

5 Steps to Building a Personal Brand

Companies and organisations are not alone in the need for solid branding. Personal branding, the art of building a unique brand around yourself as an individual, is just as important. Just as so with a traditional brand, personal branding requires you to find a signature image, a unique voice. Personal branding allows you to establish a reputation and an identity while still maintaining a personal level of trust and interaction, usually through social media.

Step 1: Determine your area of expertise

Before you can establish or develop your expertise, you have to decide what you want to be known for. The world of personal branding is flooded with competing entrepreneurs, so it isn't enough to choose a general field like "marketing" or "human resources." Instead, it's best to develop yourself in a very specific niche. With a niche focus, you'll have more opportunities to prove you know what you're talking about, and while your potential audience might be slightly smaller, it will also be that much more relevant. Specificity is a trade of volume for significance.

Step 2: Start writing and publishing

Once you know your area of focus, it's time to start building your reputation, and the best way to do that is to show off your expertise. Content marketing is the best way to build a brand and reputation online; when people look for information, they tend to go back to sources that were helpful to them. If you can become a trusted source of information through your content, over time you'll become collectively known as the expert of your specific field. It's best to start your own blog and update it on a regular (at least weekly) basis, but it's also a good idea to start guest blogging on other reputable blogs.

Step 3: Flesh out your social media profiles

If content is the fuel for your personal brand, social media is the engine. Take the time to flesh out the details of your social media profiles, including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and make sure they're consistently in line with your personal brand standards. Post updates regularly (at least once a day for Facebook and LinkedIn, at least a few times a day for Twitter), and don't be afraid to re-post your older content for your new followers.

Step 4: Speak at events and develop case studies

If you're trying to win the business of your personal brand followers, it's a good idea to work up a few case studies. Work with your past or present clients and co-workers to spin and present a solid narrative. People love real stories more than promises or speculation, so prove what you've done by giving them digestible case studies. You should also consider looking for speaking events in your area, which will give you the opportunity to demonstrate your expertise while connecting with new audiences.

Step 5: Network, Network, Network

On social media and in the real world, the key to sparking growth in your personal brand is networking. Engage with other individuals in your field, social influencers who have many connections, and anybody else who could be valuable in helping you spread the word about your expertise. Attend professional networking events to meet influencers in your area, and in the online world, engage in community discussions whenever you can. The more opportunities you have to meet people and talk, the better.

A personal brand is like a garden. Once you lay the groundwork and plant the seeds, you'll be in a great position to eventually reap the benefits. However, it still takes time and dedication to nurture and expand your creation. As you continue to develop your personal brand, stay consistent with your efforts, pay close attention to how your audience responds to your content, and hone your direction until your focus is razor sharp.