

What's Your Brand U.0?



Otherwise Known as: You Are What You Blog, Tweet and Post

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Pop Quiz: What's the first thing you do after reviewing the resume of a serious candidate? You Google them, of course. Brands and businesses of all kinds have been waking up to the reality that the way their companies show up on internet search results can define them more than any PR campaign.

Actually, the good PR campaigns factor in search results as a core strategy. But increasingly, the same goes for individuals. When we present ourselves to prospective employers or even enter new relationships, you can be sure the odds of getting "Googled" are pretty good. Throw in social networks and what you've got is an entirely new kind of profile -- and it matters just as much as the polished version of yourself that you carefully craft on your CV.

While "gaming" search engines or representing yourself inaccurately in a social network is inadvisable, there are certain things you can do to help you custom-design your personal brand online in a way that is unique, memorable and positive. Here are a few things you should think about when building "Brand U.0."

Establish at Least One Digital Profile

If you aren't participating in at least one personal or professional network, such as [LinkedIn](#), then I suggest you stop reading this article and do so right away. Even the "walled garden" social networks will often display limited profiles that show up on search engines. Not only that, but they offer opportunities for your "personal brand" to demonstrate effectiveness across "multiple channels," so to speak.

Checking out someone's profile on Facebook or [LinkedIn](#) and perusing photos on [Flickr](#) gives you a comprehensive view of an individual's personality, interests and professional qualifications. Sound like stalking? Guess what -- we're all stalkers now. If you don't want someone checking out your stuff online, don't put it there. And, more important, if you do, think about yourself as "brand you." It's all you have, really.

Engage in Personal Publishing

It's widely accepted that brands are in the business of producing content now. Guess what -- we are too. Blogging platforms such as Blogger, TypePad and WordPress offer opportunities to publish our thoughts, ideas and other details of our everyday lives if we choose. Services such as Tumblr let us tell the world what we like and why. [FriendFeed](#) lets us put it all in once place, and Google picks up all of it. If you are going to choose to "publish" anything online, it automatically becomes an extension of Brand You. It says something about who you are and what you care about. Personal publishing is a great way to build your brand online, but take a page from classic brand building and have some type of strategy. Think about how you want to come across to the world before you push that button.

Become Your Own Agent

That's right. Think about yourself as a celebrity or talent who just hired the most qualified agent you'll ever meet: yourself. You are now responsible for every photo or video of yourself that ends up in the archives of Flickr, Google or YouTube. As your own agent, you'll be able to edit the media you upload online and use discretion when participating in media that others upload. Choose wisely: The long tail of the internet is indeed lengthy and influential. By becoming your own agent, you'll have multiple opportunities to project yourself in ways you'd like, but it takes some discretion and experience to get it right.

Be Authentic

The hallmark of any great brand is authenticity -- just ask Harley-Davidson, Coke or Apple, especially when all of these brands lost their way and learned from it. Same thing applies to Brand You. In every tweak or a template, upload and keystroke, you have an opportunity to be authentic or disingenuous. Know what makes you special and unique, and tap into those qualities as you build your personal brand online. Most people can spot a fake when they see one, so remember that being genuine is more important than presenting yourself in an artificially glossy manner. It used to be important for bloggers to "find their voice" -- now it's relevant to all of us.

These are a few things to consider, and you don't have to be [Robert Scoble](#) or [Seth Godin](#) to benefit from them. Owning your personal brand online isn't just for "Weblebrities"; it's for all of us. I'd also be careful about using props. I once put on a cowboy hat at the request of my friend Richard Binhammer of Dell, and now it's become an expectation from the people I meet that I wear it. Sometimes, successful brands are created accidentally; if that happens to you, my advice is this: First roll with it, then own it.

