

Building Your Personal Brand

How to set yourself apart, clarify your unique professional identity,
and build a stellar reputation for yourself – on purpose!

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What the heck is personal branding?

“Your personal brand is a promise to your clients...a promise of quality, consistency, competency, and reliability.”

“Your brand is what people say about you when you’re not in the room.”

“Be yourself. Everybody else is already taken.”

“Life isn’t about finding yourself. It’s about creating yourself.”

“You, too, are a brand whether you know it or not. And whether you like it or not.”

“If you are not a brand, you are a commodity.”

“Personal branding is all about discovering what makes you special and then communicating it to the right people, through multiple channels.”

“Everyone is a salesman and the product is each person. Personal branding is being conscious to the continued nature of selling yourself.”

“Your personal brand serves as your best protection against business factors you can’t control.”

“If people like you, they will listen to you. But if they trust you, they will do business with you.”





Element #1: Market Differentiation

What makes you better at your job than other qualified professionals in your field? Where do you shine and stand out? What sets you apart and differentiates you from the crowd?

Differentiating Yourself

- If you're not clear about what separates you from your peers/competitors, figure it out; How do you approach your work differently? What can people count on when they hire you? Why would you hire you vs. somebody else?
- Cultivate an interesting, powerful, and (possibly) controversial point of view about the work you do - and express it with loads of conviction
- Keep tabs on your competition; pay attention to how others in your field are promoting themselves and the branding techniques they use
- Dress for success and possibly even develop a unique fashion statement, accessory, color scheme, or visual element to increase your memorability
- Still unclear about your unique differentiators? Consider using a tool like www.reachcc.com to solicit input from your friends/acquaintances



LinkedIn Profile Optimization

- Get creative with the photo and “wallpaper” imagery at the top of your profile; try to align them in some way with your personality/brand
- Consider using an unconventional “headline” at the top of your profile that clarifies your career focus and contains 10-15 relevant keywords
- If you haven’t already done so, create a custom LinkedIn URL (and possibly grab other social media, e-mail, and web addresses related to your name)
- Write a compelling “about” section that uses creative copywriting to tell your story, show off your personality, and showcase relevant keywords
- Add multimedia or web links to various sections of your LinkedIn profile, if appropriate, to showcase your work product and accomplishments
- Use the “request recommendation” feature to solicit testimonials from friends/allies who can speak to your capabilities





Element #2: Strategic Networking

Are you managing your contacts effectively? Are you consciously choosing to strengthen certain relationships? Are you participating in appropriate groups and networking organizations?

Strategic Networking

- Cultivate a diverse network to avoid the “strength of weak ties” syndrome; read the book *The Tipping Point* for an excellent explanation of this
- Track your relationships carefully; develop a system for managing your “social capital” and taking helpful notes regarding the people you meet
- Treat referrals like gold; make the referring party look good and don’t forget to follow up, down the road, to close the loop on any introductions
- Out of sight, out of mind; touch base with key contacts regularly to keep your relationships healthy; focus on influential people, in particular!
- Constantly pay it forward and be thoughtful; in a world that seems increasingly impersonal and detached, kind gestures go a long, long way



Association Involvement

- Use sites like directoryofassociations.com, iloveseattle.org, and www.meetup.com to find relevant groups and organizations to explore
- Try before you buy; not every group might be a good fit with your needs and personality, so attend an event or two before becoming a paid member
- Leverage group officers for introductions/help and consider volunteering to be an officer, yourself, since you'll make many more useful contacts
- Don't just limit yourself to professional groups; surprisingly, social, civic, and hobby groups sometimes produce even better leads and referrals
- Don't overlook virtual groups (e.g. LinkedIn Groups), alumni groups, and more exclusive groups such as vistage.com, ypo.org, or yearup.org





Element #3: Reputation Management

Do you have a stellar reputation, both online and offline? Do you keep your word and ensure people have a great experience with you? Do people get excited to make referrals on your behalf?

Reputation Management

- Ooze integrity; maintain a superior “say/do ratio” and always follow through on the commitments you make to people
- Be consistent; pick three adjectives you want people to associate with you and seek to demonstrate these qualities in every interaction you have
- Google yourself on occasion; see what information comes up about you and what employers/customers would discover if they checked you out
- Be careful about what you post on social media; sharing anything that might be negative, political, or controversial could potentially backfire
- In cases where you might have a bad reference or negative online review, consider services like reputationdefender.com or myreferences.com





Element #4:

Thought Leadership

Do you want to become a recognized expert in your field? Do you have innovative ideas, methods, and insights to share?

Are you taking active steps to gain exposure for these ideas?

Writing & Publishing

- Consider building a personal website using [wix.com](https://www.wix.com), [weebly.com](https://www.weebly.com), or a similar platform to raise your visibility and showcase your work product
- Regularly post relevant content on the LinkedIn home page; better yet, create a recurring appointment on your calendar to remind you to do this
- Consider using the “write article” option on LinkedIn to publish a more formal white paper or opinion piece; this can lead to viral distribution
- Possibly start authoring a blog, but keep in mind this is a big commitment and that the blog-o-sphere is extremely congested these days
- Contact relevant media outlets or trade journals in your field to pitch article ideas - or possibly even offer to write a regular column



Public Speaking

- Approach relevant business, civic, and community organizations for possible speaking opportunities - as well as radio and television programs
- Recognize that speaking gives you a one-to-many opportunity to influence people; it will also help you hone your message and professional beliefs
- When appropriate, consider recording your presentation (get permission first) in order to build up some good content for future distribution
- If you're not a very polished presenter, or get nervous, consider hiring a speech coach or joining Toastmasters to improve your skills in this area
- Are you a real pro at presenting? If so, possibly join a local or national speakers bureau or apply to deliver a local TED talk!



Final Questions?

Time flies, as they say -- so if we ran out of time to address a specific question you raised during the webinar, please don't hesitate to reach out to Matt Youngquist at matt@career-horizons.com!

