

Personal Brands on Social Media— Where's Yours?



By Akia (Garnett) Ashmond Brew

Perhaps you are blown away by the amount of personal branding that is taking place on social media. Nowadays, it seems as if everybody has a brand. If you're still trying to figure things out, this Master Your Brand column is just for you. Specifically, it addresses a scenario in which you have not made the time and financial investment in your own brand, and are unsure if you should do so.

Two points: I know where you are in the process. And, you are not alone.

As an experienced marketer, I define a personal brand as the attachment of stories, theories, ideologies, and philosophies to a person or living creature.

So, is it time to brand yourself on social media?

The excitement over the internet and social media is not going to slow down anytime soon. Personal branding will continue to increase as tools such as WordPress and social media sites such as Facebook, Facebook Live and its "Shop" feature, and Instagram continue to simplify publishing tools.

If you research the mission statements of publishing websites and social media platforms, you'll find that a majority of them focus on putting the power of publishing original photos and thoughts in the hands of the ordinary citizen—you and me.

Where do you spend your time online? Whatever your social media preference, there's somebody there who wants to hear about your brand. It is highly likely that statistics on social media usage from the Pew Research Center (see "Most Everybody Truly Is Online" sidebar) will grow over the next 12 to 18 months.

Jumping in is simpler than it may seem. One of the first things you'll need to do is determine your brand's mission. This is different from your personal mission statement, as a personal brand may not reflect you as an entire person, but perhaps only parts of you.

For example, if you want to create a personal brand as a runner, author, or speaker, you can do so, and isolate the topic in association with your name. This means that other areas of your life may not become known

until your followers learn more about you through the postings you share across the social media platforms of your choice.

If you don't feel comfortable sharing who you are outside of your friend and family networks, this conservative approach is a great way to get started. I have launched dozens of personal brands for customers, and a one-dimensional personal brand is the most common. One reason people choose this type of brand is to ensure some sense of privacy for themselves and family.

The following can frame your thinking for creating a brand mission. You may want to build your personal brand if:

- You have already created a name for yourself in a particular industry or profession, and you want

to create a formal following that will provide more opportunities to practice your craft.

- You have or are building a profession, talent, or popular reputation and would like to amplify your visibility.

- You have a personal story of triumph and victory to tell through a variety of experiences in life, which will uplift a population.

Choosing whether or not you want a single or multidimensional brand is important before you launch. A multidimensional personal brand will allow you to generalize your life as a whole, giving followers a glimpse into your daily life. People with multiple business pursuits tend to form this type of brand, which allows them to add and remove brand elements as they continue branding their life's story.

Caution: It is highly possible to have a very robust one-dimensional brand. I have found that some choose the multidimensional brand when they have not really found their voice, thinking a fluid approach is best.

This is not so. "Fluid" can easily come off as unfocused. Always keep in mind that multidimensional personal brands must be very specific, offering true value in every area. For example, the actor who also brands himself or herself as a director, but has not directed any movies, doesn't do the brand any justice.

This brand wastes 50 percent of its time trying to pitch a product or service it can't deliver. This means that 50 percent of its acting opportunities are not attractive given the mixed messaging. Consider the jacks-of-all-trades in your network. Do they attract as many

people as they could if they would only determine and focus on their true capabilities?

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#thinkBIG!

MOST EVERYBODY TRULY IS ONLINE

According to Pew Research Center's Social Media Update 2016:

- Only 13 percent of Americans do not use the internet, which means most of the U.S. population has some access to the internet;
- 68 percent of all U.S. adults use Facebook, with 55 percent reporting that they visit the site multiple times per day;
- 28 percent of all U.S. adults use Instagram, with 51 percent reporting that they visit the site daily;
- 21 percent of all U.S. adults use Twitter, with 23 percent reporting that they visit the site daily, and 24 percent reporting weekly use; and
- 25 percent of all U.S. adults use LinkedIn, with 18 percent reporting that they visit the site daily.

Source: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016>.

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