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Forget the resumé: Online profiles the tool of young job seekers

High school students learning to build professional digital profiles instead of relying on the traditional paper resumé.



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Justin Alvarado smiles as he shows off videos he helped create to classmates during Anthony Perrotta's Grade 9 Intro to Business Studies class at Chaminade College School in North York. Perrotta is helping students build a positive digital profile for themselves, using social media.

By: **Kristin Rushowy** Education Reporter, Published on Thu Jan 28 2016

Don't bother polishing that resumé.

In the digital age, it's dead, says high school teacher and filmmaker Anthony Perrotta, who instead encourages his students to “brand” themselves with professional-looking Twitter, YouTube and blog accounts — though not Facebook because, as his teens tell him, “that’s for moms and dads now.”

“We live in a culture of the hyperlink,” said Perrotta, who teaches at Chaminade College School, an all-boys school in the Toronto Catholic board.

“I can tell you I made movies, but if you go to my website, you can see my work . . . a viable digital footprint shows what you know and what you’ve done. On a resumé, anyone can say anything.”

Perrotta is speaking on the subject at Reading for the Love of It, a national language arts conference in February, showing teachers how their students’ work can be shared online. And for this generation, that’s a key to getting them more engaged in what they’re doing in class.

“There are a lot of teachers doing great digital work, but my thing is ‘where does it live?’” he said. “Great things are happening, but what’s the next step?”

Whether the resumé is obsolete is still up for debate in the business world — with many companies relying on it for job applicants — but experts do believe it is on the way out.

“We are used to the 50-year-old tools of business cards and resumé. For the next evolution of jobs, who looks at a boring, two-page resumé? You have to present a portfolio of something written or something cool you’ve done,” said Professor Beatrix Dart of the University of Toronto, adding LinkedIn has “become the online resumé in the professional community.”

“If you think about trends in the industry and in the economy to be more tech-based, the next generation will be more tech-focused and even things like business cards are pretty old-fashioned these days. If you go to a conference, you don’t exchange business cards, you slip over your v-card, your electronic one. That’s becoming more the norm as we speak.

“But it’s a few more years until the paper resumé will be dead,” added Dart, who teaches at U of T’s Rotman School of Management.

At Ryerson University’s Career Centre, director Caroline Konrad said they’re telling students “the resumé is not the be-all and end-all it might have been 10 years ago. It’s another tool in the tool box.”

The resumé is generally still a requirement and “needs to be sharp,” but because they all look the same “having an online presence is a necessary step.”

Students are also encouraged to use social media, “even just to follow companies and leaders on Twitter so they are up-to-date on what’s going on.”

For Perrotta’s business students, social media gives them a chance to show “what you want the world to know about you,” while building connections through comments on blogs or responses via Twitter. Some of the boys’ work has been noticed: After creating high-quality posters advertising the latest Star Wars movie, they got some local media attention that led to Disney Canada offering them a few passes to the Canadian premiere of the blockbuster movie.

Getting recognition online is appealing to youth, who spend most of their lives online, he said.

“They need to know their voice and their work — it’s beyond marks. Good marks are important, but they don’t mean you have good skills.”

Grade 9 student Gemner Sandoval said he’ll use his blog to write about world issues, his faith, music and photography, while Vincent Pham plans to post about his desire to become a priest. Tweeting and blogging show they are active, engaged citizens, they say.

“It is better to have an online presence,” added Daniel Mobilio, 14. “If people search you on the Internet, you don’t want them to get a bad impression of you.”

Justin Alvarado has a personal Twitter account to share sports news and photos, and started a professional one “to allow me to express what I can really do. It gives you a better reputation with companies. It shows you can advertise yourself; it shows independence and responsibility too.”

Using social media also allows his relatives, who live in Ecuador, to see his work. “Even if I’m not discovered by a big company,” he said, “it’s the exposure to my family that really hits it home.”