

## Job Search and Networking

### Personal Branding 101



## Introduction



What do I want to do with my life? How do I want others to see me? What makes me unique? **Personal branding** is the process of determining who you are, what you want to accomplish, and how you want to market yourself to others.

In this module, you'll learn the basics of **developing** your own personal brand, both online and offline. We'll also talk about how to **maintain** your brand over time and provide additional resources to help create your own personal brand.

## What is personal branding?

The idea of **personal branding** has become increasingly popular among job seekers and professionals over the past several years. But what exactly is personal branding? Simply put, branding is how you **present** yourself to others. Everyone already has their own **brand identity**: the qualities that make them different and unique. The process of personal branding gives you an opportunity to **discover**, **strengthen**, and **market** those qualities.



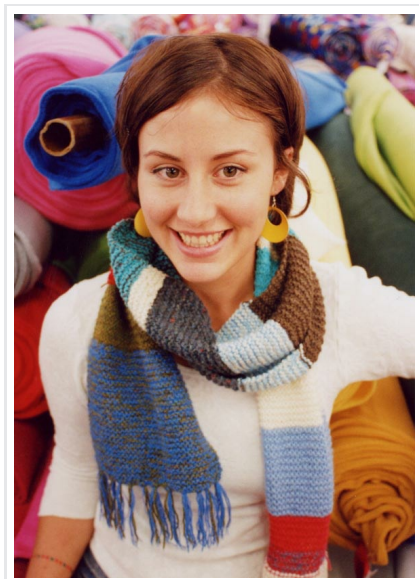
To learn more about the basic concepts behind personal branding, check out **The Brand Called You** by career expert Tom Peters.

## Why create a personal brand?

While you might believe branding is reserved for celebrities and corporations, the truth is that **anyone** can benefit from creating their own brand. Whether you're searching for a new job or looking to advance in your current career, personal branding can help you **communicate** more effectively and **stand out** in a crowded marketplace. As you work to determine **who you are** and **what you want**, you'll learn how to present yourself with greater **confidence** and **clarity**.

Most importantly, developing a personal brand allows you to control how you are **perceived** by others. Whether you're interacting with someone online or in person, a strong personal brand will help you make a memorable and positive impression.

## Building your brand



There are several factors you will need to consider as you begin developing your own personal brand. Rather than inventing a false persona, your brand should be an **authentic expression** of who you are, what you value, and what you want to accomplish.

Taking the time to determine your values, passions, and skills will help you create a personal brand that is both **memorable** and **genuine**. You might consider visiting our module on **Assessing Yourself** if you need additional help determining your skills and values.

Instead of starting from scratch, your brand should be informed by your **existing reputation**. Think about how your current friends and colleagues would describe you and your **personality**. You can strengthen and emphasize these **qualities** as you develop your personal brand.

Your brand will also be determined by the **audience** you are attempting to reach and influence. Different fields will value certain skills above others. For example, an elementary school teacher might create a very different personal

brand than someone working as a sales manager or an engineer. It's all about discovering how best to connect with the people who matter to you and your brand.

## TRY THIS!

Take some time to consider the following questions as you begin thinking about your brand:

- What am I passionate about? What are my values? What are my unique skills?
- What is my current reputation? How can I build on it? How do I want to be perceived by others?
- Who do I want to reach? Who is the audience for my brand?

## Building your brand

As employers start to rely on social media and online resources for screening and recruiting potential candidates, it's especially important for your brand to have a strong **online presence**. But there's still more to your brand than how you market yourself online. As you work to develop your online brand, you should also be thinking about how you can promote your brand when meeting people **directly**. Below are some ways to monitor and build your personal brand.

- **Google Yourself.** Before you start promoting your brand online, you should take some time to learn about your **current online reputation**. Search for your own name on a search engine like **Google** and see what kind of information comes up. You might even consider setting up a **Google Alert** for your name, which will notify you whenever you appear in a new search result on Google. This is an easy way to track the information people can find about you online. To learn more, check out our article on how to **Google Yourself!**
- **Email Address.** Make sure that your email address reflects a **professional image**. Try using a simple version of your name and profession (chef.clarkwhitwell@gmail.com in our example), rather than something too casual. If you've purchased webspace, many DNS providers will give you the option to have a custom email address (you@yourname.com, for example).



- **Social media sites** like **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Meetup**, **Pinterest**, and **YouTube** are a great way to share your brand with as many people as you can. Upload the same profile photo to different social media sites so you'll be easily identifiable across your networks. Check out our page on the **Job Hunt with Social Media** to learn more.
- **LinkedIn.** With over 175 million members worldwide, LinkedIn is the largest social media site for professional networking. Customizing your profile picture, headline, and choosing a custom URL can help you be more noticeable on LinkedIn. Visit our lesson on **LinkedIn Basics** to learn more.
- **Elevator Pitch.** An elevator pitch is a clear and specific statement that summarizes you and your brand in under thirty seconds. In the example below, Clark introduces himself, his brand, and explains exactly what kind of opportunities he wants to pursue. Check out our lesson on **Crafting Your Elevator Pitch** to learn more.



- **Business Card.** Paper business cards are still a great way to share your contact information quickly and easily. Your business card should be simple, with your basic contact information and a concise personal statement, like a shorter version of your elevator pitch (no more than a few sentences).



- **Resume.** Even if you don't have an opportunity to meet a potential employer directly, your resume is another great place to communicate your brand identity. A strong resume can help you stand out from other candidates. Visit our lesson on [Resume Writing](#) if you need help getting started with your resume.

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## Maintaining your brand

Once you've established your brand, you'll need to keep working to project a **strong** and **consistent** brand identity. Remember that actions speak louder than words—be sure to **follow through** on the promises associated with your brand. For example, if you brand yourself as a hard-working and reliable person, coming in late or neglecting your work doesn't help to **reinforce** your brand image.

Your brand will need to be **flexible** as you move between various positions and career paths, so don't be afraid to **make changes** to your brand as needed. Even if you've accomplished an initial goal, such as finding a new job, it's important to assess your brand from time to time. Some parts of your brand that were once relevant may need to be updated; **refreshing** your brand identity can help you **build new relationships** and **advance your career**.

## Additional resources

### JobSTART101

Using a combination of videos, worksheets, and interactives, **JobStart101** provides a crash course in personal branding and workplace etiquette for new graduates entering the job market. Even if you're an experienced professional, this is still a great tool for refreshing your **knowledge** and learning new **skills**.

### Personal Branding 101

A quick, step-by-step guide from Dan Schawbel, one of the leading experts on personal branding. You'll learn the basics of personal branding, such as how to **discover** and **create** your brand.

### Personal Branding Blog

Also from Dan Schawbel, this blog offers the latest advice and new approaches to personal branding from various career experts.

## TRY THIS!

Download our Personal Branding Worksheet ([Word Document](#)  or [PDF](#)  or [Google Document](#) ) to help you develop your personal brand.

- Navigate to one of the resources above for additional guidance in creating your brand.
- Try answering the questions in the worksheet to begin determining your own personal brand.

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[Next: 3 Steps to Identifying Transferrable S...](#)