

10 Golden Rules Of Personal Branding

F forbes.com/sites/goldiechan/2018/11/08/10-golden-rules-personal-branding

November 8, 2018



Oprah Winfrey, the chief executive officer of Oprah Winfrey Network LLC, has defined her own... [+]

Creating a personal brand can be a daunting, mythical task. And one of the easiest ways to get lost in the process is to not know where to start. Even Oprah Winfrey began by going through several style iterations on a small local show before defining her voice into one of the most influential personal brands in the world.

In both our look-at-me cultural shift and evolving job market, it's both helpful and necessary to stand out when applying for a job or starting your own company. A personal brand is for (almost) everyone. So here are 10 golden rules for creating an engaging, unique, and inviting personal brand.

1. Have a focus.

"Too many people are unfocused when it comes to press and coverage, trying to be "everything to everyone." Decide what your key message is and stick to it," says Cooper Harris, founder and CEO of Klickly. Her personal brand has undergone a dramatic shift—from working actress to respected tech entrepreneur and she has handled this shift by only focusing on one message at a time. Keeping your message focused for your target demographic will make it that much easier to both create content around your personal brand and have others define you.

PROMOTED

In fact, Adam Smiley Poswolsky, millennial workplace expert and author of *The Breakthrough Speaker*, takes it one step further when he's advising speakers: "Carve a niche, and then carve a niche within your niche. The best personal brands are very specific." And Juan Felipe Campos, VP of tech and partner at Manos Accelerator, goes one step further to focus on communities that he targets with his large-scale clients. "Keep your message and content consistent to one niche topic to become memorable within a targeted community." The narrower and more focused your brand is, the easier it is for people to remember who you are. And when it comes time to hire a speaker or a new employee, your narrowed-down brand will be what they remember.

2. Be genuine.

There's an easy way to have an original personal brand—and that is to be genuine and authentic. Millennial influencer and head of marketing at Popular Demand, Monica Lin, says "People can see right through a disingenuous act." The more obviously a brand is a copycat, the more the audience will call out the perpetrator for it. Monica's personal brand experienced a huge amount of growth after she began engaging with her audience more meaningfully on Twitter.

"Be genuine. It will make it much easier to manage your personal brand on a daily basis," explained William Harris, Facebook ads expert at Elumynt. Your personal brand should be an easy daily filter that you create content and reach out to your audience with. And finally, Justin Wu, founder of CoinState says "Be a master of your craft, skillset or industry before starting a personal brand. Then your content will help amplify who you are." When initially building his personal brand, he garnered a reputation of being an expert in his field while simultaneously amplifying on social media that same renown. If you're deeply skilled in one area, your reputation alone will help you build the brand you want.

3. Tell a story.

If your personal brand isn't telling a story, you've already lost half of your potential audience. Allen Gannett, chief strategy officer at Skyword and author of *The Creative Curve* explains it best: "The most effective personal branding strategy these days is to build a true narrative - single character monologues are boring in Tinseltown, and even more boring for your personal brand." No one wants to hear you shout about your brand into the social media void, so create a story around your brand that your audience can engage with. Allen regularly meets and chats with his audience in airports around the world, further developing his warm and friendly personal brand.

One of the best ways to tell that story is through written content or video. For Pelpina Trip, social video strategist, this is definitely the case. Her own video channel on LinkedIn sees some of the highest levels of engagement across the platform. "The most personal

way to communicate online is with video. Simply use your smartphone to video message your clients, make a personal connection with prospective clients and connect with co-workers. After all, you always have your smartphone on you!”

4. Be consistent.

Being consistent is very similar to having a narrow focus—it’s much easier to get recognized for one topic if you consistently create content and brand voice around it. “Ensure that your personal brand promise stays consistent, both online and offline,” explains Fyiona Yong, director and millennial leadership coach (ICF ACC). She regularly works with millennials in a corporate context to help them define their more conservative work goals. “You have to demonstrate consistency across your communication, gravitas, and appearance. Don’t underestimate how tiny inconsistencies can derail personal brand effectiveness.”

On the opposite, creative side, CyreneQ, a top storyteller on Snapchat, suggests “something consistent either visually or personality wise. Something unique that people can associate with your brand and know it's you. For example, a sidekick mascot or having a catchphrase you say after every video - something people can fall in love with.” Her sidekick mascot, Ele, has garnered millions of views per Snap for brand work, allowing her fun personal brand to represent big box brands like Walmart and DC. So whether you’re creating a wild, incredibly out-there fun brand or one that’s a bit more on the conservative, corporate side, consistency is key.

5. Be ready to fail.

Failure is tough, and all of us generally want to avoid it - that’s human nature. However, to have a personal brand that rises above the rest, you need to have a failure. Walt Disney spoke of this often when he reminisced about his failed first attempts at creating an animation brand. “I think it’s important to have a good hard failure when you’re young. I learned a lot out of that. Because it makes you kind of aware of what can happen to you.” And what can happen is never as frightening as not trying at all.

When Timothy Hoang, CEO of Stories By Tim, Inc. develops his influencer clients, he likes to tell them: “You’ll never achieve the best branding until you fail a couple times while pushing past your comfort zone.” The very best brands always come from repeated trial and error, mistakes and failures and not from instant perfection.

6. Create a positive impact.

After you’ve developed your personal brand over a period of time, there are generally two ways to continue to build your brand - hop over others and burn bridges or steadily grow a community around your brand. Jacob Shwartz, head of social partnerships at WeWork, who has worked with many of the top influencers in the world, including makeup personality, Michelle Phan, gives us this wisdom.

My quick tip on personal branding is to remember you are your brand, no matter what your current job is, what project you happen to be working on at any one time or whatever the priority happens to be today... always keep in mind the impact you leave on others and remember all we have is our own reputation and that's our brand, so be awesome to each other!

Keeping a positive attitude and helping others will only help healthily grow your brand in the long run.

7. Follow a successful example.

“People interested in personal branding need to start marketing themselves like the celebrities and influential people that they look up to every day,” explains Jason Wong, CEO of Wonghaus Ventures. His own personal brand has gone viral several times, over subjects like ice cream in Japan, inflatable pool toys and memes, earning him the title of the “Meme King.” His success often comes from studying trends and popular individuals on different social media platforms and then implementing them with a twist. Creatively dissecting social analytics and establishing the next big trend can be within your grasp too, if you pay attention across all social media platforms and not simply focus narrowly on one of them.

8. Live your brand.

As mentioned before, one of the ways you can make building a personal brand difficult on yourself is to separate your brand from your personal life. While certainly doable, it's easier when initially creating a personal brand to have your actual lifestyle and brand be one and the same.

Tim Salau, community builder and founder of Mentors & Mentees, who works with college students to help them build brands that will get them hired, believes in this idea as well. “Your personal brand should follow you everywhere you go. It needs to be an authentic manifestation of who you are and amplify what you believe.” With this in mind, your personal brand is not only a reflection of a series of job functions like marketing, finance or creative but also ideals like giving back, thoughtful leadership or mentorship.

9. Let other people tell your story.

The best PR is by word of mouth. Creating a personal brand in the public sphere is no exception to this rule. Aaron Orendorff, editor in chief at Shopify Plus, tells his personal story through lively videos and the occasional bunny co-host or two and his audience remembers. They're able to recall the bright outfits and the animal friends and tie those pieces of the story to their interpretation of his brand. As he eloquently states: “Personal branding is the story people tell about you when you're not in the room.” Jessie Maltin, co-host of Maltin On Movies works with her father, renowned film critic Leonard Maltin and has watched him build his career over the past several decades. “All you have in your life is your name and the reputation you garner.”

10. Leave a legacy.

Once you've built your personal brand with a reputation and community behind it, the next step is to think about the legacy that you'll leave behind. What are the keywords and actions that you want to be known for? Blake Jamieson, artist at Blake Jamieson LLC, who paints pop art portraits of famous tech and sports heroes reminds us that: "Building a personal brand is much bigger than building a business. The only exit strategy is legacy."

A personal brand is a lifelong project that constantly evolves and changes. Even the experts who build or enhance the biggest brands in the business know that there are no hard-set rules for creating a personal brand. But these general guidelines help provide first steps, especially if you're starting a new brand or rebranding.

Creating the right personal brand will not only help you be known in your field and consistently land work but it could be the difference between "Who are you?" and "Thank you for being here" in your career .



Goldie Chan

I'm a personal branding expert, digital strategist and creative. My video channel, #DailyGoldie, won LinkedIn Top Voice with a global community and millions of

...