

## The LAUNCH Podcast - Being Professional and Strategic Online

[00:00:00] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:00] Hi everyone. Welcome to another episode of The Launch Podcast. This is Kayla Hogrefe, Academic Advisor, UConn School Business, Hartford campus,

[00:00:14] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:00:14] and I'm Emma Bjorngard-Basayne, Academic Advisor in the School Business at the Stamford campus.

[00:00:19] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:19] On this episode, Emma is interviewing Kelly Kennedy, who is the Associate Director of Student Development and Outreach in our office, the Office of Undergraduate Advising with the School Business. Kelly is a career development instructor and coach in addition to the many other hats that she wears. And she's a really great person to listen to for tips on email management, effective communication, and having a professional social media presence. And so Emma and I thought this would be really important to bring to first year students as they start learning how to manage and communicate over email and also how to start having a really professional social media presence. You know that when you're starting to brand yourself as a first year business student.

[00:01:01] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:01:01] Exactly. And just knowing how to send a professional email to a professor or a future employer when you're looking for that first job or an internship. Those are all good things to be able to do.

[00:01:13] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:01:13] And I think sometimes people kind of overlook those simple, simple ways to present yourself as more professional and ultimately get where you want to go, whether that's with class or with the job or internship. So please enjoy. We hope you learn a lot from this episode.

[00:01:37] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:01:37] What is your name and your position at UConn?

[00:01:39] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:01:39] Hi, Emma. I'm Kelly Kennedy. I'm the Associate Director of Student Development, and I handle all the career education for all four campuses.

[00:01:47] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:01:47] So you help students develop as professionals in our office. And as we all know, they are receiving a lot of emails. So what are some ways that they can manage the amount of emails that they're receiving?

[00:01:58] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:01:58] Sure. I [00:02:00] think emails can seem overwhelming. I certainly receive many hundreds a day. I think the biggest thing about emails is the timing of them and the responsiveness. So for example, if you're receiving an email that needs a response immediately within the first 48 hours, or it's something you can put off. So I think there's a couple of tips that I would tell students. One is establish a block of time during the day that you will say, I will read and respond to emails. So, an opportunity may arise and it may need an immediate response right then and there. And that would be the time you would do so. The second thing I would do is when you are reading them, you're going to do a quick read of them and using the archive function, you might prioritize them. So perhaps you have three files that say immediate need to do this within 48 hours because of the deadlines

and the invitations that are people are asking me about or can wait until next week or can wait till two weeks. So I think when you reapproach them [00:03:00] again, you will. See which ones need your immediate attention and you can adjust accordingly. So for example, if someone was to send an invitation to something on campus, like a panel discussion, and they need you to respond. If you're going to attend within 48 hours, you will know to immediately respond and then also put it on your calendar. So you're doing both functions during the email process so that you're not just reading it and forgetting about it, and then perhaps a week later realized you either miss the event or you forgot to put it on your calendar. And that happens a lot with students applying for jobs because internships and jobs have tremendous deadlines associated with them. So, you know, it's only practice that you can get that email rolling.

[00:03:44] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:03:44] That's awesome. I feel like I need to start having folders.

[00:03:49] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:03:49] It's the only way to live.

[00:03:51] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:03:51] So what would you say are some strategies for being professional about your email communication? Like maybe how you write your email.

[00:04:00] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:04:00] So with email, just like anything else. Uh, I think it has a formality to it, just by the shape of it and the way you're typing. I mean, if we were to go back in time, it's about a typewriter. So I think you would want to do a couple of different things. , the first is salutations, salutations. , if not familiar with them. Begin with the dear mrs, ms, mr, and then end with best, sincerely, comma, that type of thing. So that's an entry and an exit. And they were originally sort of created in the business environment to...Producibility quite frankly, they were to sort of give respect to the other person too, indicate that you're listening to them. They definitely still represent that. So salutations, although perhaps in today's world, don't feel as common or comfortable if you would. , students often say, why do I need to use the word Dear? Uh, and I think that you don't necessarily need to use the word dear, per se, but addressing someone by [00:05:00] their first name or, or it could be a little informal perhaps even if you don't know this person. So I think salutations tell the reader if you would, when you're sending an email or a letter for that matter, that you are prepared. That you're professional, that you're respectful and most importantly that you're ready to work when you're ready to work. That makes you hireable. So when you might say, let's just say for example, you use slang and you might say the words, Hey Emma, that's a little bit of a different tone than you're going to provide with, you know. Dear, or I'm sincerely yours, that type of thing. So I think you want to think of this response anytime you're responding to anything as a way to showcase your and communicate your personal brand. So if your Personal brand begins with hey Emma, that's not going to be a hireable moment and that person on the other end, perhaps a recruiter or anybody else, is going to think to [00:06:00] themselves, wow, I need to teach this person some new skills. Whereas if you're going to respond to the person and say, you know, dear Mrs. Kennedy, then we're going to see that you're ready to be in the workplace. , so you want to, as I said, watch the slang. You want to make sure that you're, you're sort of responding to what the person is asking for, in terms of, you know, clearly reading the email

and answering all the questions they've asked, cause they can be detailed. You want to stay away from anything that's emotion-based. So love, warm regards, take care. Those things are very much so for someone, you know, personally, perhaps mom, dad or sister. , but in the business environment, you stay with things like best comma, Sincerely, best regards. So anything that's positive yet doesn't contain an emotion, would be really appropriate. , and again, the, the final process of that would be the signature. So you might say, uh, you [00:07:00] know, I might write a best regards, comma, Mrs. Kennedy or Kelly Kennedy, and the signature underneath my name should be really detailed. , I find that students don't take advantage of this for their personal brand. It should say their full name. The University of Connecticut School of Business, which is a brand in itself. The year they're going to graduate their major, and then I always have them put a hyperlink to their LinkedIn, and that sort of closes the letter, if you would, in quotation marks the letter by saying, this is a personal note, and I'm very informal, but I'm writing it in a formal way to respect you,

[00:07:37] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:07:37] and it's almost giving an invitation to learn more about me by clicking on the LinkedIn.

[00:07:42] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:07:42] Absolutely.

[00:07:44] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:07:44] So, you know connecting in connection to the personal branding point that you made. So students use social media, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat. What would be some ways to use your social media accounts in a [00:08:00] strategic way that's professional and what are some things. Not data.

[00:08:05] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:08:05] Right? That's sort of a whole can of worms there. I think there's a couple of things I would say about sort of cleaning up your social media, which I think students have done quite well. I maybe five to 10 years ago. They might have been in a really, uh. Sort of tough situation with having a lot of external things like photographs on Instagram and things like that that weren't necessarily appropriate for the workplace. But I think that you first can look at it like, I'm going to clean up my social media. One of the things I recommend in class is that students almost create additional social media that may just have first and first name and last initial, that if found would be on the professional sense. So let me give you an example for my Twitter account. I pretty much funnel it for a conversation around careers, recruiting jobs. So anything I do on Twitter is going to reflect that I don't, you know, sort of [00:09:00] swing in any other direction personally, so that I can. Stay with my brand, that my Twitter account, which is an MBA job coach, is very focused on that topic. So if students do that, they can also sort of funnel all of their information for that. So that would be for Facebook, Instagram, any of the ones you mentioned. , the second thing is utilizing LinkedIn and Twitter. To gain knowledge. I think students forget that LinkedIn is there and they think of it like Facebook just sitting there when they need to use it, but there's so many things on it. LinkedIn in particular that you don't have to buy the extra service to get to, and that would be industry knowledge. Job trends, any kind of learning for your major? There are groups in LinkedIn. Twitter in particular has been used by companies. I would say about 60% of companies right now are actually tweeting out some of their internships, leadership programs that are on their website and nowhere else. So when you are interested in a company, we refer to them as

target companies. When you are [00:10:00] interested in them, you might want to follow them on LinkedIn and Twitter. They definitely will be noticing that you follow them. So if you say, I really like this company, you're almost proving to them that that's true. , now with regards to building a personal brand. I think there's the online approach and the offline approach because a brand obviously is you, but you are the product and you want to have that sort of resonate. You don't want it to be all over the place. , so the first step for maybe our first semester students is going to be identifying that brand. Because what is that brand? You know, if I said to you, Emma, what's your brand? Right? You have to be able to identify for me, workplace skills, professional goals professional values that may or may not match with a future company. Okay. So for example, if you are interested in, you know, Coca Cola or what they represent you want to be able to speak to the fact that your values match their [00:11:00] value. , maybe some students are interested in environmental type companies, some sustainability programming. So if that's true. Where does that show up on your LinkedIn or your Facebook or your Instagram? You don't want to say something that you're saying externally and not off in an offline or online. Not sort of representing that as well. So you want to be clear. , I think engaging in campus activities that are going to match this identification that you've done. I mean, certainly you can take some personality tests and workplace tests. The major experience on the website on UConn's website has some. Free testing that you can do to see your value system. The QC exam is really great and free to take to see your EQ. All of these things are great to kind of identify that paragraph that we say, you know, tell me about yourself. Right? Everybody hates that. They always say, what am I gonna write about that? Right? So if you, if you kind of go and gather information from testing, from engaging on campus [00:12:00] activities, and then you walk away from those activities. And reflect. Okay. If you don't take the time to reflect, as you know, you're not going to be able to write an introduction that's thoughtful and highlight skills. , I think that you can then take those, that information and take it to LinkedIn and your rese. And I think the whole thing can be cohesive. And that really in itself is a brand.

[00:12:25] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:12:25] So would you say just. Just an extra question if, you know, I'm applying for a job and say like the finance industry, but also a part of my brand is that I'm like outdoor person and I go hiking and things like that and I care about the environment and I'm involved in that way on campus too. Should I make sure that, like my pictures on Instagram is kind of showing that part of myself too. If I'm putting that as like. Interests on my rese.

[00:12:51] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:12:51] Definitely. So I think that there have been sort of some mixed messages about how we bring ourselves to work, right? But I think [00:13:00] in the last two to three years, you will see if you're watching job trends that. Companies want your whole self to work your whole self. So what that means is, is that students should feel free about being who they are in their personalities, in their interests, in their hobbies, as well as the workplace. Because we do spend, as we know, spend 40 to 60 hours a week at work. So they want to be thinking, am I hiring this person to do the job? Yes, but am I also hiring this person to join my company? That's a bigger picture thing. And I knowing as a job coach, likability wins every time. So when they know you and want to know more about you, they have more apt to like you. And then that likability will show up in, in that interview. And then in that job offer. Yeah.

[00:13:50] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:13:50] Well, this was so inspiring. Thank you so much for talking to us.

[00:13:54] **Kelly Kennedy:** [00:13:54] thank you so much, Emma.

[00:14:04] [00:14:00] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:14:04] So we just heard Emma talking to Kelly Kennedy about managing email, having a formal communication over email and also building and. Uh, maintaining your social media presence. And I feel inspired. Maybe I'll fire up the old Twitter. I'll work on my personal brand.

[00:14:23] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:14:23] Yeah. And like, as you might have guessed, you know, this is, this is part of branding yourself. And I mean, there are little things that you can do already. Like, for example, something that I did with my Facebook account. It was just to make certain albums, you know, private, like from college or just with friends, you know, things that I felt it was more between like me and my friends or family. And it didn't necessarily need to have it public for everyone.

[00:14:47] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:14:47] Yeah. So cleaning it up a little bit. And then there's also the ways to be proactive. Like if you want to be more involved in your field, there's. Posts that you can make and people you can retweet to, you know, show that those are [00:15:00] your interests. Like you talked to Kelly a little bit about how you're interested in hiking and like, is that a good thing to post? And so it's not only, you know, being responsible and maybe. Putting things behind the curtain that the public really shouldn't see, but it's also being proactive and showing people and employers aside of yourself that you do want them to see

[00:15:20] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:15:20] exactly like that. I feel like, you know, describes me and for them to keep in mind when they maybe hire me onto their team, you know, as a good fit. Like there are many aspects that go into that.

[00:15:32] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:15:32] And then, yeah. When she was talking about email I can't emphasize to first year students enough how important it is to write a good email to faculty, to staff, to people that they might have as professional connections. I talk about it in my UNIV class and in my first year advising workshops because it can really make the difference in how somebody perceives you and what you're trying to say. And, for example, if I have a student that doesn't [00:16:00] put a subject line and it doesn't use real words like they use LOL, shortened abbreviations and it's not super professional, I don't know that I'm inclined to really go out of my way for that person if they can't go out of their way to write a professional email. And then the flip side of that is if somebody puts forth a really professional email. They've told me what they've done to try to resolve an issue that they're having, and maybe bonus points if they have a good email signature. It shows that they're professional. They're on top of things you know? Yeah.

[00:16:32] **Emma Bjorngard:** [00:16:32] And even like something that I know we've talked about as a team too, about having students, right. You know, in this subject line, like something a little bit more detailed so you can get a sense of like. What this email is about.

You know, if it was something that's really urgent or something that you can get to, you know, in a couple of hours, like those, those things are good to know, you know, and you

[00:16:52] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:16:52] communicate. So it seems like such simple concepts, but it's really. Often what makes or breaks your [00:17:00] communication? You know, writing a good email, being responsible and proactive with your social media. So thanks Emma. Thanks for your great interview and take care.