Online persona: Building capacity in education organisations to lead and model effective digital citizenship and digital footprints

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In 2018 it is more important than ever to lead and model effective digital citizenship and digital footprints for not only students, but for school leaders in the teaching profession through building an authentic online persona. Adina Sullivan, a K-12 technology integration specialist from the US likens the digital footprint to a “digital tattoo”, and encourages users of technology to “choose their tattoo wisely” as removal is messy. She invites the profession to think carefully about the impact of the digital footprint on professional perception and hastens to add that if teachers do not consider their digital footprint, it can impact online reputation, real-life reputation, employment prospects, admission to professional associations and the reputation of people with whom they associate online. In a study of more than 1000 teachers conducted by the University of Phoenix College of Education in surrounding school districts 80% of teachers felt untrained in how to use social media for professional purposes. This snapshot introduces how a middle level leader in a primary school studying for a Master of Education degree in an Australian university used these ideas and research findings from various studies to argue that successful school leaders and teachers should be using social media daily and modelling how to use such tools for students and colleagues. Construction of a model of 5Ps for creating and monitoring a digital footprint is a practical way to take action it includes the elements of Product, Positive, Presence, Proactive and Privacy. The model is an effective guide for how leaders might begin social media conversations in schools. We argue there is significant value in using social media for professional purposes and carving out an online persona that is both expert and authentic is possible. Furthermore we note that in many universities academics struggle with a social media presence and their issues have much in common with the teaching profession in schools more broadly. During the 7-minute presentation the 5Ps will be explored with resources and suggestions for how to commence and lead discussions with staff and colleagues in widening professional understanding of digital citizenship in today’s world.