

# Why not to ignore your personal brand

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Brand consistency, in the long term, ensures consistent business and career growth. Very often business owners steer clear of focusing on their personal brand, as they do not like the spotlight.



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The instinctive focus is on the PR and marketing activities to meet business objectives, highlighting their company's services and successes. However, it's not that easy to divorce the personal brand of a business owner from the brand of his business, especially if he is a small business owner.

As the pressure increases on new recruits and graduates to network and 'put themselves out there' to make the right connections, to keep their online profiles up to date and be more conscious of their conduct on social media to avoid disqualification for a potential job opportunity, the same pressure exists for business owners to make the best impression - not only of their company, but also its brand ambassadors (staff, board, management).

"Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You." - Tom Peters.

Personal branding is not a new concept and, apparently, it caught on when Tom Peters wrote an article in the 1997 issue of Fast Company magazine entitled The Brand Called You. Peters highlighted how everyone is a brand and has a chance to stand out, not just large consumer product companies with massive marketing budgets.

## Social media platforms

The advent of major social media platforms between 2004 and 2006 (Facebook in 2004, YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006), has literally allowed everyone to be a brand, whether directly or indirectly. Social media profiles have become a pre-interview, a CV, a barometer for whether an individual is a cultural fit for a company hiring or whether a company is ranked top of mind for a potential recruit.

Websites, business cards and word-of-mouth referrals might seem like day-old bread compared to social media profiles; however these tools (alongside a decent LinkedIn profile) are likely to directly influence the credibility of any business professional. The key is to ensure that the chosen marketing tool for your personal brand/career is up to date and reflects the brand impression you aim to create.

It's that time of year when businesses outline their goals for the next year. Across industries, account teams are focusing on goals, aligned activities and budget forecasts for Q1. "When it comes to your personal brand and what you want to accomplish, you should do the same. Start out with a simple exercise and write out your goals. It may sound obvious, but you need to know where you want to go before you can create a plan for how to get there. You can't move year to year without knowing what direction you want to head in the long term." (Entrepreneur, 2013.)

When an industry colleague is getting recognition you would love to get, don't just congratulate him, take note. What is it about his brand that has influenced the positive growth. What are people saying about his business or personal brand?

There is an unspoken credibility linked to business and personal online profiles, including the activity linked to it. First impressions are no longer created when you arrive at an interview or pick up the telephone, they are now extensions of the impressions created by the font of your business logo, the photo on your social media page, the inactive company blog - whether you like it or not, your personal brand influences your business brand.

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