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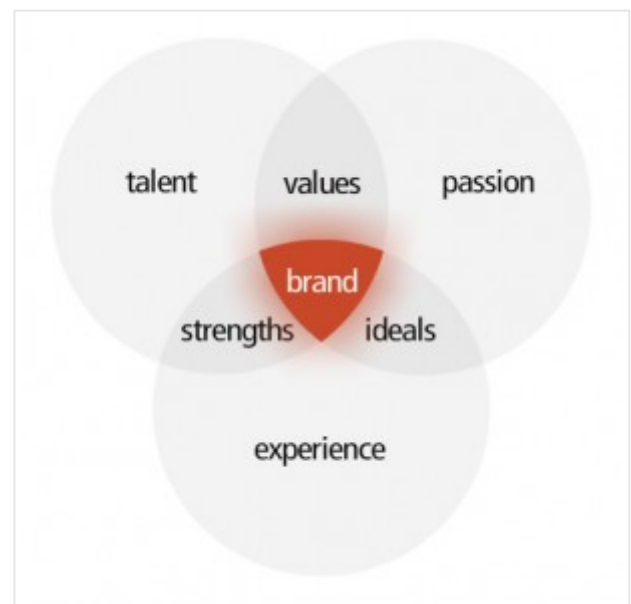
# How to build a personal brand strategy and communication plan

by **Jay Palter** on July 16, 2013 in **Branding**

Smart personal branding can help you communicate your unique value proposition and enable you to become a thought leader both within and outside your company.

## What is a personal brand and why is it important

Personal brand can be defined as the total experience of someone having a relationship with who you are and what you represent as a leader. It's like a personal trademark that informs and guides how you conduct yourself in order to deliver the "experience of you".



Your personal brand should represent the value you are able to consistently deliver to those whom you are serving. It is not about self-promotion, but instead built on the value you deliver to others in your leadership role.

Amazon founder [Jeff Bezos](#) noted:

“Personal brand is what people say about you when you leave the room.”

I love this quote because it highlights a critical fact about all brands in the social age: Your personal brand is defined not by what you tell people it is, but by how you conduct yourself and what others tell each other about you.

Noted author [Simon Sinek](#) famously said about inspiring leadership:

“People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.”

Many people do what you do. Some of them do it similarly to how you do it. But nobody does it for the reasons you do it. Inspiring thought leadership is about building a compelling personal brand around why you do what you do.

“People do business with people they know, like and trust.”

People are attracted to and trust people with whom they have an emotional connection. Human emotions play a large role in driving engagement in social networks and leadership in organizational settings.

Personal branding done right not only demonstrates your knowledge and values, but does so in an engaging and quite personal way.

## Questions that define your personal brand

Your personal brand is built on who you naturally are and how you are as a leader. It is not about “acting the part” or projecting an image that is not true to you.

Ask yourself these questions to define your personal brand:

- **Values** – What core principles determine your attitudes, choices, and actions?
- **Interests/Passions** – What interests and motivates you in terms of how you spend your personal time?
- **Mission** – What statement defines what you are all about and what you want to accomplish in life?
- **Strengths** – What abilities do you consistently apply to produce positive outcomes?
- **Weaknesses** – What shortcomings are you consciously working to improve?
- **Differentiator** – What unique quality makes you different or unusual?
- **Personality** – What traits do you show to the world and what are you not comfortable showing?
- **Education and work experience** – What are the factual bases of your career?
- **360 feedback** – What feedback do trusted friends and co-workers provide about how you are perceived?
- **Goals** – What specifically do you want to achieve?

Your answers to these questions forms the basis of a personal brand that embodies your unique promise of value.



## Key elements of your personal brand communication plan

### 1. Personal brand definition

Based on the answers to the above questions, draft a short, biographical statement that summarizes your brand. The language here is important and will be useful in crafting your social networking profiles.

### 2. Build an audience of influencers

Identify your target audience(s) based on the following categories:

**Influencers that inform and inspire you** – Make a list of all the people (writers, thinkers, artists, filmmakers, columnists, journalists, athletes, clients and organizations) that influence you and your view of the world and from whom you draw creative energy and insight.

**Influencers in your peer group** – Make a list of the influencers and thought-leaders in your space. You want to get to know these people and have them know you.

**Influencers you don't know yet** – Obviously, you can't list these (because you don't know them yet), but think about where they might be and open yourself to discovering them when they reveal themselves. Remember, influencers come in all shapes and sizes and everyone has a network within which there may be value for you.

### 3. Align your social networking profiles

Create or update your profiles on popular social networking sites using the biographical information you created in item 1 above and an exceptional photograph. Focus on the following sites in the following order:

- Twitter – Establish a personal (@yourname) account and start following the influencers in item 2 above (many of them are on Twitter).
- LinkedIn – Update your profile using your biography created above and use the same photo that you use on your other social profiles;
- Google+ – Create/update your personal Google profile and Google+ account and focus on adding peer group influencers to your circles.
- Facebook – Keep this account for personal, private use among friends and family, but be mindful that it's still an important personal brand platform.

## 4. Curate great content

Develop your skills for finding and sharing great “on brand” content in your social networks. Always look for “evergreen” content that doesn’t quickly get stale and adds value. Focus on the following sharing frequencies in your networks:

- Twitter: share more frequently, several to many times per day.
- LinkedIn: share great articles once or twice a week to as much as once or twice per day.
- Google+: share as much as several times per day.

## 5. Write and publish great content

It's hard to develop a personal brand and build thought leadership without writing or otherwise expressing your views. Develop an editorial calendar for blog posts and other “shareable” content, such as presentations, articles, etc., that can be repurposed from content you are already producing. Publish in existing publications or establish a blog.

## 6. Give until it hurts

Dedicate time each day and each week to paying attention to your influencers in social networks. Review Tweets and shares of key influencers and “like” them or share them or add comments. Promote others as your main strategy for promoting your own personal brand.

Personal branding is never one-size-fits-all. Adapt your strategy to your personality.

I'd love to hear what works for you.

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### About Jay Palter

Jay is a social networking specialist focusing on branding and engagement strategies for business professionals and firms.

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- Jeff Bezos, Founder, Amazon.com

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