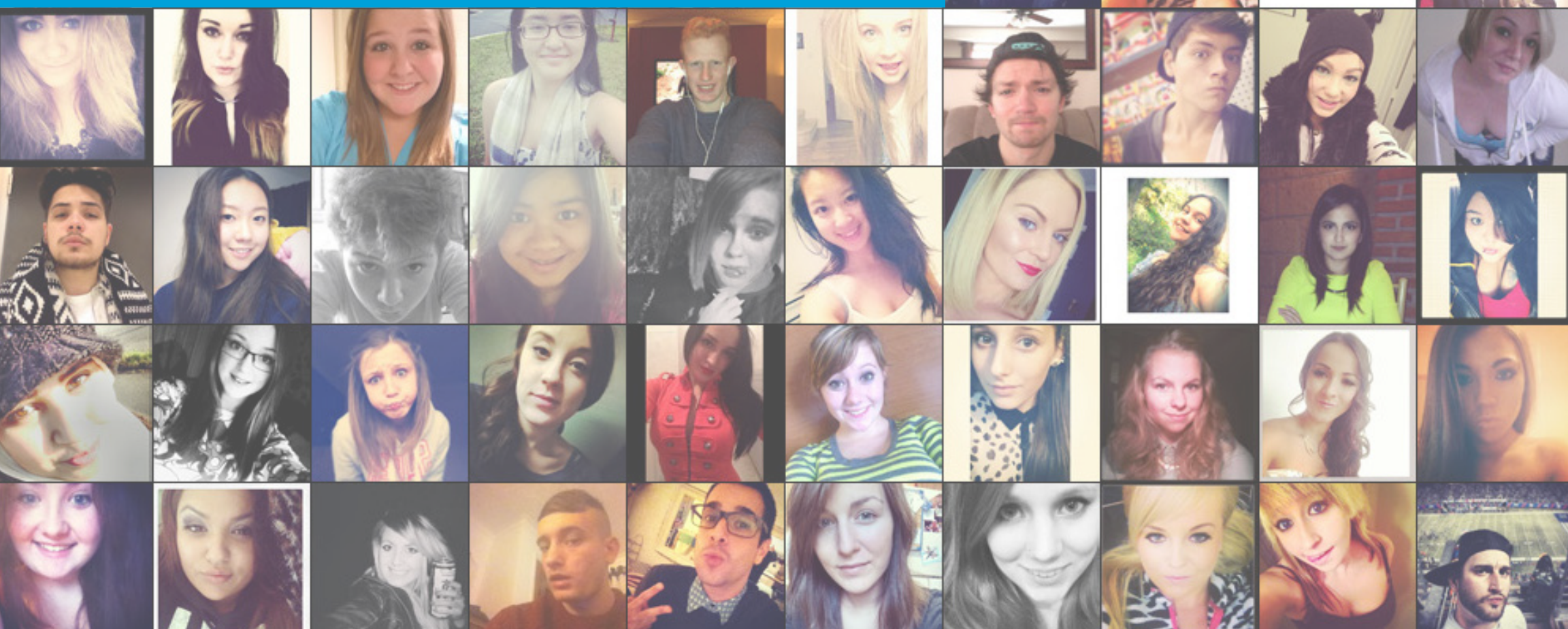# Digital Narcissism

The Rise of the Selfie and Dealing with Shameless Self-Promoters in the Workplace

HOGAN

Social media and the internet are making us more narcissistic, but can this trend be reversed?

In their book *Living in the Age of Entitlement*, psychologists Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell present findings from a survey of more than 37,000 college students showing that narcissistic personality traits rose as fast as obesity from the 1980s to the present.

Although some criticize Twenge and Campbell's study as little more than kids-these-days moralizing, just the thought of an influx of arrogant, self-promoting members of generations Y (Millennials) and Z (Digital Natives) keeps many managers and HR practitioners up at night.
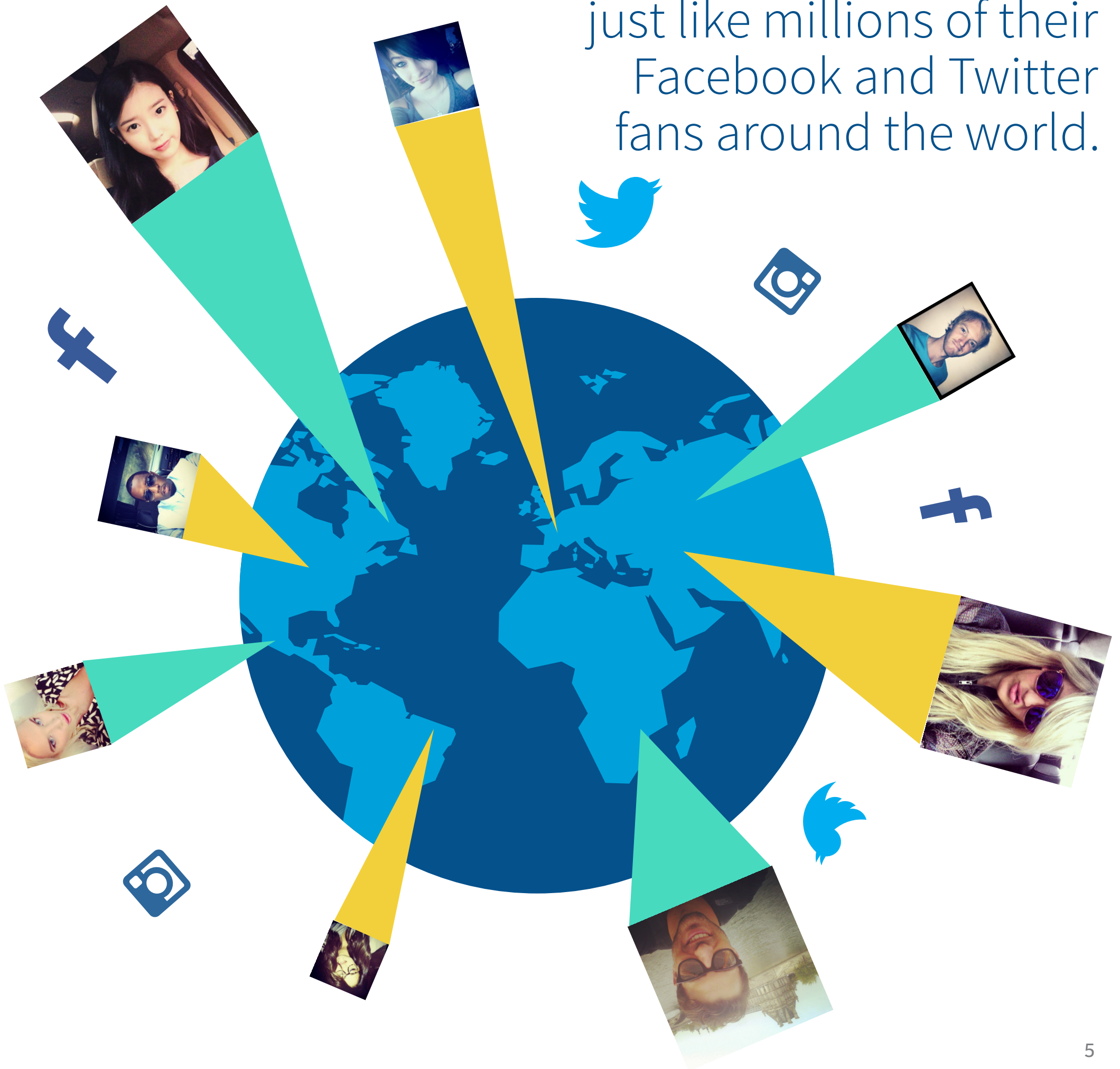
What do Kanye West, Kim Kardashian and Justin Bieber have in common?

Grandiose exhibitionism, inflated self-views, superficial personalities, and self-promotion.

In that sense, they are just like millions of their Facebook and Twitter fans around the world.

The driving force behind narcissistic behavior is an individual's belief that he or she is unique or exceptional in some way, the origins of which can often be traced to adult caretakers providing children continuous positive feedback without the boundaries and discipline necessary for learning their own and others' limits.

Sometimes an individual's history of exclusion, rejection, and/or illness can create a belief in his or her own exceptionality – in other words, the individual is exceptional by the virtue of having experienced challenging circumstances. These individuals' public self-confidence masks private self-doubt; however, their negative feelings may be so deeply buried that they are inaccessible.

Welcome to the golden age of narcissism,
a world of endless ostentation
opportunities and unlimited
bragging possibilities.
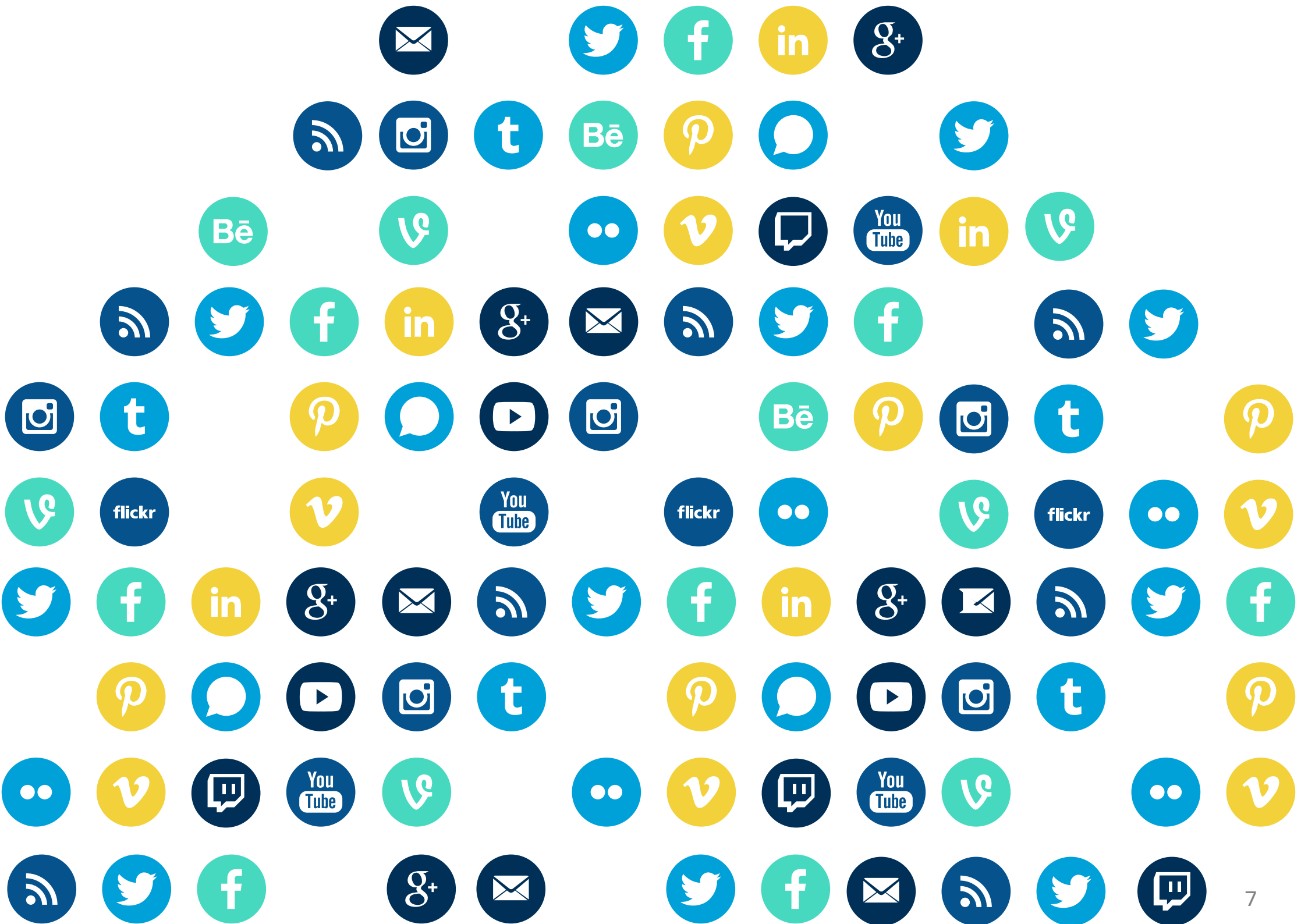
Instafame

Showing-off has never been easier and, ironically, more celebrated.

So how do you deal with narcissism in the workplace?

Under increased stress or pressure, narcissistic behavior can become detrimental to an individual's job performance.

According to Hogan Research Director Dr. Jeff Foster, "When people are under an increased amount of stress or pressure, they tend to overuse their strengths to compensate," Foster said. "So, what you see with narcissistic people is self-confidence in its extreme form. They overestimate their abilities, make decisions without consulting others, and scapegoat when they get it wrong."

Whether online or in the workplace, narcissistic individuals are much more likely to portray a desirable, albeit unrealistic, self-image, and broadcast their life to an audience.

Like Comment Share 👍4 💬1

There's nothing wrong with seeking others' approval – a healthy identity actually depends on paying careful attention to what others think of us.

Like Comment Share 👍39 💬21

When taken too far, however, the desire to be accepted morphs into a relentless quest for status, which undermines other people and impairs our ability to build and maintain happy relationships and successful careers.

Narcissists tend to resist negative feedback. When presented with a strategy for advancing their personal agenda through self-improvement, however, narcissists can be persuaded to:

- Lower their expectations for special treatment, and try to accept responsibility for mistakes

- Recognize that they ignore negative feedback

- Seek well-meaning feedback from family and friends

- Stop regarding team interactions as competitions

- Realize that subordinates are more productive when they feel respected

- Learn how to offer positive feedback to others

- Use their confidence, energy, and determination to motivate instead of intimidate others

The biggest problem with the rise of narcissism is that it puts enormous pressure on people to achieve unfeasible goals, without making them hungrier.

Wanting to be Beyoncé or Jay Z is hard enough already, but when you are not prepared to work hard to achieve it, you are better off just lowering your aspirations.