

Your Most Burning Questions About Personal Branding, Answered

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Cultivating your personal brand is critical for career success. Due to a fiercely competitive job market and business environment, both new and seasoned professionals are obliged to find effective ways to demonstrate their value even while adapting to a variety of industry changes.

Personal branding has therefore become paramount for building reputation, landing promotions or higher paying jobs and achieving a variety of business goals. Yet there's still a lot of confusion about personal branding. I asked some of the leaders I've coached to share some of their most burning questions about their personal brand.

What is the difference between having a personal brand versus being a social media influencer?

Having a personal brand communicates who you are and the unique value you bring to the table in your niche. Your brand is the sum of your personality, skills, experience and values. Having a personal brand is synonymous with having a solid reputation that people know and trust. It lets others know what to expect when they deal with you and gives them the confidence to want to work with you based on your talent, character and professionalism.

Many professionals therefore see great value in cultivating their personal brand, unearthing their best qualities and communicating this powerful personal capital to others in order to achieve their strategic goals.

On the other hand, being a social media influencer is creating an online persona and brand strictly using social media (and largely for profit). For many influencers, the main goal is to attract a large and loyal following in order to seize the opportunity for potential earnings, collaborations with big corporate brands, free products and online celebrity status.

With their content mainly focused on current trends in lifestyle, fashion and travel, the authority of social media influencers authority is based on their ability to influence their followers to buy a product, use a service or support a brand by virtue of having a substantial following.

I hasten to add that not all social media influencers are entrepreneurs seeking to make a fortune. Many knowledge workers are also repackaging themselves and using social media to convey their expertise to targeted audiences. Their goal is often to build credibility in their field and to be paid for their expertise through consulting, coaching and speaking.

Although being an online celebrity is the currency of our digital age, establishing a strong, credible and respected personal brand takes time. You must lean into your expertise, experience and character as much, if not more, as the digital metrics. To reduce your personal brand to social media metrics is to miss its value as a consequential career management strategy and a pathway to becoming a trusted leader in your industry.

Related: [What to Know About Influencer Marketing in 2022](#)

How do I brand myself?

Branding yourself is about building your reputation around the things you wish to be known for – and letting others know about it. It requires taking stock of your track record, particularly the areas in which you are most competitive.

Personal attributes can be leveraged as human skills (compassion, reliability, work ethic), and you should emphasize your assets, qualifications, credentials and experience that demonstrate your expertise in your niche. These signal to others what's important to you and help to guide each decision you make. It is also important to take stock of areas that may need improvement.

Having defined the core features of your brand, you need to ensure that you are sending the right signals to the right people about the unique value you bring to the table. Depending on your strategic goals, you can adopt a variety of strategies to communicate your brand such as taking on leadership roles at work, writing a book, speaking, blogging, volunteering for a cause you believe in, teaching a course in your area of expertise and building an online presence.

Remember that social media is just one way of conveying your brand to the public. It should not become a substitute for your personal brand.

How do you keep your brand relevant and responsive if you shift careers? What steps do you take to (re)build your brand in a new space?

A new career is a wonderful opportunity to reinvent yourself

in a new environment and a welcomed clean slate on which to optimize your brand, try out new ideas and communicate your value to a new audience.

To keep your brand relevant and responsive, it is essential to emphasize skills that are immediately transferable to your new role and responsibilities. Aim to harness them to help address or solve organizational pain points within your niche. This is sure to make a compelling first impression.

A new career is also a unique opportunity to develop new competencies, utilize latent skills and position your brand in new and dynamic ways. To accomplish the latter, identify specific publics who are gatekeepers for your brand and be intentional about communicating your value to them. These may mean taking leadership on projects, contributing ideas to team assignments or sharing your expertise online. In addition, expand your network.

Changing careers can sometimes be isolating. It's important to build community through involvement in professional associations or community organizations. New networks are vital to elevating your brand and can be the source of new opportunities and satisfying professional relationships.

Related: Don't Just Sell Yourself, Communicate Your Value. 6 Valuable Tips

How do you get clear on what aspect of your expertise to share when you have a portfolio career and are known for different things?

When your career comprises a variety of jobs and multiple income sources earned from monetizing your skills versus a job at a single organization, you have a portfolio career.

With a portfolio career, you must avoid confusing your audience. Instead, identify the main skills and expertise you bring to the table across your various job roles and decide which you want to build your brand around. Which of these skills lights your fire? Which is tied to your long term goal or strategic mission?

Then be strategic about the roles you take on and focus on the skills that will help you deliver value long term and gain traction with your audience. Consistently sharing your expertise in the areas you wish to be known for and associated with makes your brand focused and credible.

What are some guidelines to maintain a separation of your personal and organizational branding?

Your brand as a person and as a professional should be one and the same. If you are a leader in your family, make important decisions, take care of the home and children, and manage the budget, you can (and should) be harnessing this ability to add value at the workplace.

Unfortunately, many professionals mistake their job position or title for their personal brand. It is vital to remember that your brand is you. Therefore, you are loaning your brand to your employer, and when you leave that company, you will take your brand with you.

How are corporate leaders facilitating their employees owning

their own personal brand? Is workplace culture malleable and able to evolve as its people evolve?

As more employees become cognizant of their own personal brand and want to do work aligned with their purpose and passions, employers must also evolve workplace culture to account for the people on their team – who they really are and the distinctive value each brings to the table.

Leaders must get to know their employees' personal brand – their unique strengths, goals and interests, human skills and values – and harness their talents to solve organizational problems. Leaders should also assign employees work in which they are passionate and where they can excel and feel confident to deliver their best work. Further, leaders can speak to their talent and advocate for employees when opportunities arise. This will make a positive impact in terms of employee performance, productivity, morale and retention.

Related: Why Employer Branding is So Important

How do I know when my branding strategy is working? At what point should I call it a wrap ?

The most specific indicator that your branding strategy is working is when you have accomplished the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the brand building process, whether this is reputational, in terms of income or earnings, landing a better or different role or in terms of social media performance metrics.

For example, if your message has gained traction among your

target public, you're seen as an expert or trusted leader in your field. If you're landing your ideal clients and attracting high ticket sales, you can claim success. However, keep in mind that personal branding is a lifetime investment. It is important to maintain a commitment to your brand, keep abreast of new developments in your industry and issues that can negatively impact your brand, and be able to adapt it to changing situations over the long term.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/428144>