

# Developing your PERSONAL BRAND

Many successful entrepreneurs have built their businesses around their own personalities – think Richard Branson and Virgin. **Julia Nekich** looks at the elements involved in building a ‘personal brand’.

**MARKETERS NOW** widely acknowledge that personal branding is an important business-building tool, whether you’re a sole trader or CEO of a company. Customers feel more aligned to a brand when they can admire or identify with the person behind it. Which means the stronger your personal brand, the more people will trust in, and be comfortable buying from, that brand.

But how do you go about developing a personal brand? Here are 10 points to consider:

**Fill a niche:** Positioning is one of the most important first steps in any personal branding strategy. Identify your areas of expertise (they should be aligned with your business’s service offerings), then find out if any of these areas fill a niche in the media outlets you are targeting.

The purpose behind this tactic is that you want to be top of mind for journalists when they are writing about subjects you can comment on. But you do need to find a niche. There’s no point pitching yourself as an expert source on interest rates, for instance, if those magazines you want to get into are already running regular columns and comments by similar experts.

A way to find a niche is to see what your competitors are commenting on. If they are predicting doom and gloom for the market, perhaps you could position yourself as a source that identifies good news on the horizon.

Once you’ve chosen your positioning, it’s important that you stick to it.

**Walk the talk:** You will need to actively believe in the messages you are conveying

to your market. If you walk the talk you are the perfect case study for your business and are very likely to attract attention to your brand.

**Get media trained:** You often only have one chance in the media, so giving a good first impression is paramount, particularly if you’re pitching yourself to TV. If you’re new to this, get some media training. The first thing a TV producer will ask is about your experience in TV. If you can at least say you have been media trained well, you’re 10 per cent closer to your goal.

In your session with your media training specialist, together you will work out your key messages and how to convey them, how to answer contentious questions with ease, what to wear, how to sit, your body language and more.

**Be realistic:** You might need to start growing your personal brand in print media before you can even consider TV. Brand building takes time – and persistence is really important.

In print media, once a publication trusts you, finds you reliable, and the information you provide extremely relevant to their readers, a regular column is a definite possibility.

Make sure it’s you in social media: The point I want to make here is that if you are building your personal brand, ensure that your Twitter profile and your blogs are written by you (not your company) and feature your photo (rather than your company logo). This also goes for video footage that you are posting online – it’s best if it’s you speaking to your audience, not other staff.

**Build relationships:** Add to your personal branding strategy by building relationships in your industry. Pitch yourself as a speaker to your industry associations, industry events, or organisations that often hold events for their clients. A by-product of this tactic could be that you’ll develop alliances with businesses that can refer new business to you, and invite you to partner in their own marketing initiatives.

**Develop collateral:** When you do speak at events, or meet with prospects, you can strengthen your personal brand by giving out useful books or DVDs. These act like your calling card. Fill them with lots of information and plenty of “take out” for your audience. There are local companies that will simply package books for you (edit, design covers, print) without having to “publish” and distribute them through bookshops.

Finally, leverage your results by alerting clients and prospects to them – the day they run (for media) and weeks before (for speaking events). ●



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