

Article for Module 2

How Personal Branding Went Digital and What it Means for Your Career

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Author: William Arruda. **Source:** Taken from [Forbes](#).

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When I created my personal branding business 20 years ago, personal branding lived in the real world. From handshakes to in-person presentations, brands were built through human connections in huge office towers and in suburban office parks everywhere. Over time, though, your brand has moved online.

One of the early factors in this shift was the launch of LinkedIn in 2003. It created a place for your professional activities and accomplishments to live online. Since then, there has been a steady evolution from real to virtual with the introduction of more social media platforms, along with technology for video meetings and online forums, groups and associations. Then came Covid, and the gradual drift to digital personal branding became immediate and complete, like the flip of a switch.

As the switch flipped, the in-person, 3D elements of personal branding were replaced with 2D replicas online. Meetings that were usually scheduled to take place in Conference Room A moved to Conference Room Z (for Zoom). Client pitches happened online. And first impressions—including the new hire who has never physically visited the office—yep, all online. So mastering digital personal branding is key if you want to increase your success and happiness at work.

The great news is that the three most important tenets of personal branding are just as relevant and important online as they are in the real world:

- Personal Branding is based in authenticity—what's true, genuine and real
- Personal Branding is about differentiation—standing out from others who do what you do
- Personal Branding means delivering exceptional value, which makes you relevant and compelling to the people who are making decisions about you

Here's what you need to know and what you need to do so that the bits-and-bytes version of yourself aligns with the flesh-and-bones You, putting your best brand forward online:

Master Your Digital First Impression

First impressions have moved online, so you need to create one that's aligned with who you are. That means it's time to upgrade your LinkedIn profile. It's often the place people visit when they want to check you out in a professional capacity. And even if they start with a Google search, your profile will rank highly in the results—sending decision makers directly to your profile. Focus on your Headshot, Headline and About.

Your LinkedIn About will be the most-read version of your bio, so make sure it shows that you're both credible and likable. To connect more deeply, use the Featured section to showcase yourself on video. This gives people a chance to learn about you on a more personal, emotional level.

Grow Your Online Network

Boost your real-world relationships with an online component so you can remain visible and valuable to the people who matter most in your career. Reverse sort your email and make sure to add to your online social media connections to all those contacts you've lost touch with. Once you've updated your digital Rolodex, create a habit of adding new people to your online network as soon as you meet them. This will help you keep all your human connections digital.

Demonstrate Your Brand Online

It's time to master online meetings and presentations. Even in a post-Covid world, they're here to stay. The good news is that they give you the best opportunity to showcase your brand value. When you use conferencing technology to enhance what you do and show that you've mastered the world of virtual interactions, you'll make a major deposit in your personal brand bank. Don't be cavalier about online meetings. Treat them with the same importance as those brand-enhancing events that used to take place in person.

Stay on Top of It

Because your online brand will have an impact on your real-world success, you need to stay ever visible, available and valuable to your target audience. Determine a cadence for posting content that will be helpful to the people you seek to influence. Make a plan to remain front of mind with your stakeholders. Also, to stay on top of what's being said about you online, establish a google alert for your name. Then, when your name is mentioned in digital content, you'll be among the first to know.

Maximize Video

Video is the next best thing to being there. And since you likely won't "be there" a lot of the time, use an enhanced two-dimensional version of yourself. Consider using video as your Doritos in this SuperBowl ad featuring Matthew McConaughey. To use video effectively:

- Create your LinkedIn Cover Story (if this feature isn't available to you yet, it will be). Your Cover Story is a quick, 30-second video bio that sits behind your headshot. It lets you introduce yourself to others using rich media (a.k.a. video).
- Publish YouTube videos that help you showcase your thought leadership.
- Include video "proof" in your LinkedIn Featured section, with clips from your presentations.
- To create a more human and connected experience, use video in important meetings, in messages to your team and when making pitches to your boss.

Most importantly, remember to reinforce your brand traits every step of the way.

