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BRAND
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WORLDWIDE

10 Key Trends for Personal Brands

(and a bonus tip)

By Jerome Joseph, CSP



10 Key Trends for Personal Brands (and a bonus tip)

In recent years, the exponential growth of competition in numerous areas of our lives and the demand of people who stand out or are increasingly visible, are some of the core reasons why there has been a sudden drift to personal branding. It is known to be a the solution to standing out among a crowd of similar others, attracting your audiences and at the same time building trust and credibility for Brand You.

In the early years, branding used to be a thing for only big companies and organisations. It is the process companies implement to boost their sales, demand and market themselves in a special and unique way. Now, branding is not just limited to businesses, but also individuals. When I wrote my book “Turn Me On: Building your Personal Brand” in 2008, I was one of the first few persons in the world to talk about the importance of Personal Branding. It has since grown in importance and it is something that is not just limited to celebrities or entrepreneurs but also to CEO’s and executives within organisations.

Personal branding, involves building an active reputation, personality, image, behaviour, and skills. Personal branding is strategic and involves a clear thought out process to help build your brand. As a brand consultant for over 22 years, I have noted that there is a strong overlap with the strategies of big brands and that of personal brands. If it works for big brands why not your brand?

Personal Branding centres around you creating a personal and unique identity that people can link you or your company with. This approach creates a sense of professionalism, positive association and authority by creating the notion that you know exactly what you are doing and that you are a credible expert in your field.

I have observed that there are some key trends that have stood out in recent times and as such this paper looks at some of these trends. If you are serious about your brand, then read and apply.

Here are the 10 key trends:

Social Media Adoption Is a Thing

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Since the advent of numerous social media platforms, which creates an avenue to access a high population of people, it has become a highly popular approach to getting your brand out. With proper and dedicated targeting, these platforms have become a personal branding arena for individuals to create the awareness they desire. With the likes of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, among other popular platforms, personal branding has gotten much easier. Value driven content and community engagement helps drive this interaction with your audiences. Social platforms will continue to evolve so being up to date is key for your personal brand.

My Pro tip: While I believe it is important that you should have a presence on most of the channels, be selective to where you can optimise ROI. Pick the ones where your audience are most active, keep delivering value to them, engage with them and build a following.



Networking Has Become More Strategic ²

In recent times, people have started to network a lot more. To get ahead of the game, we all know that networking is very important, however networking today is about specifically focusing on key networking groups that can impact your personal brand. It has become a thing to invest more time into expanding the circle of people you know in your field or with other influential individuals/groups that you can be tagged with to elevate your personal brand the way you want it. More and more personal brands have started to be part of these selected network groups such as professional associations, social groups and communities. The more well branded the group is, the higher the impact on the individual's personal brand. The more relevant the group is, the higher the impact on business conversion.

My Pro Tip: Find a well branded group that has members that can help you achieve your brand goals i.e. Credibility / Referrals. Remember you need to actively participate to see ROI. I joined Asia Professional Speakers in 2005 and became President in 2017/2018. Being part of the association has impacted my speaking career as well as other members referring or promoting me to their clients or networks.

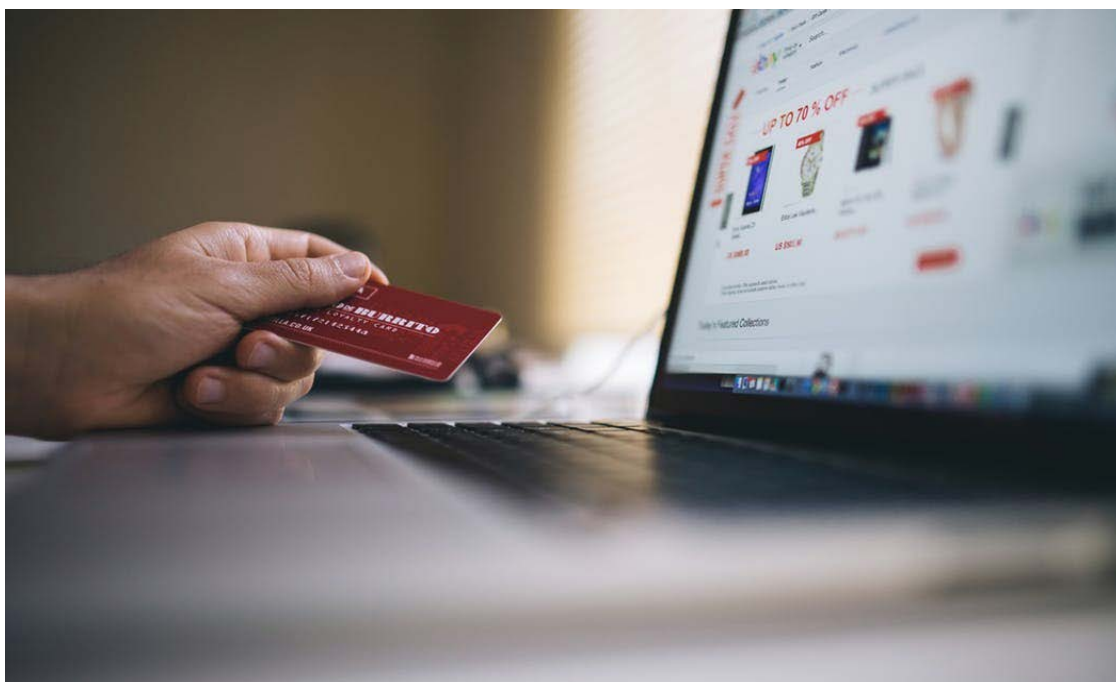


Running Personal Ads

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Normally, ads were run by companies and businesses to promote their products or services to a targeted audience. But lately, individuals do the targeting for themselves. Some common platforms include Facebook ads, LinkedIn ads, Google ads and Instagram Ads. People actively run adverts just the way a big company would, in order to market themselves by making people know them and what they do. Some go to the extent of creating logos or catchphrases and the likes to engage their audience and create a lasting effect on them. A young graduate I knew ran a series of LinkedIn ads that positioned his brand and expertise. He managed to get hired within 2 weeks by a recruiter who was exposed and impressed by his ad.

My Pro Tip: Use ads not just to sell you but also to create value that is associated with your personal brand such as sharing a powerful message that comes from you.

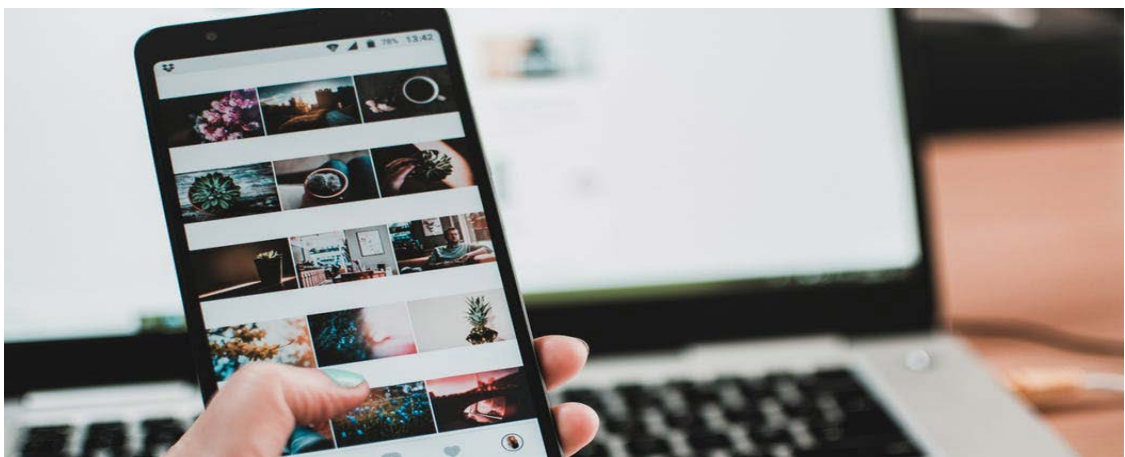


Influencers are In

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Brands work closely with influencers, who command great authority over the category of people they want to stay relevant to. These influencers can range from celebrities to normal social media users with the high and engaging following. Paying huge bucks to hire these individuals has become a normal trend in recent years. These indirect adverts can range from posting a picture of themselves together, to outright recommendations. Some personal brands have made good money using the strength of their personal brands and tapping on their network. As a personal brand you can be an influencers and you can also use these very influencers to amplify your brand. Find people in your network and get them to help amplify/share your content. If you have an achievement, get them to share it for you. It comes across a lot stronger when someone else brags about your brand.

My Pro Tip: If you chose to be an influencer, then the key is followers. Build your army of followers. But remember that building followers is about quality over quantity. No point have 10 000 followers on only 5 engage with your posts. Finally, there are dedicated professional influencer web platforms that you can join to earn money through strategic brand recommendations.



The rise of Video and Audio

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One of the common ways individuals use to develop their personal brand is through broadening their followers by creating audios and videos, related to their brand message. They make use of Youtube and Podcasts to share information and create awareness, which in turn boosts their personal brands.

It is now a to-do for upcoming people to own their own podcast or have a themed Youtube channel, these will structure the idea that they are professionals in their fields and trying to share their experience. It will also help build trust, relationship and competence level.

Even fresh graduates out of school are increasingly using video resumes as a way of showcasing their skills.

My Pro tip: I personally like Video over Podcasting as it fits in with my audience and in general, I am more visual than aural. If you intend to use video make sure its well executed and has a clear powerful message. Having said that, I know of many strong personal brands who have excellent podcasts around their area of expertise. These could be in solo content formats or even with interviews with other experts, thus increasing your credibility (by association) in the process.



Organisations Will Finally Invest In Their Employees' Personal Brands

According to Gartner, 50% of companies blocked access to social media in 2010, but the number of companies blocking access for employees is dropping at almost 10% per year. Fear of social media is clearly waning. The most progressive organisations are not only allowing their employees to use social media at work, they are encouraging it. More and more companies and organizations have upgraded their marketing and branding strategy to an approach that doesn't centre around them alone. Now, they don't only invest in standing out in their respective industries, but they also encourage and promote their employees' personal brands.

Organisations go a long way to position their employees as 'industry standard professionals', which they believe would have a positive effect on them and also uplift the organisation's brand.

Best in class organisations get their employees to showcase their personal brand both internally and externally. Internally by getting them to contribute for example content for staff newsletters and externally by training and encouraging them to blog or share content related to the company. There is also a shift into recognising that each employee is a unique personal brand and instead of stifling that, they celebrate individuality and get employees to align their personal brand with that of the organisations brand.

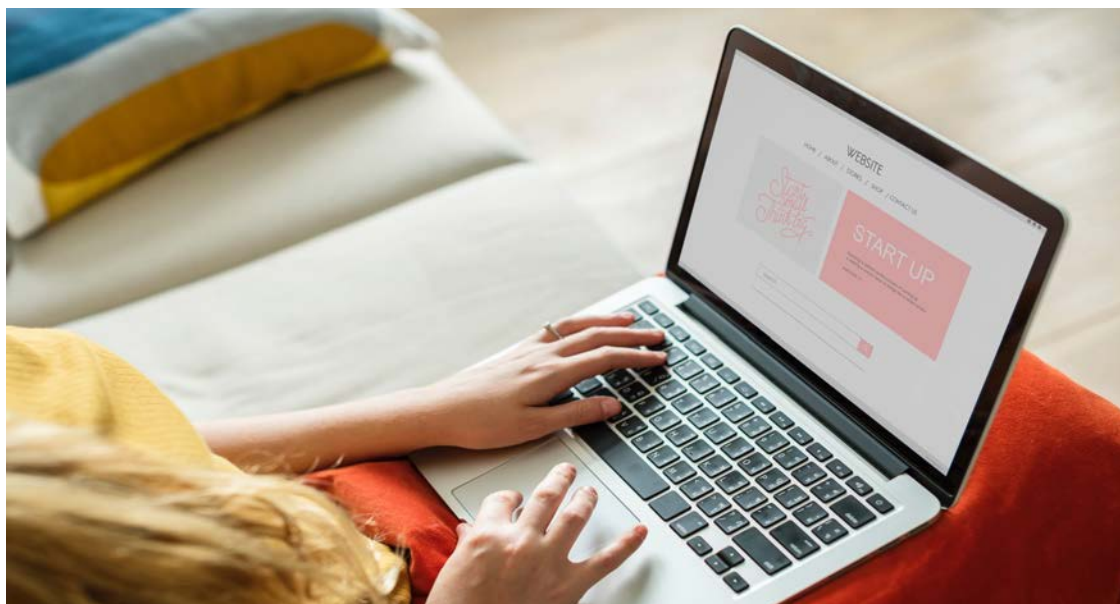
My Pro Tip: Allow your employees to work on building their personal brand and align that with your corporate brand. Your corporate brand is a living entity and its driven by your people. The stronger their personal brand, the stronger your corporate brand. Think of Steve Jobs - Apple, Elon Musk - Telsa or Tony Hsieh – Zappos and observe how their personal brands have impacted their organisations.

The Building of A Personal Website

Development of personal websites have become more popular in recent years . More and more people adopt this method because it assures professionalism and legitimacy. Their website serves as a personal arena or landing page, where potential clients or visitors can check through an individual's credentials (qualifications, achievements, portfolio and so on) and any other important information.

Personal websites can take the form of a personal blog/vlog coupled with your brand story, resume, achievements and portfolio section. The main aim of the website is to drive your personal brand and build a long lasting online presence, where you can engage your audience. What happens when your clients or perspective employers start to google you? What do you want them to find?

My Pro tip: If you are an entrepreneur it is a given to have a personal website. If you are working for a company, I still believe it is just as crucial for your career development. Head over to GoDaddy and buy the web domain of your name before someone else does.



Being A 'Go to' Authority or Thought Leader

The world has gotten to a stage where we look to personal brands who have the know how or expertise to solve or advise on specific issues. In search of information or solutions, people look for sources that they can trust to get this information. Strong personal brands realise that they have to share content and develop opinions in their area of expertise to be seen as a credible source. Strong personal brands research their area of expertise, own keywords around it and continually stay up to date. Being an authority in a specific field is a race most professionals take part in because, in the long run, it will develop their personal brands, strengthen trust level and make you stand out.

My Pro tip: Once you have defined your area of expertise, go research everything you can about it. Then start sharing ideas, stories and content around that area. Use multiple platforms to share those ideas. Engage with your audiences who are looking for your expertise. If you are an employee then share it internally on staff intranet, newsletters or on stage at employee events. If you are an entrepreneur you could write a book, white paper, share content or speak on your area of expertise.



Authenticity & Transparency

Being authentic means being true to who you are, what you stand for and your relevance to your audience. Brands who are authentic have real stories with meaning/messages which connect with their audiences. Authentic personal brands are passionate, honest and consistent. Learn to be You. Be believable and be true to who you are and not an imitation of someone else.

Transparency is a big part of being authentic. Gaining the trust of followers can also be gained by sharing the 'not so rosy' side of your brand. Most people that have built a personal brand or are building personal brands online usually share the beautiful sides only, they completely neglect the hard parts. People have started to adopt higher levels of transparency to show their authentic brand, by coming out clean on challenges they are facing and how they eventually overcome them. This strategy is known to work because it is more believable and it plays on their follower's emotions.

My Pro tip: When you start to create your brand, refrain from trying to follow or copy what someone else is doing. Find your own voice and deliver YOU!



Making A Difference

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CSR was the buzzword for organisations for many years and this continues with personal brands who actively advocate and support a cause. Think about the many personal brands who did the Ice Bucket Challenge to promote awareness of the disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or the strong voices of support for #MeToo Movement.

The trend for personal brands to support a cause will continue to increase. Research has shown that people will increasingly trust personal brands that support a cause. But your brand needs to be genuine (see above). Don't underestimate your audience's intelligence by simply jumping on this bandwagon. "Causewashing" happens and can have a negative impact on your brand. If you fake it, odds are your consumers will know what you are up too.

My Pro tip: Think about your personal brand values/purpose/vision. Now find causes that are aligned to that of your brand. For example if you brand is about innovation then find causes that help drive innovation. It could be rural village in Cambodia that needs computers for poor kids or a funded program that supports underprivilege kids to learn about innovation.



Bonus Trend: Creating the Personal Brand Plan

Increasingly professionals have started to realise that personal branding is a strategic process that requires a clear plan and not a shatter gun approach. Be ready to spend time and resources defining your brand and creating a well thought out roadmap to achieve your short term, mid term and long term brand goals.

My Pro Tip: Our Personal Brand Plan framework consist of: Discover your brand through research, Define your Audience needs, Develop your Brand DNA, Demonstrate your brand through proof points and Deliver your brand across key channels.

I shared 11 trends that are impacting personal brands around the world. More and more people have started to TURN ON their personal brand. More companies are encouraging their employees to actively promote their personal brand as they see they need to have branded employees. Start working on building your Personal Brand and stand out in your market.



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Jerome Joseph is the author of “Turn Me On: Building your Personal Brand” and the CEO of Global Brand Academy.

He is a brand strategist & global speaker who has over 22 years of experience, in 33 countries and working with over 1000 organisations.

He is also the bestselling author of 7 books on Brand. He consults and speaks on Brand Strategy, Personal Branding, Internal Branding and Brand Marketing.

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