presence? Write out an exhaustive list of your values and “why” for all areas of your life in the table below. Then, carry over values that you want to bring into your leadership online. Finally, draft your “why” statement in the final row.

Your Why for Leading Online

Your values for all areas of your life.	Values that translate into leadership online.

Your “why” for leading online.	

Part F: Declare It!

In the last part of the exercise, declare yourself a digital leader. Intention and declaration go a long way. Self-identifying as an ally, an advocate, or a change-maker is one way to set a clear intention, practice, and purpose for your work. It’s the same with how you show up and build strategy around social media. While I’ve listed frameworks, checklists, and activities for *digital leadership* in this book, I’ll be thrilled if you simply embrace the term and begin to apply it to your life, legacy, and leadership. This includes saying; writing down; or even better, posting online, “I am a digital leader.” This ownership beckons congruence with and commitment to yourself and to others both online and offline.

⇒ Now head to our book community, the Digital Leadership Network found at <http://bit.ly/DigitalLeadershipNetwork>, and find the chapter 3 topic, where you can share a few of your reflections and discoveries on any of these exercises.