



# PERSONAL **B** RANDING

*Creating a Framework  
For Career Success*

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# INTRODUCTION

**Personal branding** is a comprehensive process through which a professional marks themselves as a brand and paves the way to career success. The common misconception involved with personal branding is that only companies and products can have a brand. However, brands are not restricted solely to companies or products. At the individual level, we each have our own personal brand that defines not only who we are as a person, but what we stand for as a professional.



## What is Personal Branding?

Personal branding is an all-encompassing topic made up of beliefs, attitudes, and impressions. You are your own personal brand, and how you convey yourself to the public at large shapes their perceptions of you. That perception is affected by your talents and strengths, your weaknesses and faults. However, because it is **your** personal brand, you are the one who can best market it.



**Certainly you have faults or shortcomings**, but with a personal brand you can shift the focus to qualities and traits more conducive to vertical career advancement. Effective marketing is how we will best convey our brand to prospective employers, hiring managers, and networking connections. **Developing your brand is what will ultimately influence your value as a peer, employee, and thought leader in your respective industry.**



The focus on building a brand lies in delivering results and displaying them proudly. Here are some ways in which professionals typically market their personal brand:

- Resume
- Cover Letter
- Networking
- Interviewing
- Industry Knowledge
- Endorsements
- Professional Web Presence (personal website, e-portfolios)
- Social Media Activity
- Mission Statements
- Goals & Objectives
- Career Map
- Personal Training

**"All of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You." - Tom Peters, Fast Company**



Each of these is a tool or resource that will help you convey or build an effective personal brand. When used in tandem, this can be a surefire path to career advancement and professional success.

## How Personal Branding Applies to You



Today's world is made up of **knowledge workers**, individuals who have dedicated their lives to expanding their education of not only their jobs, but their industries. These people are incredibly valuable in the corporate and online sector because knowledge is the currency of success. **You cannot expect to succeed without first building a solid foundation of knowledge.**

**Credibility is ultimately the key to professional success with regards to personal branding.** How do you gain credibility and create opportunities for results in your career? In order to create a truly powerful personal brand, you must first establish a framework for success.



## PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

**Personal mission statements** demonstrate that you know your purpose in life and what is most important to you. You know how to express these values by how you live and work. You know where you are going and how you will get there. A personal mission statement serves as a brief career map, emphasizing your traits and successes professionally. This statement is your mantra.



### Preparation

For the purposes of this section, you will need to have a pencil and paper or else a computer at your disposal. Take your time as you follow these instructions as **goal setting** is not something to be rushed. Put yourself in a setting free of distractions or loud noises as these will detract from the success of your efforts.



Once you feel comfortable with creating a personal mission statement of your own, do not restrict yourself in what you write initially. After you have written for several minutes, you can then stop and begin editing the message you desire to convey through your mission statement.

### What is a Personal Mission Statement?

Mission statements are similar to something you'd find on a resume. Typical practice among resume writers is to include an objective or personal statement at the head of a resume. This statement describes who you are as a professional and where you hope to go in your career.

In the absence of a mission statement, it is quite easy to forget what is important in life. You lose track of where you're going, what qualities you want to epitomize, and so on. This statement is essentially your professional mantra. It helps remind you of who you are trying to become and where you are trying to go.

Mission statements can inspire you to think "I've started my life." Stephen Covey said it best when he described crafting a mission statement as "**connecting with your own unique purpose and the profound satisfaction that comes in fulfilling it.**"



### Elements of a Mission Statement

A personal mission statement is intended to provide you with clarity and a sense of purpose. The intended result is to define who you are as a person and how you will live each day. Like an objective statement on a resume, it outlines the qualities you will rely on for your success and the ways in which you will achieve that success.

### Creating a Mission Statement

A mission statement is a short paragraph made up of between one and three sentences. It should be clear and brief, while touching on the points that you wish to market yourself with. An effective personal mission statement will utilize actions, behaviors, habits, and qualities **that have had and will have a positive impact on your life.**

1. **Identify your past successes.** Knowing how you've gotten to where you are today is a useful starting point. Analyze your accomplishments, whether they have been projects in college or at work.

What drove you to achieve? How did your knowledge and personality contribute to your success? Don't be modest here. Your personal brand is your chance to shine.

2. **List your core values.** Jumping off of the first step, create a list of your values. These are the values which form the foundation for how you perform work and conduct yourself professionally. Simply put, what makes you “you”? These values should clarify who you are and what you stand for, demonstrate how you do business and why you strive to succeed.
3. **Brainstorm goals.** At this point you should begin thinking about goals you'd like to set. Creating goals will be discussed at greater detail in the following section of this guide, so don't worry about actually coming up with goals. Simply think about your long-term goals and how this has shaped and will shape you personally and professionally.
4. **Determine where you want to go.** Now that you've thought some on goals, it is time to decide where you want to go professionally. You don't have to specifically indicate a position or title you want to possess, but merely state your aspirations for career success, whether it is to become a manager or simply a thought leader in the industry.
5. **Write your mission statement.** Writing down your mission statement acts as proof of your commitment to your personal brand and conveying it to those you meet. Show your dedication and write it down. You can even take the next big step and advertise it online through one of your social media profiles (social media tools will be introduced in Conveying Your Personal Brand Online on page 12).



The personal mission statement is but one step toward establishing your personal brand. You should refer to it frequently as you plan your goals and advertise yourself online. Like with a company mission statement, this tool will help in directing your professional growth.

## PERSONAL GOALS

**Personal goals are the antithesis of a reactive lifestyle.** In a world where “fast” is the speed in which you operate and “none” is the amount of free time you feel is available, it is easy to feel swept away and out of control. Each day there are numerous chances you can utilize for your own growth, both at work and away from the office. Many get pushed to the wayside because you’re in a rush, don’t notice them, or don’t have the motivation to go out of our way for it.

Setting goals is critical in finding the motivation to succeed and the direction you wish to go in life. **However, motivation without direction is effort wasted.** Knowing where you want to go is half the battle. Goals will help you find the way.

### Preparation

For the purposes of this section, you will need to have a pencil and paper or else a computer at your disposal. Take your time as you follow these instructions as goal setting is not something to be rushed. Put yourself in a setting free of distractions or loud noises as these will detract from the success of your efforts.

Once you feel comfortable with creating goals of your own, do not restrict yourself in what you write initially. After you have written goals for several minutes, you can then stop and remove any goals found to be irrelevant to your career **advancement.**

### What are Personal Goals?



Personal or professional growth is difficult to **facilitate** in the absence of goals. Accomplishments are harder to define, you can’t set measurements to gauge your success, and you are left wondering what opportunities you’ve missed. Goals help to map out your rise as a professional. Goals enable you to truly succeed. Goals are a paving stone to true job satisfaction.

#### Goal Setting Tips

- Make your goals your own.
- Write them down.
- Track your progress.
- Vary your goals.
- Adjust goals when needed.
- Believe in yourself.
- Control the focus of each goal.
- Be patient.



Preparation is a critical part to any person’s progression. It is too easy to simply adopt a roll-with-the-blows mentality. You miss key opportunities because you weren’t specifically looking for them. You may suddenly even find yourself going down a path you never wanted to go professionally. Setting goals for yourself helps to identify where you want to go in life and how you can get there. You then simply measure your success by setting milestones that help identify your progress.

For example, you may simply want to obtain a raise. To do this, you measure success by accomplishing tasks that receive complements from management, by sitting down with your boss to discuss your ambition for growth in the company, or by working significant overtime to complete projects early. Your underlying goal here is to prove your added worth to the company, which each of these milestones can help accomplish.

### Elements of a Long-Term and Short-Term Goal

Goals have a greater chance of being accomplished when you take the time to create good objectives. However, before you can determine your goals you must first know where you want to go. Goals can act as a roadmap in getting you from Point A to B, but are not the destinations in themselves. As you prepare to set goals for yourself, ask the following questions:

- Who is involved?
- What do I want to accomplish?
- Where will I do these goals?
- When will I complete them by?
- Which requirements or constraints will I need to factor in?
- Why will I perform these goals?

You need to be smart about your goals. These will help pave the road to success and will give you many opportunities for accomplishments that you can share with prospective employers. Career counselors will recommend that you utilize a certain mnemonic, or phrase, titled SMART. These assist greatly in personal development and provide a framework for goal setting. The individual parts that make up the SMART criteria are:



1. **Make SPECIFIC goals.** Open-ended goals are too easily conducive to expecting less of yourself. If you set the goal to increase sales goals over the next six months, then it would be too easy to consider the goal a success if you made all of \$1 more.
2. **Brainstorm MEASURABLE goals.** It is too easy to get carried away with goals where you have no real way of measuring them. For example, “Attend one professional webinar a month and report findings to manager.” This is easily measurable, seeing as how there is a specific number of webinars you will attend.
3. **Keep your goals ATTAINABLE.** Don’t get so carried away with setting goals that you make something that can’t be attained in the next 20 years. Start small with things that can be done over the course of weeks, if not months. Attainable goals should answer the questions:
4. **Create RELEVANT and applicable goals.** Remember that you want to establish goals that will further your career toward a specific purpose. Setting the goal to read a book for recreational purposes is not as relevant as reading a professional development book.
5. **Produce TIME-BOUND goals.** In order to truly create goals that will help you improve yourself professionally, your goals need to be on a deadline. You will doubtless encounter more difficulties in accomplishing a goal especially if you do not have a time set for when it should be completed.

### SMART Goal Example

“I will write a report each week outlining how I’ve improved my skills and work processes and present it to my manager for the next three months.”

When you create a goal, ensure that you are following each of these guidelines. By doing so, you will create goals that are not only more effective, but will more easily contribute to your success over the long term.

### Creating a Long-Term Goal

It is better to set lifetime or long-term goals prior to establishing short-term. By knowing where you want to go in the future, you can better plan for it with immediate or short-term goals. A long-term goal is something you hope to achieve either over the

course of a year or multiple years. Because of how quickly a person can change in their career choice and interests, it is better to start small and work your way up to better long-term goals.

1. **Select an area of concentration.** Knowing what area of your professional career you want to focus on will help largely in setting goals. Focusing your goals in a specific area or discipline influences your success and chance for advancement in that particular area. For example, you might want to focus on expanding your skill at writing this year and then focus on professional networking the following year rather than both at the same time.



2. **Create practical long-term goals.** Setting the goal to retire in the Caribbean is an example of a somewhat unrealistic and far too long-term goal. Keep the scope of your goal to within the next 10 years and make sure it is something you have full confidence in your ability to accomplish.
3. **Determine a deadline.** Setting a goal matters little if you don't associate a due date with it. Otherwise you could spend the next few years "working" toward it. Giving yourself a deadline will provide the motivation you need to get things done. Long-term goals should be something that may take upwards of a year for completion, if not several. If it can be done easily within the next few months, you should consider pushing harder to determine something even more long-term in purpose.
4. **Consider what goals you can share with your manager.** Don't hide the fact that you are engaging in behaviors that will expand your value to your employer. Unless your goal is to prepare for a position within another company, you should enlist the aid of your boss to help in your efforts. As you review your goals, determine which ones you would be willing to share and how their influence could help in your success.

### Creating a Short-Term Goal

In comparison to long-term goals, short-term goals provide more of a to-do list of things that will help you work toward your lifetime goals. These can and should be tasks that take as little as a day or as long as several months to complete. They're much more simple in design and objective and should be something you can easily undertake within a small time frame as opposed to long-term goals.



1. **Break down your long-term goals.** If you've done your long-term goals correctly, you should be able to come up with a list of activities or accomplishments that need to be made in order for you to meet that goal. In a sense, you are creating a to-do list that will act as an outline.
2. **Identify milestones and classify them as short-term goals.** Utilizing that to-do list, you can then take each item and fashion a short-term goal from them. This keeps the scope of your short-term goals within that of the long-term, and each will contribute to the other's completion and success.
3. **Know how they will affect your long-term goals.** Realize that each short-term goal will affect your future plans. They may even affect the success of other goals. Before you begin in the next step, ensure that you know the effects that will come about from completing each goal and how they'll contribute to your success professionally.
4. **Prioritize goals and create a time table for completion.** Now that you've created a list of goals, you need to prioritize them. As you complete each goal, realize that those accomplishments will contribute to the success of each one following. Some goals may be time-sensitive, whereas others will rely on the completion of other goals.

Remember that long- and short-term goals are not independent of one another. They should be established and sought after in harmony with your personal brand. Short-term goals should help you in achieving long-term goals. Consider each as milestones for success. They both play an important part in fulfilling your personal mission statement and will help in your efforts at professional development.





## ACTION PLAN

**Action plans** essentially act as an outline for how and when you will achieve a goal or series of goals. Once you've gone through the effort of making goals, you then need to map out how you will achieve that goal. This will require some efforts at structuring your plan and disciplining yourself for a rigorous schedule. Achieving a goal isn't something you'll do every now and then when you're in the mood. Setting aggressive plans means you will continuously be developing your skill set and completing a task.



### Preparation

For the purposes of this section, you will need to have a pencil and paper or else a computer at your disposal. Take your time as you follow these instructions as an action plan may require continual planning and thought over the course of several months. Put yourself in a setting free of distractions or loud noises as these will detract from the success of your efforts.

Once you have created an action plan, do not be afraid to revisit it and revise when and where appropriate.

### What is an Action Plan?

After establishing a goal or series of goals you intend to meet with a desired end point, now you need to set a timeline in which you will accomplish each of your goals. This plan will show how major and minor elements of your goal setting will be managed and implemented over a period of time. Action plans break down goals into a series of tasks which will be accomplished in chronological order toward the completion of the intended goal or milestone.



### Elements of an Action Plan

The elements which make up a typical action plan are an in-depth understanding of the requirements of your goals and the amount of time it will take to accomplish them. At the start, this will likely require some estimations on your part until you become comfortable with the process. You will need to set aside a set number of hours each week (or even better, day) which you will dedicate toward the completion of a task.

### Creating an Action Plan

Time management is a useful trait to possess in the professional world and will make this particular task even easier. If you've little experience with effective time management, then this will provide an excellent outlet for practice. The process of establishing an action plan is quite straightforward in design and purpose. It simply involves being able to break down goals into a series of tasks and, from that, plotting out a schedule for when you will accomplish each part of the goal.

Here are the specific steps for creating your own action plan:

1. **Outline the tasks that must be done to accomplish the goal.** This step is identical to brainstorming short-term goals based on long-term. List all of the tasks which you will be required to complete in order to check off that goal. Once you've listed off each task, delve further still into the issue and determine what needs to be done to complete each of these tasks. By this point you will have a very definite idea of what needs to be done.
2. **Set a deadline.** While it is hard to know when a goal can be accomplished by, you should still put forth the effort of creating a hard deadline. Once you have a deadline for the goal itself, you can then plan out when each task needs to be completed and better track your progress. Then do whatever it takes to meet the deadline.
3. **Commit to a goal achievement schedule.** At this point, you now know what needs to be done and by when. The next step is creating a daily or weekly schedule for the amount of time you will dedicate toward meeting this goal. This may be as simple as two hours every other day or several hours on a Saturday. When possible, schedule specific nights for you to work toward meeting these goals so as to avoid procrastination.
4. **Track your progress.** If you are able to do so, enter all of your goals and tasks into a spreadsheet and track your progress each week. As you make strides in accomplishing goals, you will gain a better idea of the progress you've made. This in itself will lend toward your motivation and desire for success. Track details like the task type, description, time estimate, how long it actually took you, the scheduled times you've dedicated to completing it, and your progress.

Action plans put you more in control of your efforts at professional development. Action plans will likewise support your efforts at establishing a personal brand because it will help build positive and professional qualities in you that employers and hiring managers alike will value. It is not enough that you have a personal mission statement or goals. You need to plan accordingly for how you'll see things through and facilitate your own professional growth and further your personal brand.



## CONVEYING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND ONLINE



**Online personal brands** are an extension and more visible proof of the qualities that you are trying to convey. Now that you've come up with a personal mission statement, long- and short-term goals, and an action plan, it is time to advertise your intentions and accomplishments. By utilizing social media and other web-focused outlets, you can give others a better sense for your personal brand.

***NOTE:** For the purposes of this guide, social media outlets will merely be overviewed with how they can be used to advertise your social brand. Building your personal brand online goes beyond the framework nature of this instruction.*

### The Power of Social Media

Your digital footprint has a very profound impact upon your personal branding efforts. These resources have a large reach and are commonly used by hundreds of millions of individuals on an almost daily basis. What easier way to market yourself than through a service that people visit frequently? It is very important that you advertise yourself and your accomplishments in the social sector.

### Places to Display Your Brand

The benefit of the internet is there are so many places you can go to advertise yourself. While there are literally hundreds of social networking sites from through which you can build your online presence, by no means are you required to utilize all of them. Start small and select two or three areas you can work on. Then once you've grown comfortable with them, you can consider expanding to other areas.

#### LinkedIn

This website is the best place to start creating your online personal brand. It is the "Facebook" of professionals throughout the world and will be one of the best tools at your disposal for meeting others in your industry. When creating a profile here, you can upload your resume, include personal statements like goals and mission statements, list your accomplishments, and outline your work history.



#### Facebook

This is the more casual social setting for professionals, though it does serve its purpose in expanding your network. From here, you can create a professional page (separate from your personal profile) where you can create discussion and contribute content to other professionals who "like" your page. However, in comparison to LinkedIn, the scope of this site is much more limited in terms of professional networking.



### Other Tools and Resources

- **Digg**

This social media tool acts as a bookmarking site where you **can** link to your favorite websites and articles all across the web.

- **Delicious**

This is another popular social bookmarking site much like Digg.

- **Flickr**

Tell your story online through photos and videos that you can upload to this website.

- **YouTube**

This site is not for just sharing random videos about life, but can also be used as an outlet to get your face seen. Were you to run your own vidcast, this would be an excellent place to post your videos.

- **About.me**

This tool helps draw together your entire web presence into a single location. With a single splash screen, you can describe yourself and provide links to your social networking profiles, direct users to your website, or allow hiring managers to contact you directly.

- **Flavors.me**

Much like About.me, this site enables you to create a home page from which viewers can access all of your social networking profiles and get in contact.

- **Brand-Yourself**

This service allows you to create your own professional web presence that will rank you higher on Google searches, making you even easier to find.

***Twitter***

This beast is different from that of Facebook and LinkedIn, focusing primarily on the quick sharing of content. Twitter is a tool used predominantly by professionals to connect and communicate with other people throughout the world. Each status update you provide is restricted to 140 characters, which means brevity is of the essence. This allows you to more easily share profound and original thoughts or articles you've come across online.

***Blog***

A blog helps you establish credibility, which is critical to your personal brand. This resource allows you to share your thoughts without a character restriction on whatever topic you so desire. For the purposes of marketing your professional brand, a blog is an ideal location to advertise your thoughts on your industry, accomplishments made through your goals, and more. It is an excellent way to be heard and demonstrate your personal brand online.

***E-Portfolio***

One of the best ways to give proof of your personal brand through the work you do is an electronic portfolio or e-portfolio. From this location you can upload and give examples of work you've performed. For example, you can include images of the building you drew up the blueprints to, you can include sections of a proposal you wrote, or you can display presentations you gave. An online portfolio is a powerful tool in giving credibility to your personal brand.

## SUMMARY

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Through the course of this instruction, you have been guided through a number of processes. Each of these is intended to help you in better understanding the power of personal branding and how this can affect your career and designs for professional development. Creating a mission statement and personal goals are but steps toward marketing yourself effectively online.

You accomplishing these tasks is an impressive feat and will help instill in you further the importance understanding your personal brand. While marketing yourself is an important aspect, you must first understand what it entails, which your mission statement and goals will answer. You are a unique individual with many positive and empowering qualities that factor into your success.

Effective implementation of personal brand marketing strategies relies on the efforts you make here and now. It may not feel like these activities create immediate results, but they will help give your marketing efforts a stronger foundation for success.

Before you can market **YOU**, you must first understand **YOU** and your aspirations.



Good job. I like your wording and clarity. Your instructions are clear and usable. I also like the look of the document.

There are some design considerations that I think would help your readers. Also, there needs to be more explicit linkage and focus to the overall topic. But still well done.