Teach in Europe

Pedagogical orientations for an adequate training towards Europe

Presence | Visibility | Control

Yes
Employability

Escola Secundária de Vilela

Gap Egitim Gönüllüleri Dernegi

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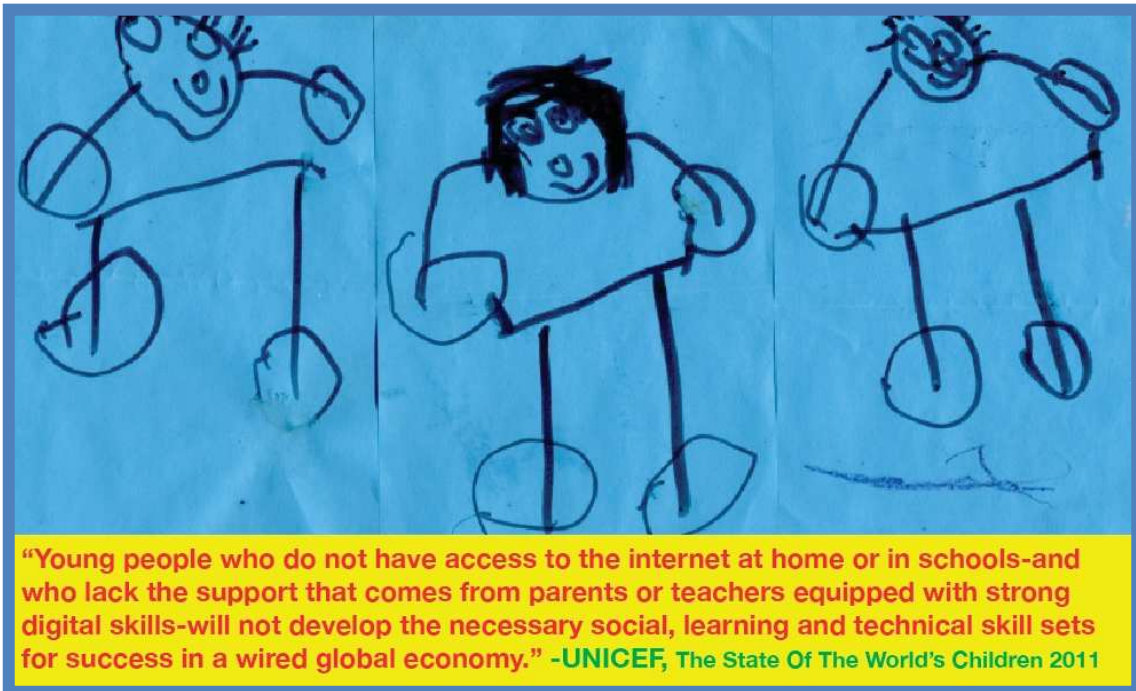
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PART - A

To Teach for Europe

Pedagogical Orientations for an Adequate Training

Towards Europe

1. Teaching In The Web 2.0 Eras: *Which Digital Skills?*

In the time of Web 2.0 and 'digital native' students, school needs to change: perhaps it is time to shift from '**teaching the IT' – or 'WITH the IT'** – to '**teaching IN the IT' The school**'s make over could be realized through its immersion into digitalism. Then, what can teachers do and how?

"Young people who do not have access to the internet at home or in schools-and who lack the support that comes from parents or teachers equipped with strong digital skills-will not develop the necessary social, learning and technical skill sets for success in a wired global economy." -UNICEF, The State Of The World's Children 2011

2. Web 2.0 Tools

Some terms quickly get into common usage. That was the case of 'Web 2.0' (O'Reilly, 2005) and 'digital natives' (Prenskym, 2001), two sayings which synthetically represent epoch-making phenomena. In first place, the web was thought as an instrument to visualize static hyper-textual files (created with use of HTML). This kind of approach could be defined as Web 1.0. Then, Internet evolved into dynamic interfaces (such as forums and blogs). The Web 2.0 is totally equivalent to the Web 1.0, from a strictly technologic point of view, , as the web infrastructure keeps on being made of TCP/IP and HTTP protocols and the hyper-text remains the basic concept of links among contents. The difference consists basically in the approach that users have towards the Web, which shifts from simple visualization – supported, though, by tools effective to research, selection and connection – to an actual contribution to the development and growth of the Web with their own contents.

The Web 2.0 remarks a deep change in the Internet. To average users, 'Web 1.0' used to be a collection of products made by others and the navigation used to be something comparable to the TV 'zapping'. The 2.0 dimension enhances the social dimension of the Internet at its most. Everybody can interact with each other and take part to the production of contents. Blogs, websites for sharing videos, photos, presentations, and libraries – Youtube, Flickr, SlideShare, Anobii – allow anyone to produce contents and share, comment, tag, download, modify and embed those in a blog. The wikis – Wikipedia is just the most popular one – allow a collective elaboration and collaboration in the diffusion of knowledge.

Most of all, the Web 2.0 is a philosophical approach to the net, it represents its social character of sharing and being author rather than merely use. Although many web tools could seem unchanged from a technological point of view – think about forums, blogs, and chats, which existed before, in the Web 1.0 –,this kind of use itself created new scenarios, based on the coexistence of the possibility to use and to create/modify the multimedia.

The possibility to access low-cost services, allowing beginners to edit contents, too, represents an important step towards real interaction and sharing, in which the central role belongs to the users themselves. Before, the development of a personal website required for HTML and programming skills. Nowadays, blogs allow everybody to publish their contents in a powerful graphic look, without a specific technological education.

If before web communities were made mostly by computer experts, today the situation is completely different. The main blog producers are teenagers, writers, journalists, artists,

students, whose activities do not require strong IT skills. The Web 2.0 is characterized, besides than by the sharing contents online, by immediate publication of the material, along with its classification and indexing in the search engines, so that the information is right available for the community. This way, the life cycle of the content management has been completed quickly.

It is not just about new opportunities offered by the XML, it is also a brand new culture: harnessing/ harvesting/ making the most out of the collective intelligence. Google Translate is an example among thousands. It allows comparing, statement by statement, the translation with its original version, and gathering the users' feedbacks ('suggest a better translation').

The 'digital native' term remarks a whole generation – also defined 'net generation' or 'screen generation' – that grew up surrounded by digital technologies: CD-ROM, DVD, iPod, mobiles, digital photos and videos, chats, e-mails, the Web – and into that, websites such as MySpace and Youtube, blogs and sites for sharing music and movies. This generation wrote the first words either with a pen or with a keyboard, gives for granted immediate access to any kind of information and person, is used to search for– and find – the needed resources online, is familiar with the peer-to-peer, the free sharing and plays in a multitasking modality. This generation chats on MSN while downloading music on e-Mule and watching a video on YouTube with MP3 headphones on. Shortly: 'Medias and ICT … are the culture through which the young live, build and share meanings today' (Ardizzone & Rivoltella, 2008).

With this kind of students and in the 2.0 era, can teachers hold on to the format of the 20th Century School?

Antonio Campani suggested a changing line in his 'invited report' of Didamatica 2008, 'Digital skills at school: how to assess them?' School taught about the IT, taught WITH the IT, now it needs to aim towards the teaching IN the IT. They have been teaching ABOUT a technique and WITH a technique, since its invention, through writing, until printing and photography. The more a technology was developed and spread, the more teachers and students were into it, the more you could say that the teaching occurred IN it. As far as Digital Technologies are concerned, for the moment we must stay tight to the concepts of teaching 'about' and teaching 'with'.

Teaching about technology means to provide technical competencies, on the one hand, and to educate to awareness in the use, on the other hand.

Teaching with technology can be useful both as far as the motivation is concerned and on the side of efficiency improvement (target orientation) and teaching efficacy (ratio result/energies investment). Several students are more confident with a PC rather than with pen and paper or chalk and blackboard. They think it is more up-to-date, more fun. Then, a certain

activity, as elaborating a conceptual map or making a summary, can result more fascinating if carried out with a PC. A lecture with the interactive board, rather than the traditional one, can draw more attention. Anyway, the use of the PC and – why not – of the videophone can be motivating, most of all for the difference these tools offer compared to the traditional lectures with blackboard and bloc notes. Besides, students could learn the importance and potentialities of these instruments besides the range of socialization, rather from the perspective of employment and the use that companies make of it (e.g., the virtual enquiry about the candidate prior to an interview is part of the information research characterizing the 'digital reputation'). Doing researches on line – maybe as webquests – means having much more information at disposal, compared to a paper encyclopaedia, and, above all, in various formats: not only texts and images, but also audios and videos. Preparing a lecture using Powerpoint or Impress of OpenOffice, is something different than just thinking about a verbal presentation. Studying the parabola with a manipulation of graphics created by Geogebra (Berengo & Terenghi , 2007), is not the same as studying it on the book or drawing it on a piece of paper, as far as the 'learning by doing' process is concerned. If English as a foreign language provides understanding exercises along with a self-assessment comprehension test and the aid of audio equipment, studying it becomes much more interesting

The motivation is related to the improvement of efficacy and efficiency. Interactive exercises and self-assessment tests aid the learning process. The interactive board allows using what was already done in the previous lesson or in another class without losing time in creating ex novo. The educational resources provided on the school website allow saving time and money for copies and, most of all, ensure the students to be able to get them when they need to. If the students are provided with explanations, presentations, exercises, links to videos and tests, they will probably be more prepared at the exam. Some teachers use forums, blogs, courses made with Moodle or with another LMS, so they use a working environment on the web as an extension – with no temporal or space limits – of their class.

So, digital technologies become means of change for the school. There is a shift:

✓ From the central role of the teacher to the central role of the learning subject;

✓ From the teaching to the learning;

✓ From the spreading of knowledge in a behavioural or cognitive format to the elaboration of knowledge in a constructive or connective format;

✓ From a hierarchic system (teacher-students) to a net-like one, in which it is enhanced the equal contribution of each subject to the learning;

✓ From a systematic, linear and sequential order and the long times to the hypermedia disorder and the short times;

✓ From the teacher as spreader/ communicator to the teacher as supporter – not in the sense of making things easier, but in the sense of drawing things out, making them emerge (Ardizzone, 2008) – , promoter of experiences, 'grown-up' pushing the enquiring and synthesizing knowledge and experiences;

✓ From the formal education to the contamination with the informal;

✓ From a traditional model to the one that could be defined the 'school2.0'.

3. Blogs, Wikis, Forums

This is an analysis about the IT tools which would be useful if employed in the range of teaching and education.

The first one is the blog, a sort of an online journal. The blog is easy to use, since it does not require specific skills. As a matter of fact, its structure is usually made of a guided editing application allowing the development of web pages, without necessarily knowing the HTML language. This structure can be personalized with graphic formats called 'templates', which come in different versions.

A blog can be public or private. All posts are generally visualized in a reverse chronological order, which means from the newest to the eldest, and are collected in a database easily accessible. Readers can comment the posts, sometimes after having registered. You can update a blog from any place having an Internet Access Point.

Some blogging platforms, such as WordPress, allow posting by e-mail. There are also the so-called 'moblogs', which can be accessed and used with a mobile self-phone or a PDA.

Physically far away but ideologically close individuals can keep in touch, thanks to the blogs. They can share thoughts and points and view about a wide range of situations, because these are rarely monothematic sites. You are free to express your creativity, interacting directly with other bloggers. The blogger is who writes and administrates a blog, while the whole group of blogs is called 'blogsphere'. Some blogs can actually be considered personal and/or collective journals, which means that they are used to put on line personal stories and meaningful moments of someone's life. In such a context, discretion, privacy, and personal life shift towards the collective dimension.

Some of the main kinds of current blogs are below mentioned, providing some links as examples – and reserving a specific section in the following pages for the educational ones.

Blogs can be of different kinds:

✓ Personal blog: it is the most popular. The owner writes about several matters: daily experiences, poetry, stories, literature, art, desires, inconveniencies and complaints, travels, and much more, interacting with readers through comments.

✓ Actuality blog: users express their opinion about actuality subjects and news items or simply make considerations about matters of social interest or comment news read on the newspapers or websites.

✓ Thematic blog: it is given to themes in which the administrator has a specific expertise.

✓ Other kinds of blog: photoblogs, webrooms, politics blogs, urban blogs, watch blogs, m-blogs, provlogs, video blogs, audio blogs, nanopublishing, moblogs, multiblogging, blog novels or blog fictions, about which Wikipedia provides information.

✓ Educational blogs: they can be at the service of education and learning.

This is an alternative tool, based on interaction, which among its benefits accounts a certain gratification for students, coming from the publishing of essays of a personal nature or created in team. Students are more actively taking part in the class' activities, getting to self-organize in small groups to keep a track of what is going on during class. This track can be partially reworked at home or school, it can be written down on the pc, embellished with images and explanatory graphics, and then it can be collectively discussed in class so to improve on it, if necessary. Only at this point the resources provided can be published on the blog. Also students from other classes can interact and exchange opinions, commenting the resources posted online. External visitors commenting what has been published is not uncommon, creating so a network of relationships in which knowledge is dynamically 'handled'.

Ideally, the blog catalyzes the interest and enhances the motivation in creating something, and it can go beyond the class itself, widening so the circle. It encourages the arousal of the kids' natural curiosity with amazing results as far as the development of specific skills is concerned, such as, for instance, the planning of a project regarding contents editing and the graphics related to that. Then, it surely improves also the problem posing and problem solving skills, since students are often called to solve problems connected to the creation of texts to be posted. It also enhances the ability to take notes during class and the team-working process, as the students are united by a common goal that is not abstract, rather concrete.

So we assist to a general improvement of all basic skills, because students are more careful to what they do, since they clearly have in mind a gratifying purpose. Besides, mutual support among equals is enhanced, and this causes the improvement of the network of relationships developed in the class. Unfortunately, time is the variable which must be faced, both in the real and the virtual approach to the educational and learning matters. An accurate planning is necessary, making target-oriented choices and optimizing the educational curricula, often redundant in the contents, cutting off some parts poorly important and turning others into fertile grounds for interdisciplinary activities.

Naturally, experimentation has to go on for three years, so to be able to monitor the collected data, elaborate them and gather meaningful conclusions about the results. Whoever is willing to try the blog in the field of teaching, is advised to arrange a project plan in which goals and contexts are well defined, which means to choose the blog theme in relation to the educational objectives, agreeing upon them with the students, and specifically stating which contribution this technology will bring to the educational activities. Besides, it is vital to remark the details of the activities which will be related to the use of the blog well – not before having provided students with the know-hows and skills to use it. Eventually, the methods for evaluating the experience (self-assessment by the students and evaluation of the experience by the teacher according to the goals established) need also to be determined clearly.

Wiki is another tool interesting for education. It is a website – anyway, a collection of hyper textual data – enabling each of its users to add contents, like in a forum, but also to change the existing contents already added by other users. The term 'wiki' can also refer to the collaborative software used to create a website.

In the end of the 20th Century, the wikis were considered as promising resources to develop the basics of a new public and private knowledge, and this potential inspired Kimbo Wales and Larry Sanger, the creators of the Nupedia encyclopaedia. They used the wiki technology as a base for an electronic encyclopaedia: Wikipedia – launched in January 2001. Then, a wiki allows to collectively write documents in a basic mark up language, with the use of a web browser.

A single page in a wiki is called 'wiki page', while the overall of the pages, usually tightly linked to each other, is called 'the wiki'. A peculiar character of the wiki technology is how easily the pages can be created and updated generally. There is no preventive check of the modifications and most of the wikis is open to anybody, even the registration of a user account is not always demanded.

Besides these characters, the wiki features as an instrument that can be used at school, both by students and teachers. The former can use it, for instance, to collaborate all together to a school project or a research, since they can modify the page already written by a schoolmate with their contribution and so can all the members of the project team. The alumni can create their own wiki to contribute to a thematic research of History, Sciences, English or of any other field, even not a disciplinary one. A teachers/students wiki could be created also. All you need is a good amount of creativity and the will to experiment new strategies for the development of knowledge.

4. Visibility In The Web 2.0

It is well known that the Web 2.0 has become one of the main means of communication, just thanks to its versatility and the possibility also for not professional users to use its instruments. So, it becomes a mean of socialization and a 'window' for those searching for a job and putting their professional experience on the market. Private subjects and companies have web spaces in which you can find all the information you need about them. The 'visibility' and the 'kind' of visibility become then key-concepts that can produce good and numerous results. If you want to get into the web, regardless of the mean, the title inserted must include keywords effective for both the comprehension of the subject and the search engine spiders.

The identification of the keywords will 'draw' the spiders' attention: the tighter is the connection between the keyword and the content, the higher is the possibility to get 'seen' in short time.

The keyword must cover the widest range of researches, still keeping the specificity of the subject.

The visits must surely increase, but not only as far as the amount is concerned – sometimes, the number is not useful if it does not correspond to an action: it is better to have few visits of good quality than many but extremely vague ones. Then, keeping the user's profile high is always important.

Appearing as much as possible in the search engines is vital. So, having keywords for each page becomes a strategy for a higher visibility.

A good help for the visibility online can be a tool – widget, gadget or sw – allowing tagging (with metatags and keywords) each page, making it independent – from a marketing point of view. This way, not just one page will appear on the search engine, but several ones, so the possibilities of your page appearing will be increased.
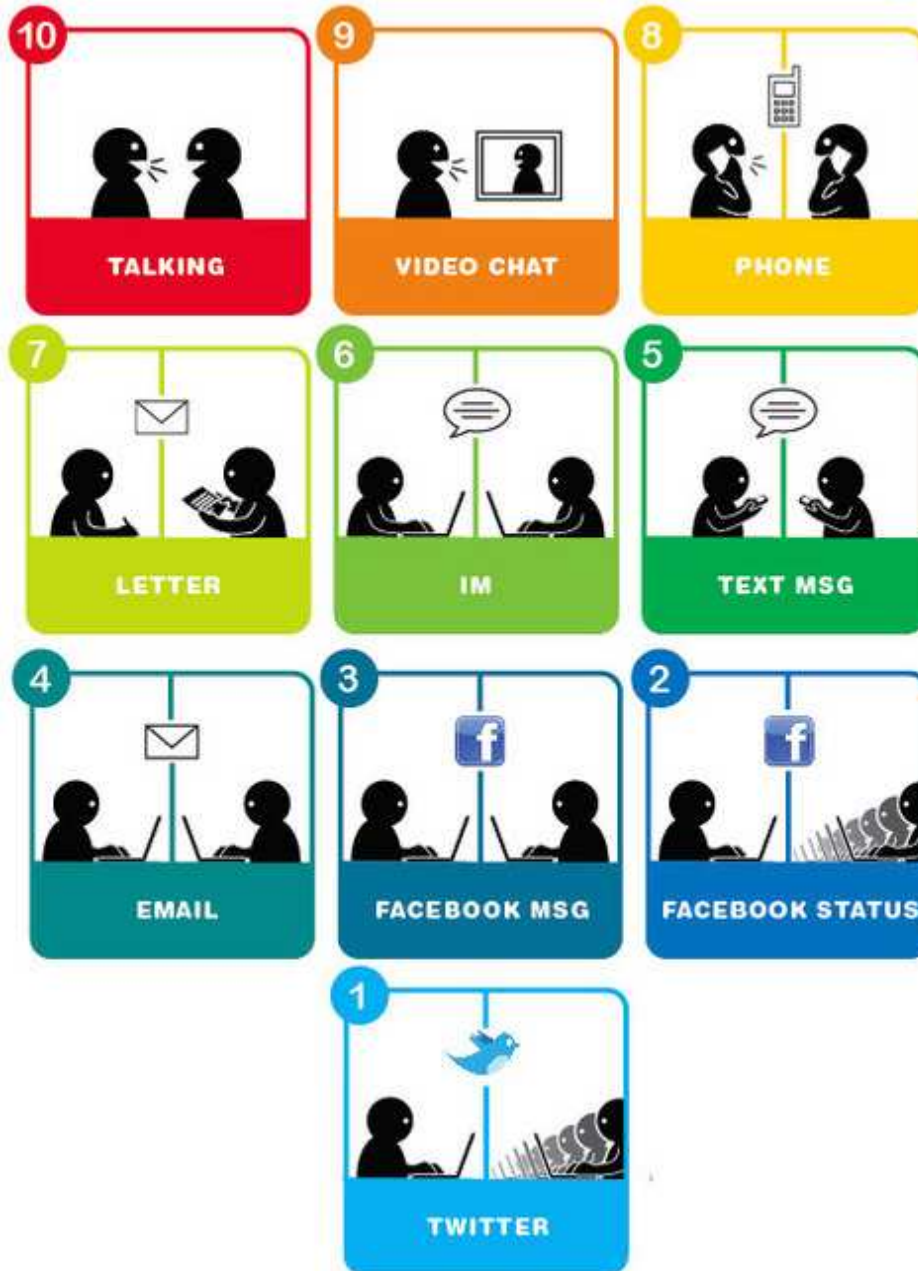
5. Social Media Persuasion: A Mix Of Means And Attitude

If you compare the communication means from the past or the offline ones (newspapers, TV, etc.) and the current ones (as social networks), you can see how these are substantially different, even if having the same purpose, which is communication. The difference lies in the kind of relationship established between the communicator and the interlocutor. We will focus on the ways to communicate which regard us the most: blogs and social networks.

If you think about the features of a blog, you see it has two players. There is an author (or many ones) proposing a subject to discuss about, there are the readers – getting to the information quite casually –, there is the chance to express someone's point of view. Then, the communication is over, unless there are further replies.

Now, think of a social network: what makes it different from a blog? The distinction comes from the social networks implying that you must be in a social relationship with some individual – still, quite in a casual way – to get to know a discussion or any other content. Besides, if you think that this relationship between individuals has at both sides other relationships among other individuals, then you can easily understand that the sharing makes the content once again usable by other people, engaging so the process of reciprocity of the information.

Then, if we publish content on a social network, we can express our opinion as in a blog, but there is a stronger component of socialization. As a matter of fact, the students taking part to a discussion are quite often connected to each other, therefore they socialize.

In this scenario, the messages shared by users become effective because of their relational nature. A person connected to another by some kind of relationship is usually more motivated to take part to the conversation and share a message rather than an individual completely unrelated. Then, the communication outcomes 'diverted' because of this relationship between the parties. What we should wonder is: 'Is there a persuasive component in this behaviour?' Somebody said that persuasion can be described as an 'inner, sub-conscious strength that can be used to make us behave in a certain way with no apparent reason'. Then, the Social Media Persuasion is an action engaged by an unconscious behaviour, under the influence of a relationship among two or more individuals. This behaviour can be properly exploited at a business level. Many companies get the top yield through a social connection with the

customers, spreading so purchase messages. These messages are quite often far from direct: they have a consistent component of sub-consciousness, which produces great profits, as in the advertising. Is this same method applicable in schools to get the greatest results from students? Which are the tools available to teachers who are using the Web 2.0 tools to make the Social Media Persuasion real at a scholastic level? A relationship with the students generating persuasion becomes possible through complete integration of the subject to assert about, allowing the creation of a bounce among the individuals involved. Here are the channels for it:

Inclusion of the social profiles into the website/blog you have chosen. The strategy of including into your own website all the fan boxes and social profiles, but also the newsletter, engages a sense of reciprocity in the user. The message we communicate is the will to establish a relationship with those visiting the website.

Belonging to a network. Being on the social creates in the user a sense of belonging which can culminate in the decision to follow the subject and create so a relationship upon the channel used.

Spontaneous grapevine. When a user establishes a connection with a page or a profile, the latter can turn into the subject of a spontaneous grapevine, exploiting the natural processes which a social network involves. This means that the affinity of interests among people connected to a system is what makes the system itself suggesting a page to those individuals, rather than the mere registration act.

The tools become the method through which the ground for the social persuasion must be prepared, but the fact remains that the whole is driven by a totally unconscious behaviour and basically caused by us being 'social animals'. This new way to communicate is much more natural because it stimulates our need to connect to each other and feel part of the social reality.

6.   A Personal Web Space: Domain, E-mail, Name

When you have a clear idea of what visibility means and which is its importance, you can proceed with the creation of a personal web space, which could be helpful to making yourself be known and exchange information. Therefore, this allows to put online experiences and professional skills also, so to get in touch with potential employers or people to exchange tips with. First, a hosting is needed. Most of the providers offer a certain amount of free space on their servers. Then, there are several communities purposely created to offer a piece of internet.

Italian xamples:

http://www.altervista.org

http://digiland.libero.it

http://www.geocities.com

http://www.tripod.it

http://www.xoom.it

http://www.kyberlandia.it

Everyone can search in their country and find communities that offer that kind os services.

Keep in mind that the address will be a little bit long. E.g., on Digiland the internet address will be something like **http://digilander.libero.it/yourname**. Nevertheless, there are several redirection services, allowing a shorter title. Webtool.it, for example, provides a redirection such as http://yourname.too.it, under the exhibition of a little horizontal banner.

Besides, you must consider that the use of various web languages such as ASP, PHP, CGI, PERL, etc. allows creating dynamic web pages. If a website is created to publish online personal contents – such as texts, images, etc. – there is no need for web languages. It is a different case for those who have to deal with information provided by several users connected to one website.

A personal domain is advisable, from a professional point of view. There are numerous possibilities as far as the administration of a subscription website is concerned: you can go for a provider/maintainer taking charges itself of all the procedures necessary for the registration and maintaining of the website. For example, aruba.it, tuonome.it, dominiando.it, or websites

dealing with similar subjects, like the already-mentioned migliorhosting.it, hosteye.it, hostsearch.it.

Many of these domains, most of all those on payment, allow also building an e-mail address linked to your own specific domain, enabling a more professional presentation, especially when you are sending your CV. If the domain does not allow the building of a personalized e-mail address, it can be easily realized with other services, such as gmail, hotmail, yahoo, among others. Still, the choice of the name is important. It is never convenient to pick up a nickname to create your own e-mail account, from a professional point of view, because you risk to be considered 'not suitable' to a working context. You have to use your own name and surname instead, so the person supposed to contact you can remember it more easily, just in case of turning into a potential employer.

7. The Good Reputation

Nowadays, the virtual identity of an individual, which is the identity built through the years each time we access the Web, may have concrete consequences in the real world, because virtual identity can meaningfully affect someone's reputation. There is no law protecting against potential damages to one's image, though. The law is definitely late in comparison with the rapidity of the web's development in the society. Because a video put on the internet without you knowing about it can be seriously damaging for your image. It is estimated that at least 70% of US workers fill out forms online to find a job. Still, more than half of these either have not been hired yet or they risked not to because they did not have a good 'virtual reputation'.

These considerations stress out the actual macroscopic issue about the safeguard of the virtual identity of an individual well – rectius: 'of the social identity manipulated by telematics' –, despite the evaluation mistake about the legal instruments. There are cases in which you just would like to erase your personal data which have been published on the Internet by yourself or others. Think about Web 2.0, blogs and social networks, Youtube and GoogleVideo, for example, which permit detailed profiles, even against the will of the interested person.

Here are some cases:

Old pictures or videos which not represent you anymore, mostly (but not only) as far as the professional needs are concerned.

In particular, one may think of those who have diffused or have seen diffused photos and/or videos through the Internet of:

Long hair, piercing, tattoos, etc., which they would never show a HR Manager of a big business company to whom they sent their CV and with whom they would have an interview properly dressed up, hoping to be hired for a managerial position;

Them without their clothes on, pictures they would like to forget about or to make people forget about, fearing a poorly serious image because of their professional or social position.

Digital persecution.

The phenomenon registers a collective fierceness against individuals, perpetrated through the Internet and with various instruments (blogs, forums, etc.), regarding the attention that people end up having towards them. Sometimes, the phenomenon leads to cyber-violence, which is a further collective degeneration of people who, without a vertical coordination, end up:

Becoming collectively interested in the same case, because the news draws the public opinion's attention in the web, and it shifts from one source to another;

Collectively taking part to the creation of a whole of negative and hostile contents against individuals unable to personally react to all the data about them, mining their reputation.

The consequences can negatively affect different fields:

Professional, because it may influence the employer's opinion until even causing the dismissal;

Social, because the negative opinion widely diffused worsens the quality of social relationships with friends, family, colleagues, etc.;

Personal, because it can determine a sense of deep discontent and frustration, a loss of self-confidence, depression, until tragic excesses;

Now, privacy – and, along with it, the right to the image, the right to the oblivion, the right to personal identity, the right to discretion – must deal not really with a need for security, but with a need for the freedom to express thoughts and opinions by those who want to spread and comment the news, according to a typical contrast between the two opposite needs of safeguard, both constitutionally guaranteed by our legal system.

Cyber-stalking.

A stalker perpetrating an action by means of the Internet (with chats, mailing lists, forums, websites, etc.) is often registered in cases of cyber-stalking. That becomes possible with the diffusion of the victim's number in various kinds of ads.

The reaction to that kind of phenomena should start with:

A proper response under the legal profile (claims for damages, data protection act, penal guardianship).

Actually, the Italian legal system is quite advanced under this profile, both as far as the access and modification of personal data are concerned, and regarding the damages guardianship, since the law allows claiming also for not patrimonial damages, but even for the hypothesis of illicit use of the personal data, regardless that criminal offences occurred. The typical means of penal law can be added to those of the civil law against the hypothesis of damages for the dignity and the reputation.

A proper marketing-oriented response, involving actions focused on the technical/technological and social sides .

It is necessary to technically erase all the material compromising somebody's image or reputation, as possible, both on a personal level and on the company's level, and, on the other hand, it is necessary to put on positive contents, somehow balancing the negative ones.

Actions are often mixed, because a legal action, if amplified, can also be used to counterbalance the negative news about the image on the opposite side. Acts leading to a new image should follow marketing logics and be set upon the most remarkable targets. A Reputation Defender Society partially plays in this sense, from a technical point of view. The 'ReputationDefender.com' website was born to protect the privacy or to make up for some juvenile or Internet-inexperience mistakes. This website sells its services to the users of the Web first of all to defend their virtual reputation.

Italy has legal instruments and these deserve to be properly used. In fact, the interested subjects, or someone for them, can ask to update incorrect or old information or erase those not handled in conformity with the article 1 of the Legislative Decree nr. 196/03. All this can be done right according to the rights to access and modification provided by the Code for the privacy protection, and, before that, by the Law 675/96. Then, you can claim for damages or go for a lawsuit if the offence of the image, the honour, and the reputation occurred illicitly, or even if just the handling of the personal data was illicit. Consider also that the service is not necessarily preventive, so, in case of a compromised image, the suffered damage will be repayable exclusively through the legal means we have, which, by the way, ensure a particularly advantaged position to the victim, thanks to the guaranties provided by the Privacy Code at article 15, combined with the art. 2050 and the art. 2059 of the Civil Code. It is important to remind that the technical service of the reputation's defence must be well coordinated with the legal actions from the start, without preceding them. Indeed, the risk is that an action focusing on the elimination of the illicit material from the Internet would cause itself irreparable damages to the victim, who could not have an effective probationary frame anymore, if not preventively registered by the computer forensics technologies.

A good reputation is everything in the Internet era. The e-reputation neologism was not created by accident. What is expressed on the web nowadays can affect heavily the success of a company or a person, because opinions and news are generated on blogs, forums and social networks real time. Internet is a virtual universe with long-lasting memory. Taking care of the online reputation is important also to users willing to avoid bad surprises in their careers, considering that checking on the web is a standard procedure prior to hiring somebody. All the people using social media as Facebook, YouTube, etc. have to take care and handle their online reputation, because everything they upload (statements, images, videos, etc.) is potentially visible to millions of users. And jokes are not always an advantage for the reputation. Google recently launched a free and useful service regarding this matter. It is called 'Me on the Web' and informs individuals each time their name or e-mail address is mentioned on a web page. A sort of Google Alert, then, but strictly referring to people's names. The service can also be used to protect your own privacy, because you are alerted each time that personal information is published in a potentially illicit way. 'Me on the Web' also allows preventing the public visualisation of personal data (phone number, credit card number, etc.) or embarrassing images on Google. The service can be activated through the Google Dashboard.

8. Teaching, Education, And Web 2.0: Pedagogical Orientation

The Web can be extremely helpful for any kind of teacher. Blogs drive them through websites and ideas for the education. How old were you when you created your first e-mail account? Either that happened as teenagers or as adults, you must keep in mind that the new generations already have it since children. Nowadays, an educator cannot underestimate the fact that the students will have surely stronger IT skills, compared to the previous generation.

Then, we cannot help but wonder how the Internet can help teaching, involving in newer and newer ways modern students. Websites about education and teaching are numerous, and fortunately also teachers have their own blogs. Some of them not only suggest games and applications with which you can deepen the lectures, but also actual new methods such as the ones of the Second Life virtual world. The sensorial involvement provided by Second Life can do a lot, but the cooperation among students can do even more. A virtual world tends to isolate the users, but there are also other Web 2.0 applications helping to keep in touch, instead. Twitter, for example, is a micro-blogging that enables to send messages of 140 characters each. It can be a valid tool for the didactics. Encouraging the students to become themselves a learning network is the best solution. So, the students' messages are sent to a group of fellows and friends who will be able to support them in solving the issue, when the teacher is not available. The option of receiving the messages directly from Twitter on the self-phone is certainly brilliant.

The use of Edmodo to send notes, links, files, alerts, assignments, and to share events can be another idea of a scholastic use of micro-blogging and social networking resources. You can register as a teacher or a student.

Teachers have also the possibility to tag each post from their classes as public or private. If the posts are public, they can be shared with the whole world, so anybody online have access to them. If the posts are private, they are kept visible only to the teacher's classes, to a closed group, then. Private groups can be created, and even other colleagues can be included eventually in these, so they can collaborate with the classes.

Sure, there is the risk of excessive simplification of concepts and superfluous reproduction on paper of contents only useful on the Internet, because of all these micro-blogging and contents formatted for the Web. This is the problem introduced by the sciolistic

culture of Wikipedia and the unaware use the students often make of it. The matter would deserve a further deepening. When talking about studying at school, many find awkward that Wikipedia is the quickest method to gain information, while students think that books are obsolete. There is no wonder if the 'copy and paste' has become the quickest method, then.

Not only students use this practice. Teachers are getting to use it more and more often, too. As many academic students will be able to confirm, lectures consist more and more often of PowerPoint presentations or brief and synthetic notes provided in copies. In short, we are going towards a culture that emphasizes immediateness and convenience rather than deepening. In the 'sms-format culture' being able to balance new technologies with traditional teaching methods is vital. The importance of playing and drawing for Elementary school kids must not be forgotten, for example. Creativity and originality must be stimulated since the childhood, in order to avoid the 'copy and paste' backup solutions as adults.

The use of the Internet in the field of education is a nearly unlimited resource. Fortunately, blogs are helpful in finding the links, ideas, suggestions, or games most convenient to our needs. Remind not to abuse of them, though, and to balance the proper amount of human interaction and the use of digital tools.

When the teacher decides to introduce the use of web 2.0 and the use of social network in his/her teaching modality, it's important to insert the concept of digital identity and digital reputation. The students have to become conscious of these concepts and have to know the modalities and the instruments to move safely in the web for protecting their personal and professional identity.

With this purpose, the second part of the guide is a handbook for students dedicated just to these important concepts.

**PART
A**

**PART
B**
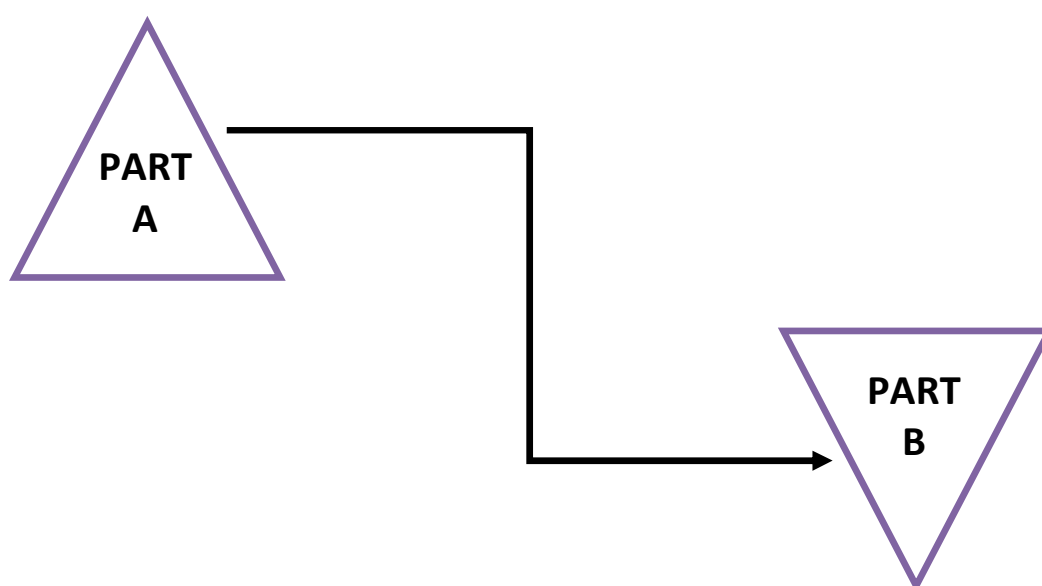
Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Teach in Europe

Increasing Employability of Students in Vocational Training at European Level

Yes
Employability
2nd Guide

Escola Secundária de Vilela

Gap Egitim Gönüllüleri Dernegi

LANGUAGE LINK LONDON

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PART - B

Teach In Europe

Increasing Employability of Students in Vocational Training at European Level

1.   The Digital Identity

Digital Identity can be defined as:

The online representation of an individual within a community, as adopted by that individual and/or projected by others. An individual may have multiple digital identities in multiple communities.

As we move around different web sites and digital environments, we leave small traces of ourselves along the way.

Before the 2.0 age our digital identity was spread among a relatively small amount of web pages (including the emails we sent to a public list). However, since the advent of Web 2.0 our digital identity has spread across a much larger number of sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, and so on), and it has become more and more difficult to keep track of it.

Digital identity can be either self-created or assigned by others. It is the online image we have of ourselves on the web created through all digital media means: blogs, websites, social networking sites, twitter, cell phones, logins or logouts, chats, creation of files, etc.

Our every interaction in the digital environment provides data on what we have performed in that environment, which is valuable in assisting behavioral targeting, personalization, targeted marketing, digital reputation and other social media or social graphing services *(http://www.forbes.com/2009/01/12/mobile-marketing-privacy-tech-security-cx_ag_0113mobilemarket.html)*

In other words, we have a digital footprint that is as large as the number of individuals or entities we interact with.

According to the **Pew Internet & American Life Project (2008)** these are some of the main footprints we leave on the Web about ourselves:

- ✓ Home address

- ✓ Company or employer

- ✓ Email address

- ✓ Home phone number

- ✓ Things we have written that have our name in it

- ✓ Pictures of us

✓ Groups or organizations we belong to

✓ Political party or affiliation

✓ Cell phone number

✓ Videos of us

When someone looks for information about us on the Internet, they mainly belong to the following groups:

✓ Someone from our past or someone we have lost touch with

✓ Friends

✓ Family members

✓ Work colleagues or business competitors

✓ Neighbors or people in our community

✓ Someone we have just met or we are about to meet

✓ Someone we are thinking about hiring or working with

✓ Someone we are dating or are in a relationship with

Our personal data can be therefore used for different purposes, so before interacting in the digital environment we should consider all those aspects. Everything we do online is at the mercy of everybody, and can be scrutinized, valued, and used in our favor or against us. The way we shape our digital image is likely to have significant impact on our future and our expectations (for example, it may play a significant role in our employment opportunities), so it is important to know all the possibilities and threats.
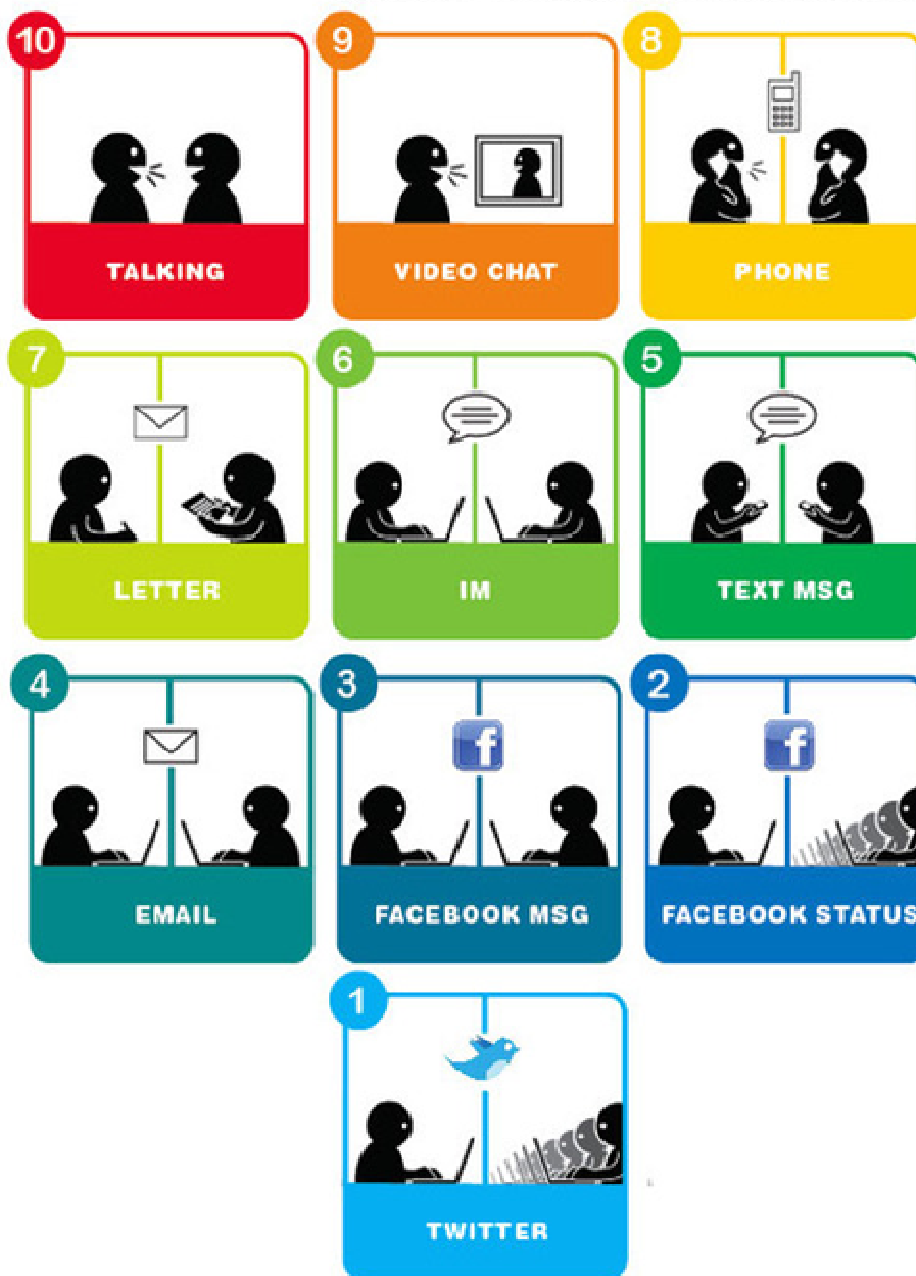
2.   What is the Digital Reputation

Digital Reputation

All the traces we leave on the web contribute to defining the image that other users perceive of ourselves. But it's not only what we say that contributes to shaping our identity, it's also what other users say about us. We also have to consider that virtual communication, compared to face-to-face communication, can be more easily subject to misunderstandings, and when our words or actions have been misunderstood, it's harder to put things right.

Another factor to consider is that the more people we know and the more contacts we have, the higher is the amount of people that can share their opinions about ourselves. Moreover, information spreads at a very high speed, so in a matter of minutes (or seconds), thousands of people (friends and acquaintances, friends of friends and so on), may become aware of something that has been said about us.

Trust is essential in an online community. For example, when we do transactions on Ebay, our reputation is created through the feedback that other users send regarding the quality of our transactions.

Finding information about us somewhere on the Internet is very easy; it can be done through a simple search on a search engine. If someone Googles your name and finds nasty comments about you, your credibility could be destroyed with great damage for you and/or your brand or company.

Now, more than ever, the use of the Internet and of the social networks are at their very peak, and one of the hot topics for individual people, brands and companies is the digital reputation.

> **Digital reputation can be described as "the result of the relative proximity of three factors to one another, as follows: who you ARE, who YOU SAY you are, who PEOPLE SAY you are"**[1].

The first of the three factors covers your identity in the real life, or your products and services if you run a business, the way you operate. 'Who you say you are' corresponds to the image you wish to display to the public. In the case of a company, it is both the responsibility of the company itself and of its communication and PR agencies, whose number and popularity is increasing according to the growing importance of creating and defending the digital reputation. 'Who people say you are' corresponds to the way other people or the company's stakeholders (consumers, clients, partners, employees, competition, and shareholders) describe you or your business. Managing your reputation, or the reputation of your company, means dealing with all these dimensions.

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[1] Cesvet B., Babinski T., Alper E., 2009, *Conversational Capital. How to Create Stuff People Love to Talk About*, FT Press, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey (USA)

Rules for creating a Digital Reputation

Thinking about digital reputation must be concerned with rules to keep this sense, the creation of it.

We will now take the opportunity to list a few rules and care to implement them accordingly.

"Sooner or later

all people will be exposed in some way,

either through a relative or a friend "

Being present in a social network is easy, it's difficult to keep intact that presence with a good visibility, this requires control. To do so, we recommend that you follow these rules:

1. Properly use the lists of friends - an employer not only looks at your Wall and your information, it also analyzes your friends list;

2. Remove yourself from the results of search of social network or fill them correctly;

3. Avoid tagging of photos and videos (which can be embarrassing);

4. Protect your photo albums;

5. Avoid Wall posts that can be embarrassing;

6. Use Internet etiquette;

7. Keep your profile updated - New professional and academic achievements will be more important if they are properly published in the right channels. This is a big problem, because we're too busy to update our curriculum;

8. Expand your network with relevant contacts, this requires being humble, patient and persistent;

9. Be active, answering questions and sharing. Participate, help, show your expertise. Disseminate relevant articles in your network of contacts;

10. Multiply the opportunities to be found - Leverage your contacts in social networks: "***People get a job through other people, not by the computer***." It is not enough to have an appropriate profile on social networks. People looking for a job need to be found on the Internet. To do so, you must register with the maximum possible social networks

and, preferably, participate on them so that your opinions can be seen at the time a recruiter looks for a topic on the Internet;

11. Adjust your image to the social networks, people often forget that the profile they keep on LinkedIn, Facebook, or any other social network represents something like a calling card. Thus, it is unwise to think that a potential employer will not disqualify you because of a racist comment or poor posture when writing a message on Twitter about your current employer. "***Whatever you put, streaming solution or comment is being recorded and will be used against you***";

12. Avoid embarrassing stories to appear in the news feed of your friends;

13. Show some personality - be too careful in social networks can also be negative. It is not because people should avoid putting compromising photos or inappropriate comments that an employer expects that they are completely silent on social networks. Many times an employer looks for a candidate who is sociable and outgoing, showing relationship skills and communication. Some companies give priority to people who show some kind of character and leadership, so, be strong, be unique!;

14. Add to your list of contacts companies in which you would like to work.

3.   How to Cultivate a Good Reputation

NO, but there are somes values that in the digital environment become more relevant.

The user 2.0 therefore takes an active role in the creation of content, compared to the user 1.0. An increasing number of users share their knowledge in order to create content and applications, in the form of blog posts, videos, pictures, podcasts and software. Everybody has the right to contribute and all users are on the same level, regardless of social status, employment or course of studies.

As general rules of behaviour, when we start browsing through the social networks and Web 2.0 applications, it is important to make sure we know which are the user's rights and duties, to read the regulations, and ask the more expert users for help in case of need. When we share personal information, it is important to choose with care what we want to make public and what we want to keep private, to choose with care the friendships with which we want to grow our network and share our information with. Also, we should avoid sharing information with people we cannot trust completely yet.

Contents published on web applications of social networks have different levels of visibility (for example for some users or for all users) which have different levels of privacy. It is therefore important, when we publish content in a community, that we learn how to set up the different levels of privacy.

Since all the content published on Social Networks stays on the Web for a long time and is sometimes difficult to delete, we should avoid putting material that we wouldn't want to see published in the future.

Relations on Social Networks are similar to those in the real world, and therefore based on trust. We should include among our friends only those people who we think are reliable or we know for sure their identity. If we start a virtual friendship with people whose real identity we don't know, we should avoid sharing contacts,

personal information or private data, especially if they concern other people. We should be aware that social networks are difficult to control and therefore we have to keep in mind that our "friends' friends" are many and sometimes they can have access to our personal information.

Digital reputation is persistent and spreads rapidly, and therefore we should never libel or offend other people, especially if they are not present in the social network and cannot take notice of the damage they incur.

On a more specific level, here are some preliminary remarks that can teach us how to behave adequately on the Web 2.0 and which can be very useful in the management of our digital reputation:

- ✓ **Pro-activity**. It is better to take the initiative rather than being dragged along by what other people do. It is worth taking the initiative and opt for a provocative management of our reputation instead of waiting for a crisis of our digital reputation that would force us to act in a reactive way. Moreover, if we own a business, taking the initiative is the best way to boost our profits and make ourselves known.

- ✓ **Honesty.** To lie is not considered positively, not even on the Web 2.0. It is not about telling everything, it's about telling the truth. For example, when we want to apply for a job, it is advisable not to present ourselves by putting forward work co-operations we have never had or qualifications we don't have. It is a sign of scarce professionalism and in the end employers will find out if we have given them false information. Why not say the truth? It is much better to be honest about what we want than to lie and make a fool of ourselves before even starting a conversation.

- ✓ **Solidarity.** The Web 2.0 is the net of shared knowledge and to share also means to bring value to the Net (by creating one's own contents, redistributing contents of interest generated by other people, commenting what other people do). This will contribute positively to the digital reputation.

- ✓ **Humility**. It is normal to be afraid of making mistakes, but one learns from one's own mistakes. Moreover, on the Net everyone is equal.

- ✓ **Gratitude**. To converse means to listen and to answer. One has to be grateful for the comments that he/she receives and also for the references made about him/herself.

✓ **Respect and tolerance**. Everyone has the right to express his/her opinion, and everybody has to respect it. Variety is enriching.

It is also best to avoid being insistent or too aggressive when we disagree with certain comments or replies. On the other hand, if someone becomes too aggressive with us or even uses offensive remarks, it is best to ignore him/her and abandon the conversation

✓ **Responsibility**. Every user is responsible for his/her own behaviour, even on the Net, and this is fundamental for a civilized and respectful coexistence. Communities usually have their own internal rules and failing to respect them is not considered positively and one's reputation gets damaged.

✓ **Flexibility.** The user has to be open to changes and able to adapt to innovations. In other words, he/she must have a digital attitude.

4. Spend time on social networks

Being present

Having time to…

> **When you decide to use social networks you have to be aware that it takes time to use them properly, because it is not enough to update your profile, you also need to participate actively**

1. Evaluate how you are using your time – do you have time to talk on the phone? To chat with your friends? Do you have time for meetings? Do not just think of the social marketing as a means. It must be seen as a very effective channel to establish relationships with your contacts;

2. Spending time on social networks means saving time and money - if used correctly, the time spent on social networks can save time and money. Because it may decrease the number of phone calls and the money you spend on sending out resumes;

3. Be multitasking. Everyone has the ability to do several things simultaneously. Develop this ability.

4. Share the tasks, make team with your network of contacts and share tasks in order to publish your work;

5. Do not think of it as a job, think of it as an investment, or even as fun;

6. Make choices, for example, what platforms to use?

5. How to control/monitor your reputation

It is not enough to be present and visible on the Net. The creation, the development and the management of a good reputation are essential in the contemporary life and business.

One of the greatest and worst things about the freedom that the Internet gives users is that anyone can say anything they want. If you want to conduct business online or make yourself known in the Web it's necessary to control your image and what's being said about you. Your name is your brand and you want your brand to have the best association as possible. This is why finding ways to take control of your online reputation is so essential to online success.

You may have to take into account that someone is being criticizing your firm, your product, your brand or yourself. And what is worse is that someone may come to influence other people. On the other hand, the opposite can happen, someone can recommend your brand, your product, your firm or yourself. Someone can even bring you new ideas.

The digital reputation is the prestige or esteem that we have on the Web 2.0. Not only is it important to create it, but also to control it.

As a consequence, before you engage in new actions, you need to monitor:

✓ What are they saying?

✓ Who is saying it?

✓ Where are they saying it?

✓ And, how should we begin?

95% of Internet users look for information on search engines. Search engines influence and determine a close-up of your own image.

For this reason, it is recommendable that the first 20 results increase your value.

It is recommendable to analyse those results.

For this purpose we can use different devices:

Creating Alerts on search engines (Google Alerts, Yahoo Alerts), which will allow us to see – in our email – when there are online pieces of news coinciding with the topics we have specified.

Google Alerts is a simple application that allows us to receive real time updates regarding one or more Google keywords. In this way it is possible to know if in a site or blog a certain subject is being discussed, no sooner has Google indexed it among its results. Google Alerts is very useful to find out what the Net is saying about you or your company, and if it is necessary, take prompt action in case there are problems with your online reputation.

In order to use it, you need to have a Google account. If you don't have one, you can create a new one for free.

Log on to www.google.com/alerts

On that page you can select the options regarding the key words you want to keep under control through Google Alerts.

In order to do a concise research it is important to use proper key words. In the Search Terms field you can put, for example, your name or the name of your company. The second option, Type, allows you to choose the contents you want to monitor (*News, blogs, Video, discussions and books*). Then you decide how often you want to receive alerts on your research

(as it happens, once a day or once a week). The field Volume allow us to choose if we want all results or the best results. Finally, you can decide if you want to receive the alerts through email or Feed RSS

Using the link:

URL command in search engines such as Google or Yahoo, which will show us a list of pages that link up to our domain.

Besides alerts, there are other kind of tools that can be useful in order to know what have been said about you, who said that, when and where.

- **News through RSS channels. RSS (Rich Site Summary)** is a format for delivering changing web content. Many news-related sites, weblogs and other online publishers syndicate their content as an **RSS Feed** to whoever wants it. People who regularly use the web can easily stay informed by retrieving the latest content from the websites they are interested in without having to visit each site individually, joining the site's email newsletter, and logging on to the website. The number of sites offering RSS feeds is very large, but the most popular are the following:

  - ✓ Google Reader (www.google.com/reader)

  - ✓ Bloglines (www.bloglines.com)

  - ✓ Netvibes (www.netvibes.com)

  - ✓ Feedly (www.feedly.com/)

  - ✓ Yahoo! Pipes (pipes.yahoo.com)

In order to be able to read RSS Feed, you need RSS Feed Reader or News Aggregator Software, which allow you to grab the RSS feed from the various websites and read them.

- **Blogs.** There are specific search engines that allow users to search pieces of information on blogs or tagged social media.

  - ✓ Google Blog Search www.google.com/blogsearch)

- ✓ BlogPulse (www.blogpulse.com)

- ✓ IceRocket (www.icerocket.com)

- ✓ Twingly (www.twingly.com)

- ✓ Technorati (www.technorati.com)

- **Social search engines**. They are real time social media search engines that search user-generated content such as blogs, comments, bookmarks, events, news, videos, etc. They are very useful because they let you know what's happening right now on any given topic. Some of them use microblogging and social bookmarking sites as tools to figure out what content is relevant up to the second. They allow you to search the latest information available on a specific topic, and also to easily track and measure what people are saying about you, your company, a new product, or any topic across the web's social media landscape.

  - ✓ Surchur (www.surchur.com)

  - ✓ Swotti (www.swotti.com)

  - ✓ SocialMention (www.socialmention.com)

  - ✓ SamePoint (www.samepoint.com)

  - ✓ HowSociable (www.howsociable.com)

- **Twitter.** There are a series of services made available on Twitter, such as search engines, analytic tools and other resources through which it is possible to control facts related to your activity on Twitter, such as, for example, what other people are twittering about you, your product, etc., how many people reach you on Twitter, trend analysis tools, etc.

  - ✓ Twitter search engine (search.twitter.com)

  - ✓ Twazzup (www.twazzup.com)

  - ✓ Backtweets (www.backtweets.com)

  - ✓ Trendistic (www.trendistic.com)

  - ✓ Twitter Alerts (www.tweetbeep.com)

  - ✓ Tweer Alarm (www.tweetalarm.com)

By analysing all this information, you will be able to control your digital reputation, defining your own metrics. But you have to be aware that besides quantity it is important to consider the quality of the references you may have found.

This way we will be able to analyse what kind of people has requested information through our website, who is making remarks on us, important blogs which are connected to one of our websites and comments made within our websites or within someone else's pages.

6. How to maintain and improve your reputation

A good online reputation may take months or years to build, and only a few seconds to destroy. People can get a wrong perspective of your reputation because someone may use in the wrong way your personal information and ruin your online reputation. It is therefore important to keep a constant watch of your online reputation and take steps to maintain and improve it.

The best way to maintain and to improve your digital reputation is through conversation. For this purpose it is necessary to participate and to answer.

You can participate in two different ways:

- ✓ Creating contents and sharing them on the Net or helping to spread the content created by other people using the platform or platforms we have chosen.

- ✓ Answering to conversations started by other people through comments.

It is equally important to start conversations and put your own content on the Web, as well as participating in conversations begun by other people, as the knowledge which is shared and created by users is one of the key elements of the Web 2.0. The principles of cooperating and sharing are fundamental in the culture 2.0: in order to receive you have to be ready to give. In order to build a good digital reputation it is important to bring relevant content to the Web on the topics we wish to be associated with.

Before improving your reputation, it is important that you know what is said about you, your product, your company or website. This can be done using the tools mentioned above (search engines, alerts, etc.).

In order to maintain and to improve our digital reputation it is necessary to:

- ✓ Built relationships with other people. It is important the you are active an participative, that you bring content that is valuable to other people: comments, resources, links, and everything that is considered interesting. For each personal

comment that you find online, take the time to say thank you, people will appreciate it and they will do the same in return. The wider is your network of relationships, the more positive effects it will bring to your online reputation.

✓ Present contents clearly, with sincerity, honesty, humility, politeness and tolerance. In short, cultivate a good digital reputation, showing sense of humour and politeness. Losing control can help you ruin your reputation, so even if you have been provoked or someone has said something about you that gets you angry, think twice before replying.

✓ Take care of the editing of contents, avoiding orthographical mistakes and expressions that may be perceived as offensive.

✓ Accept criticism and regard it as an opportunity for improvement. It is necessary to learn how to debate respecting the opinion of the others and avoiding disqualifications.

✓ Try to participate in communities that are relevant to your line of work. You will not only gain an incredible amount of information, you will also have a great exposure and therefore improve your digital reputation.

✓ Avoid being overbearing, boasting about success achieved. We have to acknowledge the good work of others; too much pride and presumptuousness can be detrimental to our reputation. You have to act with humility and acknowledge that you are not perfect, so by being humble, the others will see that you are interested in the good of the community and not only of yourself.

✓ Dole out the contents about the same topic in a single day.

✓ Be careful about the image of ourselves or of our environment that we publish.

✓ Be selective with the contacts. It is also important not to seek contacts at all costs in order to gain image and power. That could be self-destructive to your reputation.

✓ Establish clear rules of engagement with the others, avoiding the constant change of criteria.

7.   Active Participation

Employers   look,   most   of   the   time,   for   active   people,
evaluating your participation in the network. Here are some golden rules:

1. Personal opinions are essential when you want to publish a news flash or other content;

2. Questions generate interaction (It is important to know what the audience think);

3. Posts with images get much more "***Like***" than text without illustrations;

4. Frequency of messages on the network must be defined according to the profile of the audience;

5. It is important to be aware of peak times;

6. Education, politics and "*jet set life*" are the themes that generate more comments;

7. It is important to create a ***welcome page*** for users who have a fan page on Facebook;

8. Go to page Facebook Analytics to learn which countries, genders and ages of people are accessing the fan pages;

9. Make the most of plugins and add-on applications available on Facebook, for example;

8. Content not shared

One way to have visibility on the network is when our group of contacts share our posts.

The question is, *why my contacts don't share my posts*?

Few reasons:

1. Users do not trust you;

2. Your posts are boring - People are much more likely to share content they consider intriguing and fun. Try to address issues in a curious way to get attention;

3. People care more about causes than brands;

4. People share to build relationships with each other;

5. Users look for self-assertion - In social networks people try to build credibility among their friends and other people. They want to be seen as "experts" on any subject. The way to do it online is sharing your content;

6. Users share to manage information - Today many people "think out loud." Many people process information in a better way when sharing it and reading people responses.

9. How to defend your digital reputation

Positive and negative opinions can circulate on the Web very fast. The quantity of time we need to write and send an email is shorter than the quantity of time we need to send a fax. To share an opinion on the Internet, send it back to a friend who shares it in his turn with other contacts is a fast process. Opinions grow and multiply with a rapidity that was unthinkable just ten years ago.

But what happens when negative criticism toward our firm, product, brand or person appears? What should we do? As in every critical situation, it is better to prevent than to cure.

If it happens, our intervention should imply three steps: preventing, listening and reacting.

The best way to manage bad references is prevention. If we participate actively in a conversation, we would gain a lot in case someone published a negative reference about us.

In other words, prevention means:

✓ To create our own contents and positive mentions;

✓ To participate in the conversations in the Web 2.0.

In order to detect any negative reference in time, we have to carry out a sustained and systematic monitoring of our reputation through the control of our digital reputation.

If we detect a negative reference, it is important to weigh it up before we prepare the answer:

✓ Who is posting it?

✓ What are its implications?

✓ What is precisely its argument?

A negative reference can be justified or unjustified. The answer may vary depending on the case. **Before we intervene, it is crucial to establish:**

1. If the information of reference is false, we will have to contact who issued it, give her/him the right information and we ask her/him to publish it, maintaining a calm temper at all times.

   If the person who issued the information is willing to damage us directly, we can take legal action:

   ✓ Through the agencies for data protection:

      ▪ Word Intellectual Property Organization WIPO *(www.wipo.int)*

      ▪ Agencia Española de Protección de Datos *(https://www.agpd.es)*

   ✓ Reporting in our own platform where the negative reference has been detected.

2. If the information is true, we have to admit it to the person who issued it. It is advisable to explain the cause of the mistake. We can also explain what are our plans in order to solve the problem.

   Whether the negative reference is true or not, it is advisable to react quickly, avoiding being passive and hasty.

Another means of preventions is to try to reduce the amount of junk mail you receive. By doing that, you become a smaller target for identity thieves and other people who can mess with your reputation. (One of identity thieves' favorite tricks is to sign up for a change of address in your name, so they can re-route pre-approved credit card offers to your "new address."). Taking your name off marketing lists will reduce 50 to 75 percent of junk mail. There are services that can do that, like **ProQuo**. By signing up to this free service, they can help delete your name from more than a dozen marketing lists — including those operated by the Direct Marketing Association and massive data brokers like **ChoicePoint** and **Acxiom**.

Also, there are a number of information on us that is available to anyone who knows how to look for it, for example if you own property, if you are ok with your payments, if you have ever been arrested, divorced, and so on. When an employer does a background check on you,

this information is very likely to turn up, so you need to make sure that it is accurate. In order to do that, you can ask request a free public records report, or also a credit check. There are a lot of companies that do that.

It is difficult to control Google news results, as the content is very dynamic, so you'll have to act fast. When a Google news publisher, like a newspaper or news website, publishes a nasty comment, it will start showing in Google news results almost instantly.

The only way to suppress these news stories is to be ready to put some positive publicity in Google news after the negative comment, in order to push the bad press down more quickly. The best way of dealing with your reputation is to monitor conversations and be ready to answer where necessary. You do not have to respond to any criticism, as you should not interject in the conversation when a bad allegation about your company is wholly unfounded, or you will worsen your situation. In addition to this, you should not deny negative press which is true.

In forums your reputation can be at risk too. The best strategy to interject is to register at the forum with an official email address of your company (@yourcompany.com) and reply to negative comments stating that you are an official representative from the company. You can get some ill feeling from other participants a moderated forum will give you the chance to be heard.

Negative comments can spread very quickly on social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook. On Twitter the 're-tweet' system makes negative press become rapidly of public domain. It is advisable for you to respond to negative comments on Twitter backtracking to the original source of the first Tweet and reply to it. You should write short and concise answers (more or less 140 characters). Some companies will pass negative tweets to customer services who will contact the complainant.

Facebook's distribution system works in a similar way. If someone posts a negative comment to their friends in his/her own Facebook status update other users can comment on it or 'like' it setting off a chain reaction. The problem with Facebook is that you may not be able to reply to or even see these comments unless you are friends with the complainant due to Facebook's privacy controls. However, one positive aspect is that most people join Facebook using their real names, you can be able to track down their contact details and get in touch with them via email or phone. Nevertheless, even Google can't catch everything. For example, many of Facebook's 60 million profiles are inaccessible to search engines.

In blogs, you can reply directly to bloggers through comments on their post where comments are enabled. However, for serious allegations it is often better to attempt to make private contact with the blogger first before replying publically in the post comments. Most

bloggers put contact information on their site. If you do not find the contact information on the blog, you may be able to find the e-mail of the blogger searching the whois database (although the email address details on whois are not always accurate).

> *It is not necessary to be active in all platforms, but it is important to select the most appropriate ones that can improve our visibility. Therefore before we select them, we have to inquire about what kind of references already exist on the Net about those platforms.*
>
> *In order to find out what is our on-line reputation, we have to put ourselves in the user's shoes and look into what kind of information she/he may find if she/he does a research about us. Also we have to keep in mind that we have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.*

10. Resuming and planning

Apart from revealing your personality and professional attitude, social networks can determine the success of your career, or rather, the end of it. This requires not making colossal mistakes:

The biggest mistakes one can do are the following:

1. Not having a plan, or, joining the networks just for fun.

2. Not using social networks properly. Despite being free, social networks can cost time and money both for the everyday user and for businesses that do not use them properly. The most important step is to determine what is your goal and who you want to reach with this tool;

3. Trying to get everything at once - after a strategic plan, it is natural to want to implement all actions at the same time, which ultimately become an overload. Prior to that, do a search to determine which networks that will best achieve your objectives;

4. Not putting essential information in your profiles - it is important to complete all information fields in the profiles because they are what define who is found in searches over the Internet. The profiles on social networks often provide several fields to include information about the user, photos and logo, etc. Many users tend to fill only the most important parts and end up leaving the profile incomplete. The more complete your profile is, the greater the chances of being found;

5. Neglecting the opinions of others - seek to interact with your contacts. If you've been in a situation where only one person talks and gives no opportunity to others to express themselves, you already know that it is annoying not having the proper attention. In social networks the dynamics are the same: if a user only promotes and does not interact with others, may end up losing followers . So if someone makes a comment on your profile or post something, do not forget to respond;

6. Removing negative comments or critics - there are users who use social networks to complain about or criticise some action or attitude. In most cases, the first reaction is to delete the comment and not letting the remaining contacts see it. However, when

you delete a message, users may understand that you are trying to hide something and pretend that you always show a positive image. Instead of deleting the posts, try to answer them politely and wait also for the defense from other contacts;

7. If used incorrectly, the networks can also destroy your career - do not delete messages with criticism about yourself, but try to understand who criticized you and why they did it. Convince them to publish a post saying exactly the opposite;

8. Not worrying about the profiles that already exist - do constant searches on the Internet to see where information about you is disclosed. Did you know that many of the information about you are already on the Internet without you knowing? A simple search can show you Google profile Places, telephone companies and websites with information to contact you. The important thing is to keep these profiles up to date, because even without a website or a profile on social networks, an employer will find it through search engines;

9. Not having time to update the profiles - building a brand on the Internet takes time and dedication. To expand your network of contacts online, you must be prepared to devote a few minutes of your day to update all profiles. If you think you will not have time to update social networks on an ongoing basis, the best thing to do is not start with that strategy now;

10. Not having an interest in social networks - just like in any other field or profession, using social networks requires passion and dedication;

11. Maybe social networks are not the right thing for you - try to find out whether employers you want to contact use or give importance to social networks. It is not because many people use social networks that you should do the same. If you think you are not prepared to enter the networks, the best thing to do is wait to enter this new world.

12. Publishing personal details - it is natural that you want to share photos, videos, musical tastes, but everything has a limit. Therefore, it is essential not to expose oneself too much.

13. Using social networks in the workplace - if you use them only on breaks, there is no problem; however, if you use them during working hours, it shows lack of respect towards your duties and your colleagues, not to mention that it may be a cause for dismissal.

14. Saying on social networks what you would not say personally – Be aware that you are in a global world and what you are doing is a global conversation but at the same time also personal. Therefore there are issues and comments that are harmless to some, but that may be a personal attack to others.

15. Not worrying about spelling and grammar – when people write on computers they often use short sentences and an informal language, as the Internet requires a dynamic and relaxed language. However many companies evaluate this aspect item as an ability to communicate using the language correctly. Therefore, it is better to use a language that is normal and correct.

16. Lying - one of the problems often remarked by companies recruiting people using social networking is that there are people who need to convey the idea that they have abilities and skills that do not actually have. They do not do it to cause any harm, but they are convinced that this information is restricted to a particular group.

17. Commenting political positions – Avoid confrontation, consider that many of the comments may be wrong because we do not know the future, but your posts will be there in the future. Your position may create some discomfort in your workplace or it may cause you to lose your job opportunities because of your ideologies not well explained.

11. Recruiting through Social Networks

Currently, large companies maintain that they seek their collaborators using social networks. Studies show that approximately the 80% of them look on Facebook, about 53% on Twitter and 48% on LinkedIn.

If we consider these numbers, an important question arises: why these? Because they are the most popular and relaxed.

Most of them say that the researches of profiles on social networks are made especially after receiving a resume. Actually what they are looking for are lies on professional qualifications, they assess their ability or inability to communicate, they look for posts with negative content on the old employers, inappropriate comments and inappropriate pictures.

On the other hand there are companies who claim that the aspects analyzed in the profiles are: passion for technology, passion for business, creativity and initiative.

In addition, most claim that they have rejected candidates because of the content of their profile.

Meanwhile, users keep believing that what convinces employers is the good organization or the more positive aspects in your profile.

Tips for those who look for a job on social networks

After the analysis of what companies look for in social networks and the advantages and disadvantages of using social networks, we present a list of tips for those who seek a job on social networks.

1. Be yourself. Be realistic and maintain a in social networks the same attitude as you have in the physical world. Do not create false expectations.

2. Look at all the contacts as an opportunity. Opportunity to learn, share, interact and maybe getting a job.

3. Do not look that you are desperate for getting a job. Be calm, excitement and despair might influence the success and effectiveness in the search.

4. You are unemployed, not dead, so try to be proactive and show what's on your mind. Participate in discussions within your area of interest.

5. Do not be confrontational. Be polite and learn to hear opposing views. Avoid touching controversial and sensitive issues (sex, football, religion, etc.).

6. Appear on "off line" events promoted by your groups of interest. You will certainly make good contacts.

7. Learn to listen. In social networks the are very competent and experienced people who, through their simple comments, give us essential tips to evolve.

8. Look for an opportunity to open your own business. Pull out your entrepreneurial spirit. Be aware of everything that surrounds you: people, comments, websites, and so on. One of these days you could be "clicking" your way to your own business.

9. If you do not have anything to say that could add value to a discussion, keep silent! Silence is more relevant than an inappropriate comment.

10. Believe and work on your "personal brand". Be optimistic and keep this positive attitude on the networks.

11. Do not share content that might compromise a recruiting phase, everything is "stored" on the web. Share content and information that improves public perception.

12. If you are seeking employment in a specific area, concentrate on this area. For example, if you are looking for a job in marketing, do not waste much time talking about art, or sports (unless it brings you some personal satisfaction). The important thing is that when a search is carried out on you, the content on your area of work appear first.