

28 TIPS

For Professional Success in the Digital Economy

By Anita Newton and Brian Honigman

In this guide, you'll learn:

- ▶ How to Build a Strong Personal Brand
- ▶ Networking Tips That Actually Work
- ▶ What It Takes to Stay Relevant Throughout Your Career
- ▶ Strategies for Building Thought Leadership

Stay connected



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AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Over the past month, we've looked at the challenges and opportunities facing the modern day marketer. The reality is, there has never been a better (or scarier) time to be a marketer. Changing customer habits, radically new marketing tools, improved analytics, proliferation of media choices and (cheap) access to users globally is enough to make any person's head spin.

The purpose of this eBook is to show how marketers today can remain relevant across the industry from the perspective of the authors; one is a digital native and the other a digital immigrant. Our goal is to provide a spectrum of tips, tricks and insights from our own unique experiences to help spur your continued professional growth.

To that end, we've compiled this comprehensive eBook of all of our strategies for building a fulfilling and successful career as a marketer.

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HOW TO BUILD A STRONG PERSONAL BRAND

Note: Some of the tips in this section on personal branding come from the answers given in our [interview with branding expert, Dorie Clark](#).

1 Understand the Difference Between Personal Branding and Professional Reputation.

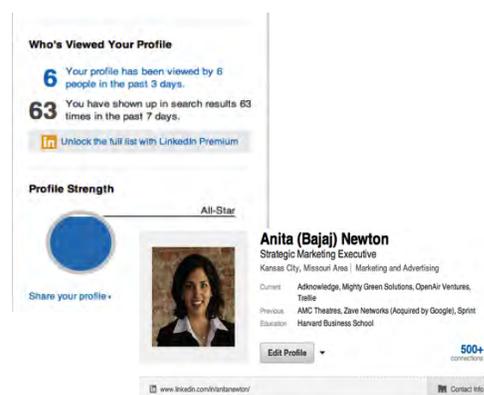
The term “personal brand” gained prominence after the seminal 1997 [Fast Company cover story](#) by Tom Peters, "The Brand Called You." Some people dislike the term and think that it implies fakery or manipulation – trying to be something you're not. On the contrary, it's about something very basic and longstanding in professional life – the importance of understanding one's reputation and ensuring that others grasp the real value you can bring.

2 Avoid the Biggest Mistake in Personal Branding.

Too often, we assume that other people will intuitively understand our career path – where we're going, and what our past experiences have helped teach us. But others usually aren't paying that close attention, which is why it's necessary to proactively create a narrative that describes your professional arc. If you don't do it, others will guess or make their own (often incorrect) assumptions – and you risk being misunderstood or overlooked. Take 15 minutes and see if you can jot down “your story.” It can be daunting, but it is better to know this before you need it. Try out your “story” with a trusted friend or colleague. That person will give you honest feedback and let you know if your pitch is compelling and most important—authentic.

3 Set Up Your LinkedIn Profile.

It doesn't send the right message when a senior executive has a barely-attended-to LinkedIn profile. If you're a billionaire or celebrity, it's fine not to have a LinkedIn profile; we assume that you're too busy to fend off the fawning masses. But for almost everyone else, you need to have a profile, and if you're going to bother having one, you should do it right. Spend the time to make sure your LinkedIn profile is 100% complete. If you're not at 100%, you will know it. The bar on the right of your personal profile will tell you if you are 50% or 85% complete.



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4 Identify a Group of Influencers.

Networking is an important means of building your personal brand, but even more critical is finding the right contacts to network with consistently to help you build your reputation. The contacts you have throughout your career play a role in shaping your professional narrative, which is why it's so essential that these individuals are well-matched to your career goals. Find established professionals in your industry with similar career paths, shared interests and values that you stand behind.

Attend industry events, browse social media and go wherever else these influencers in your industry are active to identify individuals to connect with. Research influencers and learn how you can best introduce yourself online (or offline) to these potential contacts. First and foremost, don't make any requests of these contacts until you've established a relationship, especially during your initial interactions. Instead, figure out what you can do to help them through your research and the conversations you've had with them.

5 Blogging is Critical to Your Craft.

Blogging is important because if you want to be known for your ideas—and most high-level professionals do—it's the most powerful way to demonstrate your insight. How does anyone know if you're a good marketer? Unless people know you personally or talk to your references, they have no idea. But if you blog thoughtfully about the industry and share your perspective, people are going to have a good sense of where you're coming from and what you can contribute.

Before you start, think about your intended audience. [Seth Godin](#), in his book *All Marketers are Liars*, talks about writing for the "edge of the audience" rather than the "vanilla middle." You can't be all things to all people. Have a specific person in mind when you are writing. Write about something that you care about. If you are passionate about the topic, it will show. If you decide to phone it in, that will be evident also. Additionally, write as if you are talking to someone in a coffee shop, not behind a lectern in a college classroom. Make sure your blogs sound like you—your humor, personality and sensibility. The author is as important as the content.

A lot of people hesitate to blog because they don't like writing or aren't sure what to say. Follow the lead of [Gary Vaynerchuk](#), the well-known social media consultant, who speaks into his smartphone and has it transcribed using a service like Amazon's [Mechanical Turk](#). If the thought of writing is stressful, just talk and let the ideas flow.

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6 Focus Your Social Media Efforts.

These days, your personal brand is shaped on two parallel tracks—your real world activities, and your digital presence. You have to engage, at least somewhat, in social media, or you risk looking like a Luddite—or someone with something to hide. Every professional (except billionaires and celebrities, as noted above) needs a LinkedIn profile. Beyond that, take your pick of blogs, podcasts, videocasts, or using Twitter or Google+. (Facebook is not really useful for professional purposes, though every culturally literate person should know how to use it).

7 Ways to Immediately Start Building Your Personal Brand.

Here are three things you can do right away: when you go to a networking event or conference, link up with a “wingman” (a trusted colleague) beforehand and make a pledge to talk each other up. It’s a lot easier to brag about someone else, and you know they have your back, as well.

Get involved on Twitter. It’s not as broad-based as Facebook, but Twitter users are disproportionately influential – it’s real-life opinion leaders. You can maintain a decent Twitter presence in five minutes a day, while you’re waiting in line at the store. Ask five friends or trusted colleagues, “If you only had three words to be able to describe me, what would they be?” Odds are, after a few people you’ll start to see patterns and probably learn something illuminating about how you’re coming across to others.

8 Find a Trusted Colleague.

It’s important for every professional to seek out like-minded peers. If you’re an independent consultant or freelancer, perhaps it’s fellow chamber of commerce members, fellow authors, or fellow graduates of your university. And if you’re a very senior executive or entrepreneur, it might be friends from your mastermind group or EO (Entrepreneurs’ Organization) or YPO (Young Presidents’ Organization). **Find peers you trust, and they can become your “wingmen.”**



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9 Pivot Throughout Your Career, but Research First.

If you're interested in changing careers, it's important first to research carefully what you'd like your new field to be, as you don't want to jump into something only to discover you hate it. The best way to try it out is via job shadowing someone for a day, doing a longer internship, or perhaps a hybrid experience like those offered by [Pivot Planet](#), a company that allows you to pay to follow someone in a given profession (baker, photographer, rancher) for several days so you can really see what it's like. Next, think through how your existing skills apply in the new realm, as it might not always be obvious.

You won't necessarily need to go back to school for another degree, but you may benefit from taking a few targeted classes. Finally, as you settle into your new profession, you want to get new contacts – and old friends and colleagues – on your side right away by demonstrating your expertise. You don't want to give them any reason to doubt you. So start blogging and taking leadership roles in professional organizations so they can see how committed you are, and experience the quality of your work and your insights.

10 Pinpoint the Best Stories About Yourself to Share.

It can be very hard for individuals to identify their own personal brand. We know too much about ourselves; how can we possibly distill it down to a few core elements? That's why war stories—the stories we repeat, the ones that have the most meaning for us—are so important. They allow us a window into what moves us, and what makes us tick. Through those stories, we can begin to get a “ground up” picture of who we are, what we stand for, and what we'd like our brand to be.

NETWORKING TIPS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

11 Don't Try To Impress Others, Be Yourself.

Many people experience anxiety when talking to professional contacts they're trying to impress, when your focus should be spent on being your genuine self. There's certainly an argument for researching the attendees of a networking event and coming up with some talking points, but there isn't a need to come up with an impressive set of questions that show this contact your intelligence. In the end, anyone you're networking with online or offline is a person who's really important to remember.

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Tip 11 Continued ▼

Spend your time thinking about areas that you may have in common with that person. Many times, this is not about work. If you both like to ski, fish, knit, or ride horses, start there. Finding common ground while networking can evolve a one-time casual interaction with a potential contact into a long-term professional relationship. Also, think about how you can genuinely be helpful to the person you are talking with. It can be anything – a babysitter’s name, article on improving SEO, vacation spots for the family. The key is to follow up the next day (ideally the next morning). Nothing creates an impression than offering to add value and executing quickly.

12 Find Job Openings, Make Contacts and Learn with Meetups.

The best part about all the online tools at your disposal is that they can help foster offline meetings with online contacts. Meetup is one of the more effective networks for connecting professionals who share similar career interests. Start by joining multiple Meetups in your area that match your expertise, industry and most important, where you want to meet the right contacts. Join Meetups that other industry experts are members of (usually a good indicator of their quality) while also signing up for a few on your own to see what they’re worth and what type of networking events they typically provide.



13 Become a LinkedIn Powerhouse.

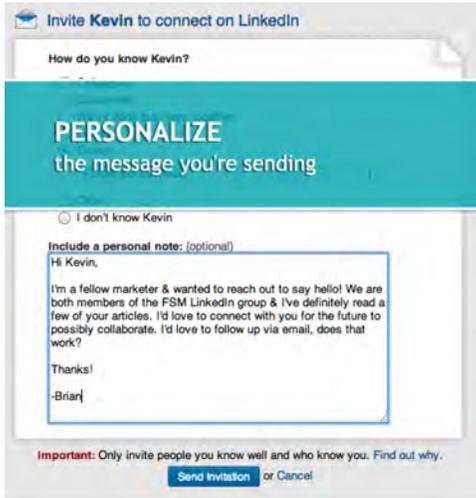
LinkedIn is the most successful professional social media channel for networking with like-minded people and it’s important that you take advantage of its helpful features. Once you’ve set up your LinkedIn profile and filled it out to its fullest, start connecting with other professionals of interest.

A key to getting your LinkedIn invitations accepted is to **personalize the message you’re sending**. This is obviously time consuming, but it’s more effective and personal to the connection you’re making. Taking the extra few seconds will go a long way towards building a relationship with your new connection. Introduce yourself in the note, explain how you’re connected, what you have in common, what you’d like to achieve from connecting and any questions you might have for your new contact.

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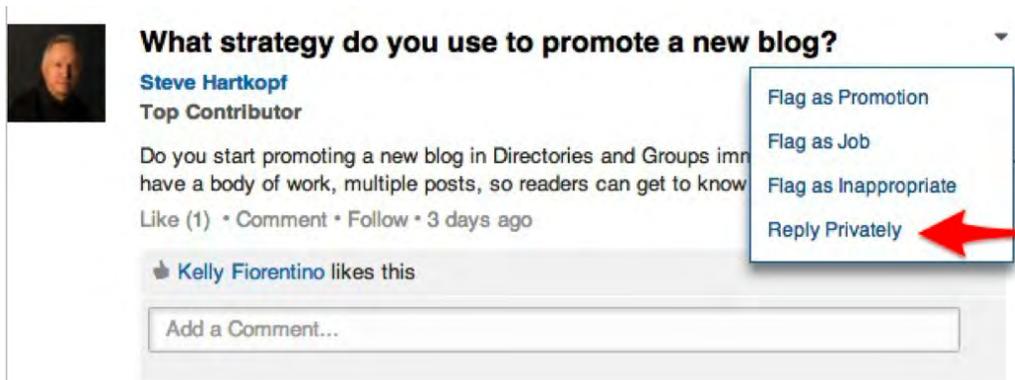
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Tip 13 Continued ▼



A key to getting your LinkedIn invitations accepted is to personalize the message you're sending.

Join LinkedIn groups related to your industry and actively participate. Share content and answer the questions of other group members both publicly and privately. Many are unaware that you can message LinkedIn users whom you aren't connected with as long as you are both members of the same group. Just click on the little black arrow near their post in the group.



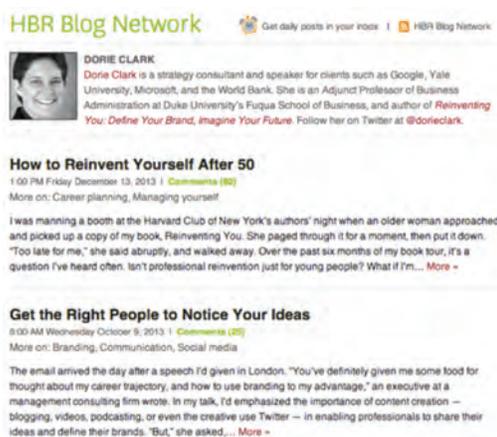
Answer questions publicly first, then message privately with a more extensive answer and to let them know you're willing to help again in the future, if needed. By continually providing value to other LinkedIn users in your industry through this tactic and others, you'll slowly be able to build meaningful relationships and expand your network of contacts.

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14 Create Content at Scale.

According to **branding expert Dorie Clark**, it's critical that you become known for your ideas and are willing to contribute to the conversations happening in your industry by creating valuable content. As a speaker, consultant and writer for *Forbes* and the *Harvard Business Review*, Clark is an example of her very own advice. You can grow your network by conveying your value and worth as a professional by writing articles, creating videos, sharing information across social media or using other media channels.



Whether you are a professional writer or marketer, writing for tech and advertising publications will raise your visibility and credibility in your respective industry. Creating content and putting it out in front of relevant people in the industry will build your brand and a network of lifelong professional connections.

Not everyone should be a writer—or even likes writing—but as a professional, it's important that you find your ideal medium. That will help you deliver your perspective online to help foster bonds with your existing and future connections. If you're eloquent, think

about publishing your own audio books, starting a podcast or publishing YouTube videos to regularly contribute your professional point of view.

As was stated in a recent Adknowledge blog [post](#), the topic of reinvention is incredibly important because career paths are less like a ladder and more like a trampoline.

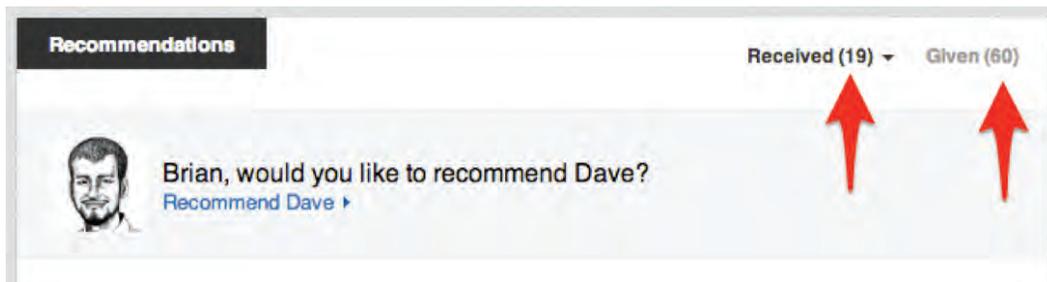
In today's job marketplace, it's critical that you distinguish yourself from your competition, and one way of doing so is by creating original content on a regular basis.

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15 The Economy of Favors is Endless.

When networking, it's always best to give more than you receive. You'll feel better about yourself, see better results and build stronger relationships over time since you aren't always looking for something immediate in return. Perform favors in various forms to offer value to your existing network, as well as new connections.



Here are some of examples of the types of favors that help build your network:

- ▶ Introduce members of your network to one another via email or Twitter
- ▶ Recommend your connections on LinkedIn, don't just use Endorsements
- ▶ Re-tweet and tweet the original content of others in your network, mentioning them
- ▶ Feature members of your community as guest bloggers on your blog
- ▶ Send a thank you note in the mail to stand out as truly appreciative
- ▶ Share the content of others across LinkedIn, Google+, Facebook and elsewhere
- ▶ Interview members of your community and feature them on your blog or other publications
- ▶ Invite members of your network to be guests on your Twitter chat, Google+ Hangout, etc.

Try your best to perform one of these favors once a day, or a few times a week, to provide unparalleled value to your network of contacts. It's an effective way of nurturing your relationships with existing contacts and a way of building an ongoing rapport with new professional connections.

Networking is a non-stop commitment that takes a long time to pay off, but in order to reach that point, you'll have to be fully committed to supporting your network and each individual relationship.

With an ever-changing landscape for marketers, it is as important as ever to stay up to date on the latest technology, tools, companies and developments affecting your industry. Your network is an ongoing resource to help you stay relevant with the collective knowledge, support and expertise of your contacts.

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16 Meet Someone New Every Week.

To effectively scale your network and remain valuable in today's ever-changing economy, strengthen your network by meeting someone new online every week. Find these potential connections across social media by searching on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and elsewhere for like-minded people who you think will bring value to you and your network.



There's always room to demonstrate genuine interest in others when building your network, says [Mika Salmi, the CEO of creativeLIVE](#), and this notion will only help fuel the success of your daily outreach. Use social media to foster this concern with others by complementing, thanking and being genuine with your network as you continue to expand and meet new people online.

In some cases, a full-fledged introduction might not be appropriate with certain contacts; in that instance, interact with them with a lower-risk action like commenting on their Facebook posts, sharing their LinkedIn posts to add your own commentary, re-tweeting their posts to slowly gain their attention. You can also build rapport by simply telling them they're doing a great job at what they do.

Find other people tweeting, sharing content and participating in discussions about topics of interest and proceed to find their contact information. That can mean connecting with them on LinkedIn with a personal note, tweeting them to ask if they'll send a direct message with their email address, adding them as a friend on Facebook or to your Google+ circles. These introductions don't need to be high impact, but meaningful and personalized to catch the interest of potential new contacts.

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WHAT IT TAKES TO STAY RELEVANT THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER

17 There Is No “Try.” Do...or Do Not.

Yoda was right when he spoke that line to a young Luke Skywalker. If you want to win in marketing (let alone lift an X-Wing fighter out of a swamp) you can't just *try*. You have to *do*. [Neil Patel is a brilliant marketer](#) who, at the ripe old age of 28, has already started two successful Internet companies and is now sharing what he knows via [Quick Sprout](#).

Neil tells a story of starting his first company and giving \$20K to an expensive agency that did nothing for him. He realized that he needed to start “figuring stuff out”, which meant experimenting like crazy until he understood what the key underlying drivers were in the world of acquisition marketing.

Why is this important? Relegating your social strategy to fresh-out-of-college digital natives at your impressive agency is like letting the local bank teller prepare your company's financial statements; you can do it, but is it wise?

You can't just sit on the sidelines. You have to start blogging, tweeting, pinning, Snapchatting—in short, use the tools. Without a good understanding of the tools, you will fall short of what is happening with your marketing message, let alone be able to monitor how your consumers are interacting with your brand.

[Dorie Clark, brand expert and author of *Reinventing You*](#) reiterates the advice, saying to just “...get started, try it out, write things down and iterate.”

18 Get Smart – Invert Your Mentoring.

The benefits of mentoring are well understood. At a minimum, **marketing professionals should seek help for career navigation**, hold themselves accountable to clearly defined goals, be open to feedback and constantly look for new knowledge.

As [David Hosmer, MIT's learning and organizational development professional](#), puts it, “It's not therapy, but a quiet place to think out loud.”

The paradigm that you can only learn from people who are more senior and presumably, older, is now being turned on its head.

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Alan Webber, co-founder of Fast Company introduces a new term – reverse mentoring:

“It’s a situation where the old fogies in an organization realize that by the time you’re in your 40s and 50s, you’re not in touch with the future the same way as the young 20-somethings. They come with fresh eyes, open minds, and instant links to the technology of our future.”

Digital natives (the 20-somethings) can teach you how to spruce up your Twitter page, how to research new mobile trends on social media, and how to find the best Chinese food in Toronto before you even get to your hotel.

Many companies around the country are instituting inverted mentoring programs. Cisco, Johnson & Johnson, Mars, Citibank and the originator of the concept, GE, have implemented reverse mentoring programs in their respective organizations. While this is helpful, another suggestion is to find a mentor outside your organization. Colleagues have used a combination of LinkedIn, Twitter and old school word-of-mouth to find their “tribe of five” digital experts.

19 Adopt a Start-Up.

When you’re introduced to a new tool, you need to see it in action—work with a startup to put your new knowledge to the test. Start-ups live and die by being customer acquisition machines. It is hard to understand the power of digital marketing until you have to “make the numbers” each day.

Being around these start-up marketers will inspire and motivate you. Beyond that, another benefit is you will look at your business in a completely different way. So consider taking a role as a marketing advisor—you can add a ton of value to the start-up as well by building brand equity, develop good positioning, understanding and segmenting customers needs. They need your skills. You can actually help stimulate the economy, hone your marketing skills and get inspired in the process.

To find these new ventures, start with LinkedIn. You can also go to your local business journal. Tap into local private equity groups and call a few incubators in the area. After two or three calls, the problem will be not finding a startup to mentor—you’ll need to figure out how to narrow down your enthusiasm to the right one.

This strategy, while highly effective, comes with a warning: make sure to clarify your role and get a clear time commitment before signing on, whether as a board member or advisor. These guys will come to depend on you. If you don’t deliver on your promises, you will be labeled an empty suit and the news will spread like wildfire. The world is indeed small and your personal brand will take a tumble.

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20 Be the Customer.

One of the top marketers out there is Mark Schweitzer, former CMO of Nextel and who now leads marketing at Comcast Business. He has the rare blend of being strategic and understanding the way customers shop.

Mark is known to bring back a picture of his brand's ad that would be marked up with specific issues that were counter to the brief, or confusing to the customer. This is akin to Sam Walton, founder of Walmart and Sam's Clubs, counting cars in the parking lot.

Adknowledge's CEO, Ben Legg, is obsessed (and we do mean this in a good way) with how customers view his company's brand online. He is constantly checking all digital channels, ensuring the message resonates with customers.

The big idea? **You have to live through the customer experience that you're crafting.** Relegating this task to the junior manager – or, worse yet – an aggregate summary in the form of a trend line that appears on page 79 of a brand awareness study, just isn't going to help you understand what's going on.

21 Your Decisions Must be Data-Driven.

The CMO, and every marketer for that matter, must become a data interpreter or you'll likely become obsolete. Measuring the success of your marketing has always been important, but now with more sharing of content, more data is at our fingertips for analysis and actionable insights. It's not necessary to become a data expert, obviously it couldn't hurt, but it is critical that you're able to analyze the data related to your job role whether you're a copywriter, a digital marketing manager, a paid search analyst, a VP of marketing or any other related role.

→ TAKE THE QUIZ!

*How do you know if you are a digital analytics master?
Start by taking this quiz to find out.*

It's the role of the CMO and his/her team to learn incrementally, constantly experiment and then share insights from the data collected in the role. It's ultimately up to the CMO to unify all the data collected from the various team members to make informed, strategic decisions. But in the end, it's a team effort. The members of a marketing team must be able to prove their successes and analyze their failures with data accurately or face the possibility that they'll become outdated.

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22 Learn about Growth Hacking.

Growth hacking is one of the most exciting things to happen to marketing in a long time. Sean Ellis was the first marketer at Dropbox and coined the term “growth hacker.” He defines a growth hacker as “a person whose true north is growth.”

Every strategy, decision and tactic is informed by the growth hacker’s ability to grow the business. Of course, all marketers care about growth, but a growth hacker’s singular focus is about using digital tools to grow. The most celebrated companies in the new world—Facebook, Twitter, Dropbox, airBnB, Buffer, Mint, Zynga—all used growth hacking (as opposed to big budgets) to amplify their customer acquisition.

To get started, we recommend the following:

-  **If you like learning via video**, go to [Growth Hacker TV](#) for hundreds of videos and see a growth hacker in action.
-  **If you learn through books**, read Ryan Holiday’s eBook, [Growth Hacker Marketing: A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing, and Advertising](#). For less than the price of grande, nonfat latte (\$2.99), Ryan provides a clear, concise view of growth hacking.
-  **If you are into infographics**, take a look at Neil Patel’s [Quick Sprout](#), an easy-to-read website that’s great if you have a couple of minutes waiting for a conference call to start or you’re number 27 in line to depart LaGuardia.
-  **If you learn by PowerPoint**, I recommend [Growth Hacking](#) by [Mattan Griffel](#), founder and CEO at One Month Rail.
-  Finally, **for good community sites**, go to [GrowthHackers.com](#) or [Quora](#).

This IS the future of marketing and is as important as any Philip Kotler or David Ogilvy strategy.

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STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

23 Connect with Customers.

To become the expert in your niche of the marketing industry, you must live and breathe it or you'll be far behind your competition and customers, let alone a thought leader. Talk with customers who work with your niche on a daily basis. For instance, if you're working at an agency focused on email marketing technology, then you want to be well connected to the clients regularly using your email marketing strategies and software.

There's nothing quite like hearing first-hand feedback about the daily roadblocks your customers face. These insights can help you become more of an expert in your industry since you'll be more equipped to identify common pain points and regularly address them when creating content, speaking or networking. This also presents an opportunity to develop solutions to these issues for consumers, further associating yourself as an empathetic leader in your industry.

24 Write Consistently.

One of the best ways to **contribute to the conversation in the marketing industry—and build your credibility at the same time**—is through writing about marketing news, strategies, your perspective, industry trends and more.

The writing you're doing to help build conversations should live in a couple of places to help reach different audiences interested in what you're saying about the marketing world. A marketer should attempt a combination of writing on a personal blog, an employer's blog and for third-party publications through guest blogging and syndication to get the most reach.



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Marketer and writer, [Sabel Harris of TrackMaven](#), executes her writing using this very technique to help build thought leadership for both her employer and herself. She frequently writes on her [own blog](#) about a variety of topics focused on both marketing and personal interests, on the [TrackMaven blog](#) about the marketing industry, as well as company updates. She also occasionally contributes content on other industry blogs like [Buffer's blog](#) or [Fast Company](#).

Emulate that approach to building thought leadership by finding a variety of websites where you can publish your content. **To begin, start blogging on your own website—but do it consistently to build your credibility, confidence and writing style.** That will prepare you for writing for your employer, and eventually, third-party publications.

25 Give Your Ideas Away for Free.

It may seem like a no-brainer to some, but giving away your professional perspective might feel like the wrong approach for others. In fact, giving away this information in the long-term will make you more successful, and therefore, make you more money. As a marketer, we package ideas into tangible messages situated on a particular channel based around the feedback of customers.

These campaigns or real-time marketing moments are often for the purposes of driving sales, increasing engagement, improving visibility, etc. Think of your ideas, perspective and content on the marketing industry not as a product to be packaged and sold, but as a campaign focused on increasing your visibility as a thought leader.

The payoff will come in the long-term when others in the marketing community realize what wonderful ideas you're providing for free and therefore, will be much more likely to be invested in what you're selling. It's much like the overarching concept of [Gary Vaynerchuk's new book, Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook](#). Provide quality content to your audience, do it again, then give them more and then, ask for something in return.

A good example here is the Kauffman Founders School:

Luminaries around the country have offered up their "secret sauce" to being successful for free. This builds credibility, engagement and trust.

After you've built the trust of others over time by sharing your ideas for free, then you're presented with the opportunity to ask for something in return. The more trust your audience has in you as a thought leader, the more likely they'll help you in another capacity in the future, whether that means tweeting your latest article, paying to hear you speak, following your employer on social media, signing up to read your newsletter, and more.

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26 Participate in Speaking Engagements.

Not everyone is a good writer or enjoys writing; nevertheless, there are plenty of opportunities to build thought leadership through public speaking as an additional way to share your expertise.

Whether you're speaking with an audience in person at a conference, online through YouTube, Google+ Hangouts or on a TV segment, you'll be able to articulate your unique perspective on the industry. Look for speaking opportunities at a local Meetup, a business association, well-known conferences like SXSW and more to get in front of the right audience of other professionals interested in marketing.

Start taking notes from thought leaders like [Lewis Howes](#), who's built his entire brand through speaking online and offline, through articles, hosting events, doing TV segments and more to become known as a thought leader in online marketing. When Howes appears on a [Fox News segment](#), he's asked about his expertise on building websites, marketing businesses on social media and other topics that he's frequently spoken about on [YouTube](#), written about in [Entrepreneur magazine](#) and more.



Each opportunity a professional can take to help market himself as a thought leader is a step in the right direction, since each appearance or article offers promotion for more interviews, speaking engagements, articles, etc. It's a virtuous circle.

27 Facilitate Networking Opportunities.

As a marketing professional today, there's always a fear of becoming obsolete due to industry changes. Many professionals attend networking events in order to grow their professional connections and remain relevant on the latest trends, platforms, companies and ideas. However, thought leaders not only attend networking events, they help create and host them to foster connections in the larger marketing community and further grow their personal brands. **Take the initiative and start your own Meetup, Twitter chat, Google+ Hangout series or conference related to your industry.** They'll be of value to other members in the marketing community.

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Tip 27 Continued



Melinda Emerson is an expert on small business success and is referred to as the @SmallBizLady on Twitter, where she's started the Twitter chat #SmallBizChat in 2009. The chat reaches 2.5 million Twitter users every week as Emerson, participants and guest experts discuss how to grow a small business. The chat has become a resource to connect small business professionals and a way to grow Emerson's personal brand as a successful online marketer.

If you're a senior marketer and don't have the time, or feel like you might be bombarded by people selling you stuff, start your own group. A core group of senior marketers in Kansas City, Missouri realized that no good networking group existed—so they created one. The KC CMO MeetUp gathers a couple of times a year. They pool resources to bring in speakers from around the world and provide a daylong educational experience that raises their collective marketing IQ.

Starting a networking event online, or offline, about your area of expertise can help better associate your personal brand with your niche. It's an effective way to grow your network, learn from others in the field and stay relevant on emerging trends. It's also a powerful way to lead the conversation about your industry.

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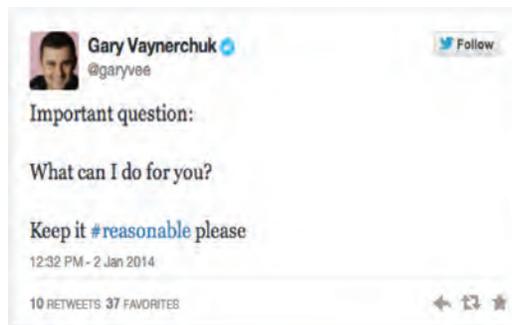
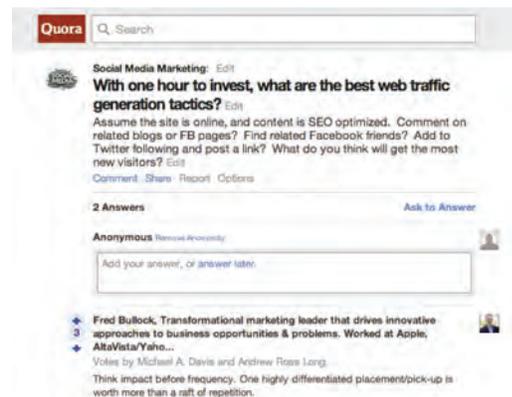
28 Use Social Media to Answer Questions.

Offline thought leadership opportunities are arguably more effective than online, since the speaker is presenting in front of a live audience rather than being in front of a computer. But online platforms and tools allow marketers to build wider thought leadership like never before. [LinkedIn Groups](#), Twitter, Quora, [Spreecast](#), Google+ Hangouts and more allow you to communicate with a large audience from the comfort of your own home, at a greater scale than possible in real life.

First, visit social channels like Twitter, LinkedIn and Quora to look for questions about your expertise in marketing and then answer them in real time on these networks. Consistently do so across social media to associate your expertise as a professional with the topics you'd like to be an expert in, whether that's mobile marketing, SEO, data analysis or another marketing discipline. This is a long-term commitment to answering others' questions in order to become a thought leader in a subject area.

Take searching across social media for questions about your expertise to the next level by calling for a question-and-answer "office hours" on one of your social accounts. Once you've built an engaged following, frequently remind them you're here to help and would love to answer some of their questions.

Entrepreneur and marketer [Gary Vaynerchuk](#) uses this approach on Twitter and other platforms, as you can see from the screenshot. This is one tactic for providing your expertise, perspective and influence to help others and establish yourself as an authority on a subject for the long-term. Don't think about what you'll get in return; instead, experiment with your social channels to see what you can do to help the greater marketing community around you.



28 TIPS

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MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU

The myriad ideas and choices to stay relevant in the digital age may seem daunting. The reality is this: marketers must begin to promote their ideas in the very channels in which they're marketing their own products or services.

FORGET THE 10,000-HOUR RULE

The good news is what is required is not 10,000 hours.

Research suggests that to be an expert in any area, it's not about quantity but quality.

-  ***Do you have a strong professional brand?***
-  ***Do you have a good grasp on the key digital trends relevant to your customers?***
-  ***Are you networking?***
-  ***Are you actively working to share your thoughts, expertise with others?***

Pick one or two areas and just begin. After finding a comfort zone, open yourself up to other channels and audiences. Before long, instead of the seeing the likes of Dorie Clark, Neil Patel and Gary Vaynerchuk quoted in pieces like this one, you might see a new name—yours!

Good luck and have fun along the way!



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