

## Utilizing LinkedIn for Personal Branding and Workforce Preparation for Office Administration Students at SMK Airlangga



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Submission	2024-30-11
Review	2024-16-12
Publication	2025-08-01

### ABSTRAK

In today's digital era, the job market is increasingly competitive, requiring job seekers to master both technical skills and soft skills. This challenge is particularly significant for Vocational High School (SMK) students, especially those in the Office Management Automation (OTKP) program at SMK Airlangga, as they prepare to enter a demanding professional environment. LinkedIn, a leading global professional networking platform, offers essential tools for personal branding and professional networking, enabling OTKP students to enhance their career prospects. However, effectively utilizing LinkedIn requires a solid understanding of profile optimization, branding strategies, and networking techniques. This program aims to teach students how to utilize LinkedIn to build their personal brand and expand their professional networks. Specifically, it provides training on creating compelling LinkedIn profiles, maintaining professional connections, and implementing effective communication strategies on the platform. Additionally, it highlights the significance of personal branding in navigating the modern job market. The methodology involves a combination of presentations, simulations, hands-on practice, and mentoring sessions. The training is divided into two parts: the first focuses on understanding personal branding and LinkedIn's relevance to career preparation, while the second emphasizes practical application, such as profile creation and networking strategies. Evaluation is conducted through participant questionnaires to measure training effectiveness and student comprehension. The primary objective of this initiative is to equip students with the skills and strategies needed to present their abilities confidently, engage with potential employers, and leverage LinkedIn as a professional development tool. By introducing key competencies such as networking and effective communication, the program aspires to broaden students' opportunities in the competitive workforce and empower them to establish a strong professional identity.

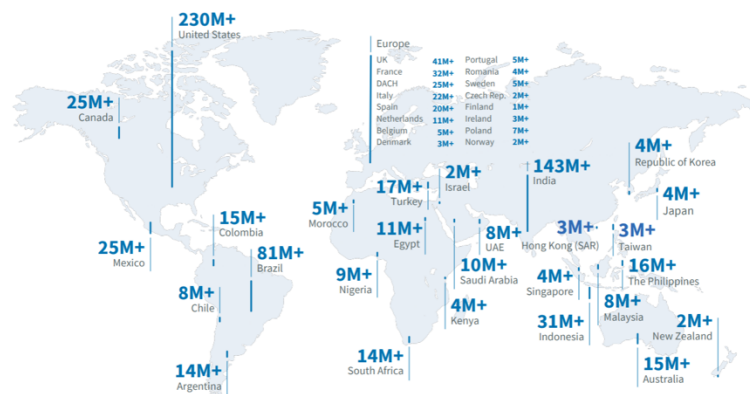
**Keyword:** *Personal Branding; LinkedIn; Professional Networking; Job Market Competition; Workforce Preparation*

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid globalization and digital transformation, the competitive landscape of the workforce demands a multifaceted approach to career preparation. Vocational High School (SMK) graduates, including those specializing in Office Administration Automation (Otomatisasi Tata Kelola Perkantoran or OTKP), are expected to not only master technical skills but also to build a robust foundation in soft skills such as personal branding, professional networking, and effective communication (Prasetyo, Herlambang, & Wijoyo, 2020). These skills are becoming increasingly important as employers are looking for candidates who can adapt to the fast-evolving digital workspace, possess the ability to engage in professional networking, and effectively represent themselves in various digital and physical environments. As job markets become increasingly saturated with candidates who possess the same technical competencies, employers are seeking individuals who stand out not only for their technical skills but also for their ability to navigate digital platforms, represent themselves effectively, and adapt to a globally connected work environment.

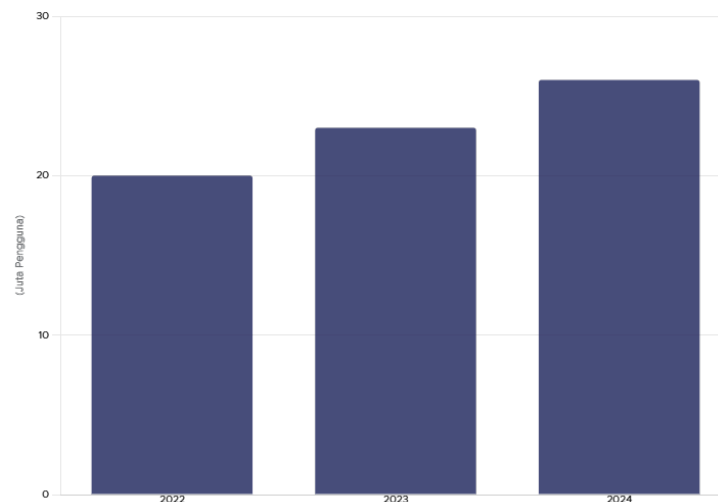
For OTKP students at SMK Airlangga, these challenges underscore the pressing need for strategic preparation to transition smoothly into the workforce. This preparation requires a more than just mastering classroom-based technical skills; students must also develop a strong understanding of how to position themselves as competitive candidates in a digitally dominated job market. Without these skills, even technically qualified graduates may struggle to present themselves to employers effectively or to build lasting professional relationships.

Recent data highlight LinkedIn's growing significance in the professional realm. With over 1 billion users across 200 countries as of 2024, LinkedIn has become a primary platform for job searching, professional networking, and career development (LinkedIn, 2024a). This remarkable growth highlights LinkedIn's pivotal role in shaping career opportunities for individuals worldwide. Reports suggest that 87% of recruiters frequently use LinkedIn to identify and evaluate candidates, while 70% of job seekers utilize the platform to connect with potential employers and access job opportunities (Jobvite, 2021). LinkedIn's extensive reach and growing user base make it an indispensable tool for young professionals, especially those entering highly competitive markets, as it provides a platform where they can display their skills, knowledge, and achievements to a global audience.



\*FY25/Q1 Membership; numbers are updated quarterly after Microsoft Earnings

**Figure 1.** Linked In members in countries and regions around the world (LinkedIn, 2024)



**Figure 2.** User LinkedIn in Indonesia (Scuderia, 2024)

LinkedIn is a widely used professional networking platform in Indonesia. According to DataReportal, the number of LinkedIn users in Indonesia has increased by 6 million in the past two years. We Are Social reports that in 2022, there were 20 million LinkedIn users in Indonesia, or 7.2% of the population, which grew to 23 million (8.3% of the population) in 2023, and 26 million (9.3%) in early 2024. LinkedIn is commonly used to showcase skills, work experience, and find new career opportunities, making it especially popular among job seekers. Features like LinkedIn Learning and Groups enhance user engagement, offering online courses and professional communities. As of 2024, LinkedIn ranks as the seventh most used social media platform in Indonesia, highlighting its growing influence. As illustrated in Figure 2, these trends indicate significant opportunities for both job seekers and employers to connect, facilitating career advancement and talent acquisition (Scuderia, 2024).

For OTKP students at SMK Airlangga, LinkedIn presents an invaluable opportunity to establish their personal brand, connect with professionals, and access a global network of industry leaders. Through the platform, students have the chance to showcase their skills, achievements, and potential directly to prospective employers while gaining insights into various industries and career pathways (Hakim, 2023). LinkedIn's ability to provide access to professional communities and content offers students a valuable avenue to learn from established professionals in their field, further enabling them to expand their networks and gain a deeper understanding of the job market dynamics (Enterprise, 2013). LinkedIn also presents an accessible means for students to not only develop their professional presence but also gather industry-specific knowledge. Through engagement with thought leaders and industry content shared on LinkedIn, students can stay updated on current trends, gain insights from top professionals, and refine their career goals based on real-world insights and opportunities shared within their professional communities. This aligns with the growing emphasis on lifelong learning and continuous professional development in the modern workforce.

Effectively utilizing LinkedIn, however, requires more than just creating a profile; it demands a nuanced understanding of personal branding, effective communication, and strategic networking. Building a compelling LinkedIn presence involves the thoughtful curation of profile elements—such as a professional headline, summary, experience, and skills—consistent engagement with industry-relevant content, and the ability to

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connect meaningfully with professionals (Puspita, 2023). These skills are integral in crafting an online presence that accurately reflects a student's capabilities while showcasing their unique value proposition to potential employers.

However, despite the significance of LinkedIn, many students face challenges in understanding how to effectively manage their online image. Without the knowledge of how to strategically build and maintain their LinkedIn profile, students may fail to make the most of the platform's potential. As such, developing LinkedIn profiles that are professionally appealing and building networks requires much more than just filling in basic information. It requires strategic curation, engagement, and an ongoing commitment to self-presentation and professional development. These skills also bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge gained in school and the practical demands of the workforce, addressing the mismatch often observed between academic preparation and workplace expectations.

Recognizing the critical need for these competencies, this community service program, titled "Utilizing LinkedIn For Personal Branding and Workforce Preparation For Office Administration Students At Smk," aims to equip students with the knowledge, tools, and strategies required to maximize LinkedIn for personal branding and career preparation. The program takes a dual approach, combining theoretical instruction with practical application. Theoretical lessons will cover the importance of personal branding and career preparation, providing students with the necessary context to understand how LinkedIn fits into their professional development journey. The practical component of the program will offer hands-on guidance in creating professional LinkedIn profiles, building and sustaining networks, and employing effective digital communication techniques to enhance students' visibility and attractiveness to employers.

By incorporating real-world scenarios and simulations into the program, students will be able to apply theoretical knowledge in a controlled environment, gaining immediate feedback and refining their skills before entering the professional world. This direct connection between academic principles and workplace practices ensures that students develop skills that are immediately applicable in their careers. In addition to the development of LinkedIn profiles, students will also learn networking strategies, such as how to effectively reach out to professionals, how to craft an engaging message, and how to maintain ongoing professional relationships over time. These skills ensure that students are prepared not just to secure their first job but also to advance in their careers over time.

Additionally, students will gain deeper insights into the importance of personal branding within today's dynamic job market. They will learn actionable steps to develop and maintain a consistent professional online presence and understand how to navigate digital communication in a manner that reflects professionalism and competence. Personal branding is no longer just a buzzword but a crucial element of career success, especially in a world where digital platforms are increasingly shaping recruitment processes (Nani, Ahluwalia, & Novita, 2021). By teaching students to curate their personal brands online, the program empowers them to control how they are perceived by potential employers, positioning them for future opportunities.

The training emphasizes both the long-term benefits of a strong digital presence and the immediate advantages of effective networking in securing job opportunities. Students will also gain critical insights into how employers use LinkedIn and other digital platforms to evaluate candidates, ensuring they understand the digital recruitment process and are able to tailor their profiles and interactions accordingly.

Ultimately, this program aspires to enhance students' awareness of the importance of a strong personal brand and prepare them to navigate the workforce with greater confidence and competitiveness. By equipping OTKP students at SMK Airlangga with the necessary skills to leverage LinkedIn and other digital tools, this initiative seeks to empower them with a competitive edge, opening broader opportunities for career success and advancement in an increasingly interconnected world. This comprehensive approach aims to give students the tools to succeed not just in finding employment but also in fostering a successful, long-term career in the digital age.

## **METHOD**

This community service activity will be held from January to March 2024 at SMK Airlangga. The "Utilizing LinkedIn for Personal Branding and Job Preparation for OTKP Students" training will be conducted in a single day, followed by mentoring over a specified period. Participants in this program include students from the Office Administration Automation (OTKP) department at SMK Airlangga in Balikpapan City, preparing themselves to enter the workforce. The training methods consist of presentations, simulations, and hands-on practice, designed to ensure active student engagement.

### **1. Training Structure**

The program is divided into four sessions, with each session lasting one hour. The sessions are structured as follows:

- 1) Part 1, Introduction to Personal Branding and LinkedIn for Career Preparation
  - a) Session 1, Overview of personal branding and its relevance to career success (60 minutes).
  - b) Session 2, The role of LinkedIn in career preparation and its key features (60 minutes).
- 2) Part 2, Practical LinkedIn Usage
  - a) Session 3, Creating and optimizing LinkedIn profiles, including completing sections such as work experience, education, and skills (60 minutes).
  - b) Session 4, Networking strategies, job search techniques, and practical application of LinkedIn features (60 minutes).

### **2. Program Stages**

Following the training structures, students will receive mentorship to maximize their use of LinkedIn. The training consists of several stages:

- 1) The community service program involves several key stages to ensure its successful implementation and effectiveness. Preparation activities include developing a comprehensive schedule and selecting a suitable venue for the training sessions. Permission is sought from the school principal and other relevant authorities to conduct the activities, and necessary administrative documents, such as correspondence, are prepared to facilitate smooth coordination.

- 2) Socialization activities begin with opening remarks and an introduction to the target student participants. This is followed by an overview of the importance of personal branding and the effective use of LinkedIn for career preparation. A discussion and Q&A session are conducted to address participants' questions and provide clarity on the presented material.
- 3) During the LinkedIn practice sessions, OTKP students engage in hands-on exercises to apply their learning. Activities include creating and optimizing LinkedIn profiles, writing an effective "About Me" summary, and adding relevant profile sections such as work experience, education, and certifications. Students also explore LinkedIn's job search features, utilizing filters like location, job type, remote work, and on-site opportunities. Additionally, they learn how to connect with professionals and follow relevant accounts to expand their networks.
- 4) Finally, the program concludes with evaluation activities, where a questionnaire is distributed to 30 participants. The questionnaire employs an ordinal scale to assess students' understanding and their experiences during the training. Feedback from this evaluation helps the Community Service Team measure the program's effectiveness and identify potential areas for improvement, ensuring the initiative meets its objectives.

3. Student Participation

To ensure active engagement, students are encouraged to participate in discussions, share their insights during Q&A sessions, and collaborate in group activities. During the practical sessions, students will work directly on creating and improving their LinkedIn profiles with guidance from trainers. Simulations and role-playing exercises will be used to replicate real-world networking and job application scenarios, allowing students to practice skills in a supportive environment.

4. Evaluation Questionnaire

Participants will complete a questionnaire to assess their experience and the program's impact. The questionnaire uses the following scale:

- 5 = Strongly Agree / Very Relevant / Very Good
- 4 = Agree / Relevant / Good
- 3 = Unsure / Fair
- 2 = Disagree / Irrelevant / Poor
- 1 = Strongly Disagree / Very Irrelevant / Very Poor

**Table 1.** Questionnaire

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Difficulty in directly implementing key elements in creating an effective LinkedIn profile					
Understanding of how to create a "About Me" summary on LinkedIn					
Understanding of how to add sections to the profile, such as work, education, and experience					
Understanding of how to search for professions and jobs, including filters like location, job type, remote, and on-site					
Understanding of how to find and connect/follow other accounts					



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

The community service program "Utilizing LinkedIn for Personal Branding and Job Preparation for OTKP Students at SMK Airlangga" aims to equip vocational students, especially those in the Office Administration Automation (OTKP) department, with practical skills and knowledge to leverage LinkedIn as a platform for building personal branding and professional networks.

The implementation of LinkedIn training at SMK Airlangga demonstrated a significant increase in participants' understanding of personal branding and LinkedIn usage. This activity was conducted from February to March 2024 and attended by 30 students from the Office Administration Automation (OTKP) department. The training was held over four sessions, each covering both theory and hands-on practice, where students were guided by the community service team to grasp the taught concepts. At the end of the sessions, students completed an evaluation survey questionnaire to measure their understanding effectiveness following the training. Documentation of the training activities can be seen in Figure 1, which shows the training atmosphere as it was taking place.



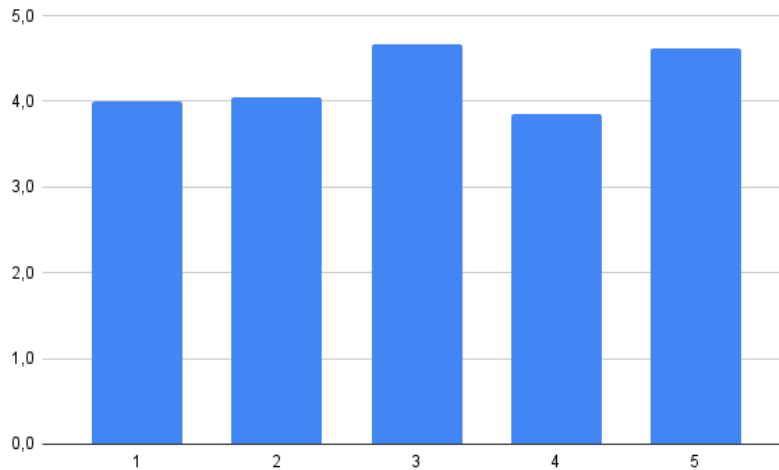
**Figure 3.** Documentation of the training activities

After the training, participants were also asked to provide feedback on their satisfaction with the training. They were given the opportunity to offer constructive criticism and suggestions to the implementing team for future improvements. A total of 30 students participated in the training, with 21 students completing the LinkedIn usage questionnaire.

**Table 2.** Results of the LinkedIn Utilization Questionnaire

No.	Statement	Mean
1	Ease of directly implementing the main elements in creating an effective LinkedIn profile	4.0
2	Understanding of how to create the "About Me" summary on LinkedIn	4.0
3	Understanding of how to add sections to the profile, such as work, education, and experience	4.7
4	Understanding of how to search for jobs and professions, and using filters like location, job type, remote, and on-site	3.9
5	Understanding of how to search for and connect/follow other accounts	4.6
<b>Overall Average</b>		<b>4.2</b>

Source: Data Analysis, 2024



**Figure 4.** Results of the LinkedIn Utilization Questionnaire

The data analysis method employed in this study is descriptive analysis. This method is used to determine the frequency distribution and response rates of the collected questionnaires by describing the items included in the questionnaire. Each item is analyzed by calculating the average results and categorizing them into a defined scale range (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Classification of Average Value

No.	Average Value	Evidence
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Insufficient
2	1.81 – 2.60	Insufficient
3	2.61 – 3.40	Sufficient
4	3.41 – 4.20	Good
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very Good

Source: Riduwan in Alamsyah et al. (2022)

Table 2 presents the questionnaire results assessing students' understanding of LinkedIn utilization following the training. The average (mean) for each statement indicates the extent to which students feel confident and understand the essential concepts of effectively using LinkedIn.

For the first statement, "Ease of directly implementing the main elements in creating an effective LinkedIn profile," students gave a mean score of 4.0. This shows they feel fairly confident and understand that they can implement the key elements in LinkedIn profile creation effectively. For the second statement on understanding how to create the "About Me" summary on LinkedIn, students also gave a mean score of 4.0, indicating they can clearly convey their identity and qualifications on their LinkedIn profile.

The third statement, understanding how to add sections such as work, education, and experience to their profile, received the highest mean score of 4.7. This reflects that students have a strong understanding of how to add crucial information to their profiles and high confidence in displaying their qualifications. However, the fourth statement, concerning understanding how to search for jobs and use filters like location, job type, remote, and on-site, received a mean score of 3.9. Although this demonstrates a good



understanding, this score is slightly lower than other elements, suggesting they may need more practice or information on using the search features more comprehensively.

For the statement about understanding how to search for and connect/follow other accounts, students demonstrated good understanding with a mean of 4.6, reflecting their awareness of the importance of building a professional network.

The overall average for all statements is 4.2, indicating that the training effectively enhanced students' understanding of LinkedIn usage. The majority of students feel confident in creating profiles and interacting on the platform, particularly in terms of adding essential information and building networks. The high mean scores in several aspects also highlight the training's effectiveness in teaching the critical concepts needed for LinkedIn success.

**Table 3.** Problem-Solving Solutions for LinkedIn Utilization Findings

No.	Problem	Solution
1	Students feel less confident in implementing the key elements of profile creation	Conduct additional training to improve LinkedIn profile creation skills, including more in-depth explanations of essential elements.
2	Students need a better understanding of how to search for professions and jobs using LinkedIn	Provide further guidance on using advanced search features, including effective filtering techniques.
3	Students do not fully understand the importance of personal branding and creating the "About Me" summary	Hold a workshop focused on writing an engaging and relevant "About Me" summary and explain the crucial role of personal branding in careers.

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

## DISCUSSION

Additional training plays a crucial role in equipping students with the necessary skills to effectively manage their LinkedIn profiles. By conducting more in-depth training sessions, students not only gain theoretical knowledge but also have the opportunity to practice directly in managing their profiles (Daru, 2024). This hands-on practice helps students feel more comfortable and confident when using the platform, considering that practical skills are often more valuable than mere theoretical knowledge (Alnoth, 2024). Furthermore, additional training creates a supportive environment where students can share experiences, exchange ideas, and learn from one another, thereby reinforcing their understanding of how to build effective personal branding on LinkedIn.

One of the key challenges faced by students is the lack of familiarity with LinkedIn's advanced features and the technicalities of creating a professional online presence. For instance, students often struggle with crafting a compelling "About Me" summary or identifying the appropriate keywords to use in their profiles to increase visibility to recruiters. To address this, specific training scenarios can be implemented, such as guided workshops where students create their profiles in real-time under the supervision of mentors. Another example is role-playing exercises in which students

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practice reaching out to professionals and drafting personalized connection requests, enabling them to develop their networking skills in a safe and supportive setting.

Moreover, many students find it challenging to identify job opportunities that align with their qualifications and interests. Amid increasing competition in the professional world, the ability to search for appropriate and relevant job opportunities becomes crucial (Nastiti, Koroy, Rusvitawati, Krismanti, & Hermaniar, 2021; Peng & Deng, 2022). Advanced search strategies can help students utilize LinkedIn's job search features more effectively. For instance, training sessions can include practical demonstrations on using LinkedIn's filters to refine job searches based on location, job type, and experience level. Students can also be guided through case studies showing how strategic searches led to successful job placements, reinforcing the importance of mastering these features. This aligns with findings by (Alamsyah, Kende, Alaina, & Astuti, 2024), who emphasize that optimizing job search tools significantly improves efficiency and increases the likelihood of securing relevant employment opportunities.

Personal branding is another crucial aspect that students must master. Personal branding is a strategic process through which individuals build and manage their image in the eyes of others, and reputation plays a central role in this process. Your brand is a promise to customers—a promise about quality, reliability, and value (KemenkopUKM, 2023). In the context of LinkedIn, an individual's online reputation is shaped by professional interactions, endorsements, and the content they share on the platform (Okviosa, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to teach students about the value of online reputation and its impact on their career opportunities. For example, students can analyze successful LinkedIn profiles of professionals in their field, identifying key elements such as profile structure, endorsements, and content shared. They can then apply these insights to enhance their own profiles, ensuring they present a professional and polished image.

Additionally, students need to understand that a good reputation can open doors to job opportunities, professional connections, and career development. By emphasizing the importance of building a positive reputation on LinkedIn, students can be trained not only to be active consumers of the platform but also to be content creators who can enhance their image and reputation in the professional world. For instance, students can be tasked with sharing insightful posts, participating in professional discussions, and seeking endorsements from colleagues and mentors as part of their personal branding strategy.

This training also connects to prior research on the impact of LinkedIn and personal branding in professional development. (Nastiti et al., 2021) demonstrated that students who actively engage in personal branding and online networking see improved career readiness and job market outcomes. Similarly, (Peng & Deng, 2022) highlighted the effectiveness of targeted training programs in increasing students' proficiency with professional platforms like LinkedIn. These findings reinforce the outcomes of this initiative, which aims to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and the practical skills required in today's competitive workforce.

By addressing these challenges with targeted strategies and linking the training outcomes to previous research, this program underscores the importance of equipping

students with the tools to navigate LinkedIn effectively. Through additional hands-on training, case studies, and tailored scenarios, students can develop the confidence and competence needed to excel in the professional world.

### CONCLUSION & RECOMENDATION

The training program "Utilizing LinkedIn for Personal Branding and Job Preparation for Office Administration Students at SMK Airlangga" successfully enhanced participants' understanding of LinkedIn's role in professional networking and career preparation. With an average evaluation score of 4.2, students demonstrated improved confidence and competence in creating LinkedIn profiles, showcasing professional achievements, and building networks. Practical sessions and interactive components ensured participants could translate theoretical insights into actionable skills. Notably, the highest performance was in adding essential profile sections, while advanced job search techniques required further reinforcement.

To further solidify the impact of this program, it is recommended to:

1. Conduct regular workshops focusing on emerging industry trends and advanced LinkedIn functionalities to sustain and deepen students' engagement.
2. Introduce mentorship programs by pairing students with industry professionals or alumni proficient in LinkedIn to provide ongoing guidance and networking opportunities.
3. Focus on personal branding mastery through workshops addressing the creation of compelling "About Me" summaries and strategic content sharing to strengthen students' online presence and visibility to recruiters.
4. Enhance job search training with dedicated sessions on utilizing advanced search filters and identifying opportunities aligned with students' skills and aspirations.
5. Encourage students to actively create and share meaningful content on LinkedIn, such as posts reflecting their learning experiences, insights on industry trends, or achievements, to demonstrate their professional growth and engage with a broader professional audience.

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