

You are no longer a person; you are a brand.

When I first heard ‘You are no longer a person; you are a brand.’ I was struck by the pith and pathos of the expression, which Tom Peters attributes in his very useful book [the brand you50](#) to Martha Stewart.

Rhetorically saying to someone ‘You are no longer a person; you are a brand’ certainly grabs their attention. And for your career, so it should. It epitomises the notion of thinking about yourself and your career in contemporary marketing way.

This post is about using a powerful marketing tool, social media, to build your personal brand and ensure you remain competitive and stay in the game. Social media takes you into the market *and* helps the market find you. Using social media enables you to communicate those attributes and qualities that define you to your market – your boss, your colleagues, clients and prospective clients, industry influencers, and potential employers. As competition for new top jobs and being assigned to prestigious internal assignments increases, social media are now an indispensable tool. Social media are one of the best means of extending and refreshing your network, opening up career opportunities.

What is a personal brand

A personal brand says who you are, what you do, what you are interested in, what you offer an employer, business partner or client, what makes you special, and it should give you a salient point of difference. The truth is, you already have a personal brand, it exists now in the minds of those who know you and those who have heard of you. The question you must ask yourself is this: ‘Is my personal brand the best I can project to progress my career?’

How your personal brand is created

A personal brand is the sum total of the experiences others have of you. These experiences are both *direct* – like speaking to you on the phone or sitting in a meeting with you – and *indirect* – like reading about you in a newsletter or visiting your LinkedIn page. Your personal brand is what people say about you when you leave the room, a description attributed to Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon.

In a career setting, what *do* people say about you when you leave the room: He’s fun? He’s smart? He seems interesting? Or would you prefer it if they said: She’s a real expert in...? She was spot on about...? She has a strong view on...? Or both? When someone says, “I’ll check her out on LinkedIn before the meeting”, what is his or her first impression? What do they learn in the 30 seconds they give to reading your LinkedIn page? And how do they feel when they can’t find information they expected, or you come across in a bland way? In effect your personal brand is how others think and feel about you, based on what you have exposed to them. If your personal brand is the cumulative result of all you are and how you present yourself to the outside world, plus everything others believe you to be. Where does it come from? A while ago in [You are who you think you are](#) I explained that how you see yourself is how others will see you. So your personal brand is a reflection of your self-image. The picture you have in your mind about yourself.

Because your personal brand sits in your and others’ minds, over time you can build and change your personal brand. You can refine it, strengthen it, add brightness and colour, and shape it the way *you* want to be seen. Of course, you can’t contrive this, you must be authentic, you must portray the real you. In doing so, put on the ‘clothes’ that reflect your personality, carry the ‘brief case’ that sets you apart, and speak and write in words and images that are distinctive and uniquely you.

Benefits of a strong personal brand

Beyond being liked by others and feeling good about yourself as a result, a strong personal brand is the key to professional development and career advancement. Provided your personal brand is authentic, i.e. you can deliver what your personal brand promises and represents the real ‘you’, both current and prospective employers

and business partners benefit if you have a strong personal brand. Why? Because it makes their life easier, they know in advance *whether* they want to find you, they know *where* to find you, and they know a good deal about what they can expect, your offer – before they even meet you.

And for you, the benefits are equally compelling. A strong personal brand increases your chances of being found, offered bigger and better jobs if you are in career progression mode. A strong personal brand ensures you are considered for plumb assignments, asked to take on more interesting challenges, and more likely to secure the time and attention of clients, leaders, and mentors.

Using social media to build your personal brand

The social media explosion is a boon for personal brand building. The digital world means personal brands are more public, more pervasive, more enduring, and easier to build than ever before. All this means personal brands built through social media activity are much, much more important than when Facebook, LinkedIn and others emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s. With every month that passes the evidence accumulates that social media is the primary, but not sole, tool for personal brand building. Being appropriately active on social media is the new resume, stump speech, and interview pitch. Your social media presence is already as important as your clothes, hairstyle, expertise and the way you introduce yourself.



The array of social media suited to career-related personal brand building is bewildering: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, your blog, and your comments on others' blogs are just some of the media you available. Experts advise: *Start with LinkedIn*. The novice may find it intimidating to put her- or himself 'out there' with an opinion. A retiring person may balk at crafting their LinkedIn profile to 'display their wares' to best advantage. Yet that's what building a personal brand requires.

And I don't just say this because I read what experts say. My personal experiences in the last five years with my website, my blog, and my use of LinkedIn have brought untold professional and business benefits. I am much more clearly defined. The phones rings regularly with new clients wanting to work with me – and 19 times out of 20 the calls are from exactly the kind of people that I want to work with. They have researched me and what I offer, and as a result they know who I am and that I have what they are looking for. Think about it this way. My clients' search costs are reduced in finding me, and my cost of acquiring clients is greatly reduced. It's win-win. I derive professional satisfaction from the research I do for posts – and I regard writing posts as an excellent form of professional development. I manage my blog and LinkedIn as part of my job. Yes, occasionally I am technologically challenged and I need help, but that's part of the learning too.

That's the genius of social media. That's why personal brand building has never been easier. And that's why you too should be building your personal brand on social media.

Related posts

You may want to delve into other aspects of this topic:

+ [Four reasons professional services firms should maximise use of LinkedIn](#) by Kirsten Hodgson

+ [You are who you think you are](#) in my blog

+ [Dare. Ditch. Do.](#) by William Arruda and Deb Dib

I thank [Dr Candice O'Sullivan](#) for sharing ideas and her personal branding seminar materials with me.

This post was written by [Dr Margaret Beaton](#), a director of [Beaton Executive Coaching](#) and [Beaton Research + Consulting](#). You can connect with Margaret on [LinkedIn](#).