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Personal Branding 101: Learn How to Market Yourself & Win Customers With These 6 Tips

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The idea of a personal brand in marketing is nothing new. Taylor Swift. Orville Redenbacher. Oprah Winfrey. These are all names that immediately evoke a product, a sentiment, an experience. Yet the strategy of applying one's personal attributes to a business isn't just for music, popcorn and media moguls. In fact, experts say every business should be bolstered by its owner's personal brand. Plus, learning how to brand yourself isn't as daunting as it might seem.

"Research suggests faces were the first logos, and people were the first brands," says Chris Malone, co-author of *The Human Brand: How We Relate to People, Products, and Companies* (https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1118611314/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1118611314&linkCode=as2&tag=sr20). "This notion that small business should be built on personal brands is an old idea, but still perfectly on-target." Businesses historically have been built on customer service and

the unique qualities the proprietor brought to the operation, points out Malone, who is now a consultant after 20 years of marketing for brands such as Coca-Cola, the NBA and Procter & Gamble. “The more you are out in front and interacting with the customer, the more you are judged in human terms—that’s when trust and loyalty are built.”

Personal branding refers to establishing and promoting what you stand for—it’s your unique combination of skills, experiences, values, and the way you express them to the world. In today’s increasingly digital landscape, a personal brand is no longer just nice to have; it’s expected.

Whether you’re a professional climbing the corporate ladder, an entrepreneur building a business, or a creative showcasing your portfolio, personal branding helps you stand out in the crowd, communicate your distinct value proposition, and build meaningful relationships that can lead to career advancement, business growth, or creative collaborations. Here’s how to do it.



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Why Personal Branding Matters

Your unique story can play an important role in building your career. A [strong personal brand \(https://www.success.com/why-building-your-personal-brand-can-take-your-startup-to-the-next-level-and-where-to-start/\)](https://www.success.com/why-building-your-personal-brand-can-take-your-startup-to-the-next-level-and-where-to-start/) can significantly impact job opportunities. It can differentiate you from other professionals in your field, establish credibility by demonstrating your expertise and unique qualities and create authentic connections with your target audience. These connections help you to attract like-minded professionals and

opportunities that align with your values and goals. It also gives you more confidence and control over how others perceive you. Finally, having a solid personal brand gives you more visibility in a crowded market, helping you stand out and reach a wider audience.

Steps to Building Your Personal Brand from Scratch

Ready to get started on how to build your brand? Here is a simple [step-by-step guide](https://www.success.com/a-five-step-guide-to-branding-yourself/) (<https://www.success.com/a-five-step-guide-to-branding-yourself/>) on how to create a strong personal brand.

1. Define Core Values and What Makes You Unique

Start by identifying your unique strengths, expertise, talents and what sets you apart from others in your field. Consider what problems you solve, what perspectives you bring and what you want to be known for. Ask yourself questions like:

- What motivates you?
- What characteristics others have complimented you on?
- What does success look like to you?

Most importantly, your personal brand should authentically reflect who you genuinely are and what you want to achieve.

2. Take Cues From Mentors

As you're establishing your brand and goals, look for successful examples to follow. Research your industry to find these success stories. Schedule some informational interviews with industry leaders (<https://www.success.com/build-your-personal-brand->

[gary-vaynerchuk/](#)). you admire. You can even look at how celebrities and influencers brand themselves. Find ways to replicate what they are doing, but be sure to put your own unique spin on it.

3. Identify Your Target Audience

Determine who you want to reach. It could be potential employers, recruiters, clients, industry peers or a specific community. Understanding their needs, challenges and where they spend time will guide your personal brand strategy, including content and messaging. To do this effectively, create a marketing persona of your ideal customer by answering questions like:

- Who will find my content relevant and useful?
- Where are they located?
- What are their job titles?
- What are their goals?
- What challenges or pain points do they face?
- Where do they spend their time online and in-person?

4. Develop Your Message and Visual Identity

Create a clear, compelling narrative about who you are and what you offer. This includes your bio, tagline, and key messages. Establish visual consistency across platforms with professional photos, color schemes, logos, fonts, and other design elements that reflect your personality and niche. It's also helpful to prepare an elevator pitch to have ready to share wherever you are so you can confidently and quickly know how to market yourself.

5. Build a Content Strategy

A huge part of branding for success involves having a succinct, consistent content strategy. This includes building an effective website and knowing how to brand yourself on social media. Create valuable content that is original and helps your audience solve a problem, which, in turn, helps you build a relationship with them as they see you as an expert they can rely on.

6. Monitor and Evolve Your Brand

Pay attention to how others perceive you, gather feedback and be willing to refine your approach. Your personal brand should grow with you as your career and interests develop, while maintaining core elements that people recognize and trust.

How to Market Yourself Authentically

When it comes to the *how* of personal branding, there are two ways to humanize a business, says Michael Fishman (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/michaelfishman1>), a marketing consultant and founder of the Consumer Health Summit.

You can position the organization behind a person: Tony Robbins (<https://www.success.com/article/tony-robbins-how-to-change-your-life>) or Mario Batali are two examples. In these cases, the individual embodies the business and its mission, and his or her name and image are front and center of everything the business tackles.

The other model does not tie the organization's name to its proprietor, thus freeing it up for future ownership changes. Yet the business is tightly connected to the persona of a leader. Zappos' Tony Hsieh (<https://www.success.com/article/tony-hsiehs-next-act>) was an example of this model.

In expressing your personal brand, keep the following advice in mind:

- **Be real.** “The most effective marketing is not slick and polished, but has an authentic, friendly quality,” Fishman says.
- **Be vulnerable.** Find ways to tell stories of your failures—both in business and in your personal life. Admit that you’re sometimes overwhelmed by family life or stumped by a business challenge. “When people are willing to display their quirks and failures, trust is formed,” Fishman says.
- **Be transparent.** “Showcasing true stories is more powerful than impressive credentials,” Fishman says. Client testimonials, case studies and statistics about how many people you helped (and by how much) all have the power to influence. “A first-person story is far more compelling than academic degrees or awards,” Fishman says.

Self-Branding Tips for a Strong Online Presence

In this period of digital prominence, it’s essentially impossible to build a brand successfully without social media, websites and content creation. Use these tools for branding yourself online:

- **Your image.** “I’m surprised how many people don’t have a personal photo on their website,” Fishman says. A headshot (<https://www.success.com/article/face-facts-zoom-in>) “immediately warms up any situation and puts down the roots of a trusting relationship,” he says.
- **A blog.** Yes, you may have paid a copywriter a lot of money to create a brochure, ads and web copy. But a blog post that captures your personality, humor or humility is far more likely to connect with the customer, get shared and be remembered.
- **Social media.** Twitter (<https://twitter.com/successmagazine>), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/SUCCESSmagazine>) and Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/successmagazine/>) are all great avenues to reach potential clients and let your personality shine. By sharing articles you feel are

important, or recommendations for products you truly believe in, you curate the world through your lens and build authority in your community and industry.

Encourage customers to voice their concerns via social media and respond to them publicly, showcasing the type of personal service customers can expect. The way you interact with customers and your staff is the essence of personal brands.

- **Videos and podcasts.** It's easy and inexpensive to create short video (<https://www.success.com/article/online-video-branding>), blog posts and podcasts. You can speak your opinions or advice into a camera or interview other experts or customers. In the past few years, video has proved to be the fastest-growing segment of Internet media.
- **Authorship.** Writing books—whether through a traditional publishing house or by self-publishing—is a great way to establish credibility for your subject. If you have a knack for prose or can hire a ghostwriter who does, a book can be a source of rich anecdotes that make customers fall in love with you.
- **Day-to-day operations.** Personal branding is highly focused on what you share with the outside world. But how you conduct yourself and your business on a daily basis is even more critical, Malone says. The way you dress, the way you speak to customers and employees and the attention you pay to the quality of your work are the most powerful ways you communicate what is unique and special about your organization and yourself.

Create an Effective Personal Brand

The value of investing in personal branding is priceless. By showcasing your unique story, values and skill set, you will learn how to brand yourself as an expert (<https://www.success.com/brand-strategy-principles/>) and reach your career goals. Don't delay. Now is the best time to take the first steps toward defining or refining your own brand identity.

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Sandi Schwartz is the award-winning author of [Finding Ecohappiness: Fun Nature Activities to Help Your Kids Feel Happier and Calmer](#) (<https://amzn.to/4ljTBwU>) and a freelance journalist with 25 years of experience. She specializes in writing about home and garden, nature, sustainability, lifestyle, parenting, and wellness. She has written several articles for Success, both online and in print, and has been published in AARP, Yahoo News, Better Homes & Gardens, Dwell, Mother Earth News, mindbodygreen, Family Handyman, BobVila.com, and many other publications.

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