

BRAND ,ME‘

Personal branding and the importance of self- marketing in the virtual world



Whenever we pick up a magazine or newspaper we are confronted with brands. We all know the importance of creating and maintaining a good brand for products, don't we? Porsche, Chanel, Lancôme, Alessi. Yes, we are all familiar with these brand names. But what about celebrities – Madonna, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Helen Fischer, sports celebrities, politicians, – they are also brands - brands we either like or dislike. In a virtual world where over 80% of companies are using LinkedIn as a recruitment tool, where 65 million users access their Facebook through their smart phones (if Facebook were a country it would be the third largest county in the world) and where twitter has over 140 million active users, it is no wonder that 93% of marketers around the world use social media for business – any you should too.

Why should you create your personal brand?

Personal branding has become an important tool for all who want to improve their opportunities in their business careers. There are a number of reasons why personal branding has become so important.

- As the majority of millennials (those born after 1980) have, or are enjoying academia and German universities are bursting at their seams, it is important to stand out from the crowd. This current generation is likely to move around more professionally. Over the course of their careers they will most probably transition between completely different careers as the need for some employment will become obsolete while other job opportunities may open up.
- People are retiring later in life. More and more of the baby boomers (people born between the years 1946 and 1964, giving an age range between 50 and 69 as of 2015) are deciding to continue working after the retirement age because of financial reasons, or because they are still passionate about what they are doing.
- Job hopping and higher job turnover has become the norm instead of the exception. In the past a job candidate with long tenure of 10 – 20 years in one company it was regarded as someone who would stay loyal to the company. Nowadays, they are seen as inflexible and unwilling to learn for new positions and to accept change which is vital in most, if not all modern companies. Many companies are introducing one-year contracts forcing people to continuously look for new job opportunities. This keeps people on their toes instead of

becoming too comfortable in their positions. So beware, if you are at your job longer than 10 years it may be perceived as a career liability even though you may have thought it was a sign of loyalty.

- The search for talent is a headache for companies. How would you describe talent? These are “high-potentials” who have the ability, drive and aspiration to hold leadership positions in a company thus helping to build consistency and credibility throughout an organization. Because most people leave their jobs because of their boss, finding and keeping talent in a company saves the company money by preventing a high turnover of staff.

As you can see, personal branding is especially crucial to keep on top of your career. The time of climbing a career ladder within a company is over. We will need to take more side-steps within the company or in other companies in order to learn new skills before having the opportunity to move up.

As people are retiring later in life, the older generation is competing with people who are up to four or five decades younger and vice-versa, which is why is a necessity, not a luxury, to reinvent your professional identity from time to time. With high levels of job turnover now the norm, coupled with the growth of digital and social media, and the high percentage of university graduates being churned out every year, it is vital to your professional self to stay relevant to your industry.”

But how do you go about creating a personal brand?

According to Mel Carson, founder of Delightful Communications – A Social Media, Digital PR and Personal Branding Consultancy based in Seattle: “The impression you make both on and offline can make or break crucial relationships” He goes on to list four questions you need to ask yourself in creating your personal brand:

1. What’s my professional purpose?
2. Where do I want to be in three years?
3. What don’t I want to be known for?
4. Who are my business heroes?

Your presence

- Your website is the best place to control your image. Make sure it represents exactly the way you want to be seen. Do you want to convey trust, to be perceived as witty, an expert, as an intellectual, as physically fit? How does it portray the impression of the way you would like to be seen?
- Keep a strong presence on social media. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media sites are precious tools for networking or getting your message out quickly under your personal brand. Make sure your website, your social media sites, and anything else you use to promote yourself have a unified message.
- Your presence in traditional media is still a vital part of keeping your brand alive. Scientists know that in order to maintain their job in subsidized research they need to write papers on their findings in renowned magazines. Like scientists, be prepared to write articles about your field of specialization, prepare to give talks about topics which are important to you.

In conclusion

The bottom line is that creating a personal brand is one of the keys to personal success in today’s world. By branding yourself — making sure the world knows who you are and the expertise you have to offer — you not only set yourself apart from your competitors but you also open the door to new opportunities.

Remember that personal branding is an on-going process. Your website, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter profile should be updated on a regular basis or as soon as you have learned an extra skill. NETWORK is the main reasons we are on LinkedIn and other social media platforms. However, it is becoming increasingly important to shift your focus from WHO you know to HOW you present yourself. That’s where personal branding can make a huge difference.

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