



Book Crush It!

Why NOW Is the Time to Cash In on Your Passion

Gary Vaynerchuk
HarperBusiness, 2009
Listen now

- play
- pause

00:00
00:00

Recommendation

Although many people advise against turning your hobby into your day job, Gary Vaynerchuk, an Internet and business phenomenon, vehemently disagrees. He boldly promotes quitting your job to pursue a profession that is your passion. An immigrant from Belarus, Vaynerchuk rose to fame in his mid-30s because of Wine Library TV, the popular, highly publicized video blog he started in 2006. Through his imaginative Internet Webcasts, Vaynerchuk has made himself a leading authority on wines and a respected expert on online brand development and marketing. His style is unpretentious, a welcome change from the reserved mien of tuxedoed wine critics. Vaynerchuk provides step-by-step explanations on how to create a personal brand and promote it using social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Although the advice is overly simplistic – Vaynerchuk somewhat naively assumes anyone can emulate his success – and the topic is well-worn, *BooksInShort* appreciates Vaynerchuk’s sincere advice and recommends his clear, lively book to new entrepreneurs and others who want an introduction to the world of social media.

Take-Aways

- If you are passionate about a hobby, you can turn that hobby into an online career.
- Develop a “personal brand”: Decide who you are and what you represent.
- Learn enough about your passion to become an authority figure in that area.
- Create a video blog to showcase your expertise, continually posting outstanding content to attract customers and advertisers alike.
- This requires hard work, but not a lot of money.
- Choose the medium you will use on your blog – text, audio, video or a combination.
- Promote your blog by developing a loyal following at social networking Web sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Read and comment on related blogs to gain recognition. Build your brand and encourage other experts to visit your blog.
- Make your blog user friendly. If you can afford it, hire a Web site designer. Otherwise follow an online template.
- Once your blog has enough visitors, monetize it through paid advertising, merchandise sales and other means.

Summary

What’s Your Passion?

If you have a passion such as cooking, playing the flute or skydiving, quit your day job. Using social media and Internet networking to establish and profit from a strong personal brand, you can transform your passion into your career, and earn a good living in the process. Of course, this takes determination and knowing which steps to take. You’ll have to work around the clock, but you’ll have fun doing it. What you don’t need, however, is a lot of money. Today, people spend much of their time

online on Web sites such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. These applications attract huge audiences, which translates into advertising revenues for you. When people seek access to your knowledge, advertisers will pay you to get a share of your followers' attention.

“Where the eyeballs go, opportunity follows.”

The subject of your passion doesn't matter. Say it's worms. Create a video blog in which you inform your audience of everything they would ever want to know about worms. You'll find that fishermen and other worm lovers will become loyal fans of your blog. Companies that manufacture fishing rods and fishing equipment will want to advertise on your Webcast.

“Word-of-Mouth on Steroids”

Use social networking applications to develop your online audience. These platforms put you in touch with thousands, even millions of people, who will start talking, tweeting, blogging and posting about you and your brand. Use social networking sites as “personal branding sites.” Through them, you can establish who you are and what you represent.

“Are you willing to do whatever it takes for the chance to live entirely on your own terms?”

Before the Internet, the only practical way to get in touch with large numbers of people was through traditional mass media, such as television, radio and print publications. But these platforms were expensive and thus impractical for most people. Today, though, these pre-Internet media are “sinking ships.” Online social networks are replacing them in influence and audience appeal. And they are free.

You Need Great Content

Showcase your personal brand by providing excellent content online. This is crucial. If your information is not outstanding, you will get nowhere. To develop your content, become a bona fide expert on your subject. Read and study everything you can on your topic.

“Social media give entrepreneurs and businesses an unprecedented chance to engage with their customers and communicate their message.”

You're ready to go online with your expertise when you can convincingly and compellingly blog about at least 50 different aspects of your topic. Answer these two questions:

1. Is your subject of interest your “ultimate passion”?
2. Are you knowledgeable enough to be hailed as the world's number one blogger about your subject?

“Where there is an audience, advertisers are eager to follow.”

Even if you can't be the leading authority on your topic, but only the 10th (or even the 100th), you can still make a profitable living. However, passion is crucial. If you're not willing to work hard to learn everything you can, you will be “just another boring blog.” You cannot make money online that way.

“It's never a bad time to start a business unless you're starting a mediocre business.”

Blogs are easy to create. Choose your medium – text, video, audio or a combination – based on what works best for your audience and what will make you feel most comfortable. Promote your content by adding your comments to other, related blogs. Join online conversations to gain exposure and to draw viewers to your blog.

Social Networking Sites

Use social networking tools and applications to promote your brand online. If you are not sure how to use a particular application, type your question into an online search engine or search for it on YouTube, which often provides “how to” content in visual form.” You can also try Twitter.

“If you already have a full-time job, you can get a lot done between 7:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. (9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. if you've got kids).”

These are some of the most popular social networking sites:

- **Facebook** – This site is expanding quicker than any other social networking application. Creating a Facebook profile and fan page is a must. Use them to promote your business activities.
- **Twitter** – Converse with customers and followers via Twitter to learn what they think about you. Twitter allows you to tell them “your commerce-driven intentions” – although you must be careful not to spam. When people retweet your tweets – forward them to other users – you are experiencing the power of endorsements. Twitter lets you pull new people to your all-important blog. Use Twitter Search to see the people who are posting about your area of concern. Communicate with them by clicking the “follow” button. Send a “private direct message” to your followers or relay a public response using “@reply.”
- **Flickr** – This is a photo-sharing site. Post pictures that tell a story about you, and comment on other people's photos. These activities will encourage viewers to check out your blog.
- **YouTube, Viddler and Ustream** – Use these sites to stream video and live content. Consider your video blog your “formal presentation,” while these sites are more casual.

“A parrot can put up a blog page.”

Other popular social networking sites include MySpace, Plaxo, FriendFeed and High Five. Check ReadWriteWeb to learn about the latest online developments. SocialTimes focuses on social networking applications and tools.

Stand Out from the Crowd

If you have a boring blog, it will become nothing more than Internet “noise.” Expertise and authenticity pay off. As far as quality is concerned, don’t invest a fortune in equipment; the important thing is to convey your personality and expertise.

“Your Web site is for communicating logistics and facilitating sales; your blog is for communicating the essence of your brand.”

Don’t expect results overnight. Getting noticed on the Internet takes time. Post interesting content, publicize yourself and connect with others. Most importantly, develop a community. Start conversations with other people on the Internet. “Join every single online conversation already in play around the world about your topic.” Read every blog post out there on your topic. Comment on as many as you can. However, don’t comment just for the sake of commenting. Share your hard-earned expertise. Be interesting. This is how you will attract people to your blog. Once they discover you, your great content will keep them coming back for more.

Your Marketing Plan

Identifying your passion and becoming an expert about it form the basis of your personal brand. You don’t need to give your brand a formal name, but you must have a clear understanding of what it is. Some examples of personal brands are, “the no-bs real-estate agent” or “the connoisseur of cookware.”

“If you’re not using Twitter because you’re in the camp that believes it’s stupid, you’re going to lose out.”

Follow these steps to set up and promote your brand:

1. **“Go to GoDaddy.com and try to buy your name, as in firstnamelastname.com”** – Names that end with .com and .tv are the best. Buy both, even if you plan to use only one right away. If you have a common name, you may be out of luck. Be creative. For example, if you are an accountant named Bob, name your domain BobtheBudgetman.tv.
2. **“Start a Wordpress or Tumblr account”** – These are blog-hosting sites. Choose the medium that will work best for you: text, audio, video or a combination.
3. **“Hire a web designer”** – You may need to spend as much as \$5,000, but if you’ve navigated poorly designed Web sites, you’ll understand why the expense is worthwhile. If you absolutely can’t afford a designer, use a template. Many are available online.
4. **“If you’re filming a video blog, buy the \$150 Flip Cam”** – Use a high-definition camera that you can carry with you everywhere and use when you feel inspired.
5. **“Create a Facebook fan page”** – Make sure your blog features a Facebook Connect link and “share functions,” which enable people to share your content with others. “Subscribe to email,” “friend me up,” “follow me,” “twitter this,” “email this” and “become a fan” are also useful buttons.
6. **“Open a Twitter account”** – Use your domain name.
7. **“If you’re doing video, open a TubeMogul account”** – This site distributes videos for free to social networking sites. Ping.fm does the same for text.
8. **“Start pumping out content”** – Blog as often as possible, daily if you can. Include personal life details and anecdotes that demonstrate your concepts.
9. **“Tweet or post your content via Ping.fm or TubeMogul”** – Develop your community by distributing your posts to as many forums and blogs as possible. Reply to every comment you receive.
10. **“Go to Search.Twitter”** – Locate everyone who is tweeting about your special topic, and communicate directly with them.
11. **“Go to Blogsearch.Google.com”** – This will bring up all the blogs that focus on your topic.
12. **“Join groups and fan pages that concern your special topic”** – This is another step in developing community.
13. **“Rinse and repeat”** – This may sound tedious, but establishing your brand online takes work.
14. **“Include a list of all of your social network links”** – Make them part of your “e-mail signature, letterhead and business cards.”
15. **“Have a big fat button on your site that says, ‘Want to Do Business with Me?’”** – The idea is to “get sticky.”

“Monetize Your Brand”

When you have firmly established your personal brand online, and have a loyal and enthusiastic following, the time has come to begin profiting from your brand. You will know you have reached this point when you start to receive free samples and products from firms that have noticed your blog, and business development deals from companies who want to sign up with you while you remain affordable. If you have a strong nerve, launch your Web site by offering advertisers a chance to get in on the ground floor before your prices go up.

“The longer you hold out to monetize your blog, the better.”

Find advertisers who will sponsor your blog. If you have a strong following, they will be happy to do so. Avoid Google AdSense. You can do better on your own. Go to Google.com and search for blogs with content similar to yours. See who their Google AdSense advertisers are. Cold-call them. Offer better deals. Also, approach advertisers in traditional media.

“Everyone – EVERYONE – needs to start thinking of themselves as a brand.”

Another way to make money from your blog is to join the lecture circuit. Now that you are a well-known expert, people will pay to hear you speak. Or, set up your own paid seminars or consult. Your Internet fame can also lead to profitable book deals.

Organize affiliate programs with companies that sell products that relate to your topic. Place links on your Web site to those of other companies. If someone from your audience “clicks through” to buy something from them, you will earn a nice commission. Sell products from your blog, including T-shirts featuring your blog name, which both make money and provide valuable word-of-mouth advertising.

“There are hundreds of billions of dollars in ad revenue out there that need a place to go, and they’re winding up online because it’s the best return on investment advertisers can find.”

Whatever you do, don't take any ethical shortcuts. If money is all you care about, you will lose. Remember, this project is about passion.

About the Author

Gary Vaynerchuk is the founder of Wine Library TV, a popular video blog. He publishes articles, blogs and Web sites about online marketing.
