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5 Personal Branding Strategies Every Entrepreneur Needs to Know



By Catriona Pollard

in

Every entrepreneur will tell you that it takes hard work and persistence to be successful. In addition to loving what you do, continually learning from others and building a great team around you, one of the most important things you can do is build your personal brand and reputation.

When it comes to running a business, your reputation is the most valuable asset you own. It is what people say about you when you're not around. It is what gives you a competitive advantage, and can help drive business and sales.

And while you might have the bearings of an excellent business plan, the strategic nous and innovative vision, all this is rendered moot if you don't have a good standing with your customers, employees and potential investors.

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Building a good reputation doesn't happen overnight. It is built one blog at a time, one interview after another, and tweet after tweet.



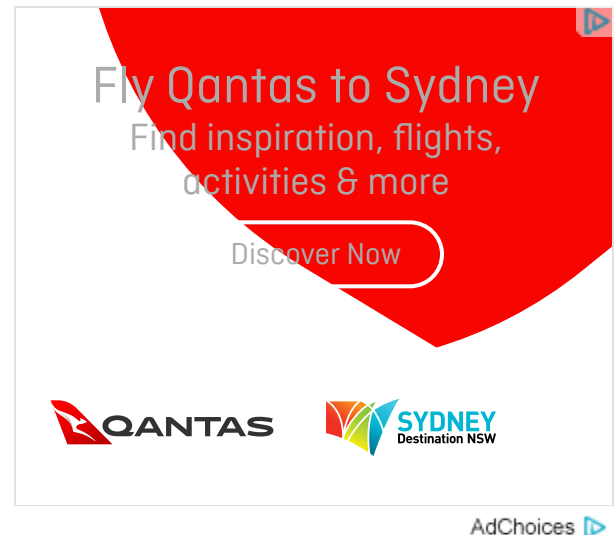
Here are my top five strategies to help you to build your personal brand on your path to being a successful entrepreneur.

1. Know who you are

Personal branding isn't just about getting published or noticed; it about being yourself and managing how your customers see you.



When developing your personal brand, it is important to think about who you are, what your stand for and what value you offer; then take the time to consider how you would like to be perceived by others.


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By setting the foundations of who you are, you can start to build a genuine and long-lasting personal brand with your target audience.

2. Building relationships

Connecting with people is the best way of building your personal brand and getting your name out there. When people know you, and know what you can offer, they are more likely to do business with you or recommend you to other people.

Remember, networking isn't about selling; in fact it's not about talking. Networking is about listening. The best networkers are the ones who are able to build relationships and invest time finding out about others.

3. Don't be afraid to self-promote

Once you have built your brand, don't be afraid to self-promote. Building a good, strong reputation is best achieved by having the confidence to share your vision and your brand with audiences, without being salesy.

Creating a plan about how you are going to build your personal brand is vital for your success. Take the time to understand how you can successfully pitch your professional knowledge to business contacts or a journalist.

When dealing with journalists, a media release is a great way to pitch your story and build your personal brand. However, you need to be strategic in how you structure and draft the announcement,

or you will find your media release in the trash within seconds.

When you sit down to write a media release you need to keep in mind the publication you will be sending it to. Your overall goal for sending out a media release is to communicate your messages to your target audience.

4. Online presence

Never before has there been such a fantastic opportunity to create, market and manage your own personal brand.

Thanks to online and social media you are in control of what people see when they search your name, what they know about you and what your opinion is.

For example, a personal website can act as an online hub for all your information, such as your biography, speaker profile, blog, and contact information. A blog is the best way of demonstrating your expertise online, controlling your message and building your reputation.

Blogs allow you to easily publish your ideas, readers can interact with those ideas and you can build relationships with your readers. This is essential as an entrepreneur in gaining trust with your target audience, and generating a powerful referral network.

Likewise social media — LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook — is critical in developing your personal

brand as it allows you to communicate directly with your audiences, unfiltered by anyone else, including the media.

5. Reputation management is critical

Warren Buffett famously said, “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.”

While building your personal brand is essential, managing your reputation is equally as important.

Not everyone is going to agree with what you have to say online, in your blogs, or an interview, and you have to be prepared to address their concerns in a suitable and professional manner.

Likewise, you need to be mindful what your social-media activity says about your personal brand as a whole. Your behaviour online is a reflection of who you are and what you stand for, so use your social media with care because productive activity can turn into destructive behaviour.

Consistency is the key to building your personal brand and reputation. Investing the time to build your brand is only half the battle, you need to make sure you are continually monitoring what people say about you online and in the media so you can manage it.

Reputation is everything to your brand. In addition to shaping how your target audience perceives you and your company, effective personal branding enables you to share your vision with

your audience while building your profile and influence.

About the author

Catriona Pollard is the author of From Unknown To Expert, a step by step framework designed to help entrepreneurs develop effective PR and social media strategies to become recognised as influencers in their field.

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Catriona is also the director of CP Communications, which merges traditional PR tactics with cutting-edge social media strategies that engage consumers as well as business.

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