

**HOW TO  
BUILD YOUR  
PERSONAL  
BRAND**



# INTRODUCTION

**B**uilding your personal brand may sound like the last thing you need to do if you're happy and challenged in your current job. It may seem irrelevant if you see a career path inside your current organization, or even if you feel confident to rely on your existing networks for future job opportunities.

Statistics like this put the importance of personal branding —even when you're not in job-search mode — in perspective. They remind us why simply waiting until you are about to change jobs may be too late to adequately build or balance your online (and offline) reputation.

But, did you know that 70% of employers say they have rejected applicants because of information about them that they have found online<sup>1</sup>?

Whether you work for yourself, for a large organization or a very small one, it's just smart career management to demonstrate why you're an expert in your respective domain — and to do this in ways that colleagues and associates can witness every day. Developing your personal brand is now essential to ongoing career development, even if you're not actively searching for a new job.

**Today, take control of the biggest brand in your life; the brand called 'You'.**

This quote may be almost 20 years old,  
but it is as relevant today as it was in the 90s!



"Big companies understand the importance of brands. Today, in the Age of the Individual, you have to be your own brand."

**Tom Peters,**  
Fast Company, 1997

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Execunet

## WHAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL?

Your brand is your reputation, so find ways to demonstrate why you're different from the rest.

In the age of self-publishing and vast personal networks, we are all brands. First and foremost, this is because online information about us is used by others to judge our knowledge, our credibility and our experience. People research each other to determine areas of expertise, authority and credibility—just as they would for products and organizations.

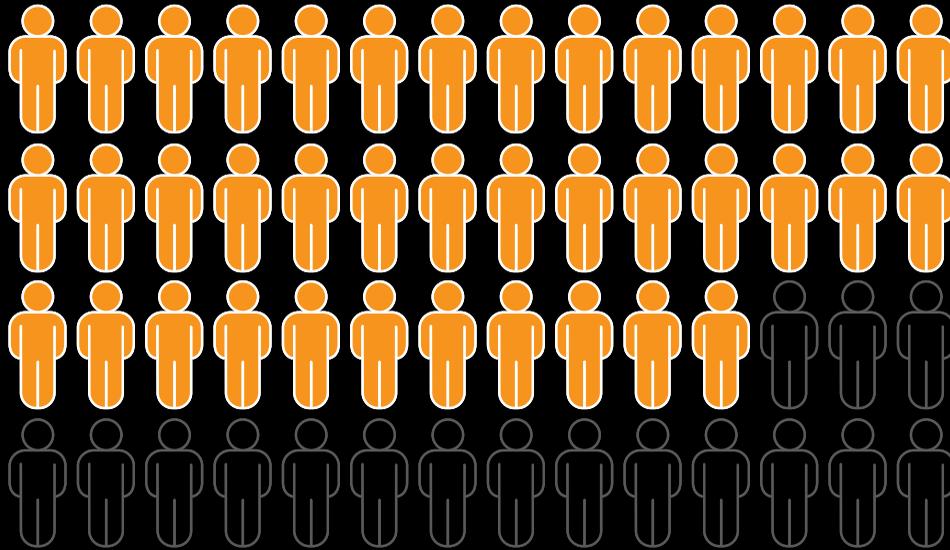
Essentially, your brand is your reputation—and that reputation is built increasingly online. So, ask yourself the key question that brand managers of large, well-known companies might ask of their company brand: “What makes you different?”

Don't rely entirely on your own opinion either. Good brand managers gather plenty of market research to figure out their strengths and weaknesses, so ask people who know how you work, and what you have to offer, to help you understand your brand. This can include other co-workers, previous managers or even suppliers or customers you've worked with and know you well enough to make an informed assessment of your knowledge, skills, and ability.

What are some of the first things that come to mind when they think of describing you? Are you creative? Do you have great leadership qualities? Are you motivated and do you motivate others around you? Look for common themes in the feedback you receive. Those themes will serve as the basis of 'brand you.'

Then, begin to consider how you can demonstrate these brand elements in creative and interactive ways. If leadership is your key differentiator and what you want to build your brand around, think of ways to publish or collate photographs, stories, articles and links that demonstrate your leadership abilities.

Personal branding is the process whereby people and their careers are marked as brands... the creation of an asset that pertains to a particular person or individual; such as an area of knowledge, that leads to a uniquely distinguishable, and ideally memorable, impression.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal\\_branding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_branding)



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## GROW YOUR BRAND PRESENCE: ONLINE AND OFF

Establishing a strong and positive brand online and off makes it easier for people to confirm the skills and experience you have, and to proactively come to you with new opportunities.

What do people find when they Google your name? And, how well do the people in your organization or network understand your skills and experience? Do they know what you've delivered in the past and know what you're capable of?

Growing your presence (both online and off) ensures that people can easily find and connect with you when they have opportunities that suit your skill-set and interests. There are four basic ways to do this:

**1. Build your own website or blog:** Keep it simple and factual. For more information on how to do this, download our '[Build a digital portfolio](#)' ebook. This resource provides a list of easy-to-use, free tools to make the process fast and painless.

**2. Generate awareness through networking:** Meeting with other people in your organization, even if they're from another location or department, can be a good way to showcase your skills and experience further. Networking doesn't just apply outside your current organization and there are plenty of ways to build relationships that may lead to opportunities with your current employer. Doing things like volunteering on a committee, joining a mentorship program and attending internal networking events are all key activities that good networkers make the effort to do.

**3. Don't be afraid to join the conversation:** Managers notice people who put their hands up to offer help and proactively take on new responsibilities. So, raise your hand

to lead the new engagement team, or volunteer to organize the next staff meeting—and offer the help before you're asked to do so. Being active on internal social/collaboration tools such as Chatter can also help you elevate your expertise in your field. Clearly, your willingness to lead online or larger face-to-face forums can depend a great deal on your personality. If you have a tendency towards introversion, posting questions on Chatter to the entire organization just may not feel 'right'. A recent book that explores this issue in depth is: "Quiet: the power of introverts" by Susan Cain. It's not the only book on the subject, but does offer some food-for-thought for the less vocal among us, and how to sell your strengths.

**4. Seek opportunities to learn:** Don't be afraid to say, "Yes" to new opportunities, even if they're (technically) outside your job description. Taking a stretch assignment will help you get recognized, and you may even learn gain new skills. Identify people in your organization who may be able to help you learn more about the history and inner workings of your organization. What makes it tick? How can you contribute that no one else can? Ask plenty of questions—it is the best way to learn.

**5. Identify people who will champion your career:** Seek feedback from people you trust and be open to feedback on how you can constantly improve.

Practice 'selfless' self-promotion; be a team player and remember it is in working with others, that you build "Brand You".



## THE PERSONAL IS PROFESSIONAL

The line between the personal and the professional is blurred, and all information about how you live and work may be considered when you apply for a job.

Executnet survey data shows just how blurred the line between the personal and the professional has become. In the United States, virtually the same proportion of recruiters and HR professionals believe it is prudent to consider both personal and professional online data when researching a candidate's suitability for a vacancy:

- 89% felt it appropriate to consider professional online data
- 84% felt it appropriate to consider personal online data

Many other studies have also confirmed the fact that employers can and do make decisions about your suitability for a job based on what they see online. Just because it's not 'work-related' content doesn't mean it won't affect the way they perceive you and how you might fit into the company culture. While the use of social channels to screen potential hires can expose companies to legal pitfalls, and there are many issues around discrimination and privacy that must be considered, companies do and can use social media information to augment the hiring process. For more on this topic, see our '[Clean Up Your Digital Dirt](#)' ebook.

Depending on the context and the content considered, companies' use of social media to assess candidates may not necessarily be a negative. After all, getting the right 'fit' both in terms of your skills and the company culture makes life a better for everyone. And it seems that getting this match right is much more critical for younger workers: MTV's "No Collar Workers" study found that 93% of millennials want a job 'where they can be themselves'. So, how open you are about your lifestyle and your views and interests can be a positive or a negative, depending on how you manage it and what you're looking for in an employer.

According to CareerBuilder, the industries most likely to screen job candidates via social networking sites or online search engines are those in technology, or those that deal with sensitive information: Information Technology (63%) and Professional & Business Services (53%)<sup>2</sup>. So, the industry you work in will also determine and inform your approach to some of these issues. Stay informed, be proactive and make strategic information-sharing decisions.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.marketwatch.com/Story/story/rescue?SourceUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.marketwatch.com%2Fstory%2Fforty-five-percent-of-employers-use-social-networking-sites-to-research-job-candidates-careerbuilder-survey-finds-2009-08-19%3Fsiteid%3Dnbnsh>



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or visit **[www.kellyservices.com](http://www.kellyservices.com)** to get started today.

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