

# Why personal branding and reputation management need to be part of your professional toolkit

We are typing anything and everything into search engines and on social media. And with the rise in activism, quest for authenticity, social good, meaning and purpose, branding is getting personal.

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We have developed a thirst for uncovering who's behind the brand, who are they associated with, and what they stand for. Companies realise also that they need to celebrate the faces behind their brands if they are to stand any chance of gaining traction on social media.

## But do professionals need to brand themselves?

Well, put it this way, if you are marketing yourself as being a credible and accomplished professional or bankable talent worth investing in, but internet searches on you throw up very little, then it's not a good look and it undermines your claims.

If you don't control your narrative and give people enough to feed on, then someone else will draw their own conclusions, which may not be a fair reflection of who you are, what you've achieved, and what you're about.

Plus, whether it's of our choosing or not, no job is for life: we are being plunged into the job market with far more frequency and having to consider career changes more so than ever.

Brands are a great way to consolidate all your facets into an identifiable, recognisable and memorable format. When I say brand, we're not just talking about a logo and a slogan. In fact, for professionals, that may even mean no logo and no slogan. *Building a brand* is about creating something that generates economic benefit, allows you to charge a premium, boosts your presence, and brings social uplift within your network. In the eyes of your audience and peers, it means going to market with a value proposition, a promise, and a commitment towards making good on those claims.

Now that I've made these points, ask yourself this: why would you spend your time building someone else's brand and not dedicate any time on building your own personal brand? Think of it as being your name, your uniqueness, your excellence, your story, your reasons for why that you can take with you throughout your career, wherever you work.

Even better, it could give you the opportunity to shape your professional identity into something that aligns more closely with more of your whole self. Some people call that authenticity, which I take as meaning a chance to be comfortable in yourself and for people to be comfortable around you. That takes time, intentional decisions, experimentation, and finding a way to take others on that journey with you, so that they understand too.

Some of you might argue that the qualifications you have, where you studied, and the places you have worked are enough in terms of signalling your credibility and excellence, but lots of other people have those same things too. Also, one thing that social media is showing us is that people are emotionally driven – even when they're thinking rationally – so facts and information alone are not enough. They need to be packaged into a compelling and intriguing story that reinforces who you are, what you do, what you stand for, the direction you are going, why it matters to others, what you can do for them, and how they can work with you.

It's also worth remembering that colleagues will be spending approximately 40 hours a week around you, and that's why communicating your human side as a positive sales point – for want of a better term – is also important.

# Where do you start?

Well, you need to get your diary out and set time aside. Think about what you would like to achieve in a year, and then work back and set weekly and monthly targets. For example, if you are going to vlog, are you going to put out one vlog a month? If so, then you could actually film three in one day and then release one each month.

The big mistakes that many people make are thinking too short term, setting targets that they can't maintain, not planning properly, not being honest about what commitments they already have, and spending too much money on software and equipment. If you check my [YouTube vlogs](#) then you'll find that I filmed them using my iPhone, a small tripod and a plug-in mic, and they were edited using free software.

The two most important things are what you say regularly, and that you commit to producing a body of work. If you think about magazines and musicians, then you judge them on several pieces of work – building a personal brand works in exactly the same way.

## Developing a personal curriculum

The following is a list of things that I actually do regularly. From personal experience and talking to other influencers, you'll really start to see returns on your investment in three to six years time – so be realistic, prepare yourself for the grind, and remind yourself it's not how much money you spend, it's how much time you're willing to put in.

1. Learn and practise how to research topics and analyse data from a number of sources
2. Memorise high end facts and figures along timelines for key countries and markets, from the historical, to the geographical, to the current
3. Become a nerd in about 3-5 topics, in detail, comprising of what would be considered high culture, low culture. Try to pick things that would be of interest to a number of different generations, consumer segments and industry sectors
4. Study and take up a hobby/interest that develops your aesthetic skills, like photography, art, design, architecture – even if that just means hanging out more on Instagram and Pinterest
5. Improve your desktop publishing, photo and video and editing skills
6. Collect images and take photos of events, meetings, and objects of interest to you
7. Develop and practise different writing styles to different word counts: reports, articles, flyers, press releases, social media posts

8. Keep up to speed with science and technological developments, and watch/read science fiction
9. Create a hit-list of people that you would like to meet, find out as much as you can about them, and prepare your elevator pitch
10. Learn/practise how to public speak and then go out and try it
11. Look at and update your CV every two months
12. Create a 1-2 minute video showreel about who you are and what you do, and then upload it on social media

Also, don't worry too much about numbers of followers and likes – quality of engagement is what matters. Your stats will grow with time and your focus should be on building your brand through telling your story and controlling your image. Remind yourself that before you started, you already had a professional profile and anything else that you gain is a bonus. Also, you only need a handful of the right people interested in you, for you to suddenly become in demand and really busy!

Check out Jonathan's online course *'Personal Branding: How to Brand Yourself Professionally, Authentically, and with Passion'*.

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