



Book Me 2.0

4 Steps to Building Your Future

Dan Schawbel
Kaplan Publishing, 2009
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Recommendation

Dan Schawbel’s book teaches college students and those who are new to the world of work how to build and promote their personal brands so they can approach the job market with confidence. While the book targets Gen Y, other age groups can benefit from its detailed advice on building a personal brand by using various online tools. A personal brand not only helps you get hired, it also leads to opportunities and advancement. Even though people often regard a “me, me, me” attitude and self-promotion as negative, Schawbel says it makes sense to focus on yourself as you build your brand. After all, you are the best person to advertise your abilities and expertise. *BooksInShort* finds that this book provides in-depth instructions for developing your personal reputation and brand without making you feel like an egotistical self-promotion machine.

Take-Aways

- You are a brand, personally and professionally, even as a student or a new employee.
- A personal brand helps others notice you online, where two-thirds of Americans have a presence.
- Make sure that everything online about you is positive, including social networking pages, videos and blog entries.
- Human resources personnel rely on social media to find, attract and keep employees.
- The social media cover all social networks, which can give you communities where you can meet colleagues online.
- Besides building your brand, you need to market it so your audience notices it.
- Present a consistent brand message offline and online.
- Keep your online presence authentic, attractive and up-to-date. Build and establish your network before applying for jobs and always show genuine interest.
- Monitor your brand so you can respond as needed to keep it in a favorable light.
- Becoming an entrepreneur can supercharge your brand.

Summary

You and Your Brand

Popular brands’ individual traits affect consumers’ beliefs and impressions. You and your personal brand can do the same. Personal branding is the way to market yourself. Websites and social networks provide multiple opportunities for advertising and reinforcing your brand so you can promote yourself positively to further your job hunt or your career.

“The individual’s role online [has] shifted from spectator to participant. Like Web 2.0, Me 2.0 can stand in front of your brand and be an effective brand spokesperson.”

Branding creates visibility, which leads to opportunities. You can achieve visibility by building a network of bloggers and journalists to create a “sphere of influence.” You and your supporters also form such a circle; expand it by building trust, showing your skills and networking widely. Personal branding lets you show your strengths in an authentic way that potential employers will appreciate. Don’t pretend to have a different personality or try to reshape yourself into what you think everyone wants.

Beginning Your Branding Journey

Many American young people experience personal branding for the first time during the college admissions process, which has just one goal: to impress admissions official. Once you are enrolled, develop your brand by learning and participating in classes, and by networking in organizations.

“Taking the time to invest in personal brand discovery will allow you to focus and prepare for what lies ahead.”

Applying for employment has become fiercely competitive, but personal branders have an edge. To stand out and take command of your career, use online resources and tools to build and highlight your brand. Taking charge of your professional future requires behaving like a leader, handling mistakes with grace and learning from them, conquering impediments, helping others, and presenting yourself as a confident person.

“The successful Brand You marketing model has the proper mix of confidence, passion, likeability, determination and focus.”

If you are already working and want to carve out opportunities within your organization, strategize about what you want to do, work effectively and stay productive. Just as your clothes affect how people perceive you, your attitude and online presence affect their perceptions of your brand.

“The Octopus Model of Relevancy”

To get a better picture of how your personal brand works, imagine an octopus with eight “tentacles” that all work together:

1. **“Marketing” and “branding”** – Communicate the value of your “corporate, product/service or personal” brand. Put your name on your accomplishments and spread the word with “promotion, public relations, advertising” and “direct marketing.”
2. **“Public relations”** – This is the process of telling the media about your accomplishments. Ideally you want to build networking relationships with journalists so they call you when they need your expertise. One way to build your public relations profile is to email the writers of articles or blog entries you read and like. Be sure to include your contact info in your email.
3. **“Human resources”** – You must do more than just post your résumé on job boards. Use all the tools at your command, including LinkedIn, Facebook, blogs, video résumés and Google. Ensure that people who search for your name on Google find only positive results. Make immediate repairs if something negative shows up; many job seekers have lost opportunities because of off-putting Google results. Really Simple Syndication – or RSS – lets you aggregate “feeds from several websites in a central location,” so you can pull together the sites, blogs, video and podcasts you need to join or follow to make sure your online portrait is correct.
4. **“Career development”** – The ways employers and employees now find each other online requires conducting focused “personal brand management” across multiple websites. If you work with career advisers, tap into their networks and contacts.
5. **“Relationship networking”** – Networking allows you to find out about jobs before a company posts them publicly. It also lets hiring managers get to know you, which you can’t accomplish with job board applications alone. Tap into your network, including your college connections, organizations you belong to and people you’ve met online. You want to reach individuals who recognize that you stand out from the mob.
6. **“Social media”** – Social media go beyond communication tools like Facebook and LinkedIn to include collaboration sites like Wikipedia and multimedia resources like YouTube for sharing video and Flickr for photos.
7. **“Search engine optimization”** – People find information by using search engines, so be sure the content on your website is designed to help people locate you easily.
8. **“Entrepreneurship”** – Entrepreneurs find a need and fill it by starting businesses and taking responsibility for the risks involved.

Four Steps to Creating Your Brand

If you doubt yourself or run into issues as you try to build your brand, gain confidence by studying your obstacles and learning from them. For instance, if you don’t know how to network, heed the example of people who excel at it. Take four steps to boost your branding abilities:

“Step 1: Discover Your Brand”

This is the find-and-define-yourself process. Brand building is a continuous progression. Even if you already know your target market, you must build a marketing plan that ensures that your market will perceive you positively. In developing your brand or “personal value statement,” you can turn negative assumptions into positive ones. The things you buy, the schools you attend and the people you know contribute to your value statement; they demonstrate your priorities. Emphasize your background, experiences, knowledge, abilities, assets and achievements. The brands you associate with shape other people’s perceptions – and your own. When you apply for a job, your competitors will have strong personal value statements, so you need one as well. Define your uniqueness by drawing on your track record, such as an internship, a special ability or noteworthy achievements.

“As the commander of your career, you influence, inspire, and earn respect from others.”

Now build your personal brand’s marketing plan, which will resemble a traditional product marketing strategy, complete with short- and long-term goals; information on your target audience; a SWOT analysis of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; a description of your competitors; a budget; and an action plan. Once you have a personal value statement, a differentiator and a marketing strategy, you’re ready to determine how to display your brand so your target audience takes

notice. Dress the part, too; it makes a difference.

“Step 2: Create Your Brand”

Before distributing and communicating your brand, collect the tools that comprise a “personal branding kit,” including your résumé, which plays a smaller role as an employment tool today than in the past. Supplement it by creating a complete social network profile on sites such as LinkedIn. While social networks contribute to your online presence, your own website will give you a central place to link to all your social network profiles and other resources, such as a portfolio or blog, to show a complete picture of your brand.

“There are no insurmountable obstacles if you are determined and focused enough, and put the necessary effort and investment into your successful future.”

Your website and blog should include your name, a photo, and a professional and personal bio. Adding a blog to your site keeps the content fresh, promotes your brand and attracts search engines. Popular bloggers read other, relevant blogs and post meaningful comments. Leaving comments on other blogs promotes your own; most let you establish a mutual link. If you want to extend your reach beyond your blog or if you don’t have a blog, offer to provide a guest post to other blogs. Also promote your brand offline at seminars, meetings and conferences.

“Step 3: Communicate Your Brand”

Now that you’ve established a high quality brand, spread the word. The Internet is a great outlet, with both proactive and passive options. Passively, journalists and networkers can find you when they conduct searches. However, the passive part can’t happen until you build an online presence by posting a portfolio and personal press releases, joining reporters’ lists such as prleads.com and helpareporter.com, and using email effectively.

“What separates commanders from infantry is actually following through with ideas and bringing dreams into reality.”

“Giving before receiving” also plays big in web 2.0. Instead of contacting a journalist to pitch a story, start the relationship by complimenting a story the reporter has written or by offering information. Refer and link to other blogs in a genuine way, not as a blog name-dropper. To pitch to bloggers, target aligned blogs, not a random top-blog list. Your pitches should be honest and authentic. If you concentrate on building relationships and helping others, your brand will gain visibility. Write articles for various sites and blogs and look for your brand evangelists: people who praise your brand and interact with you. People will also notice your brand if you produce an event. Think along the lines of a local meet-up for sharing expertise and good speakers. Use social media before and after to promote the event and post videos, pictures and notes.

“Step 4: Maintain Your Brand”

To benefit most from the work you’ve invested in your brand, maintain it as you master new skills. Create an alert so you receive an email whenever a website mentions your brand. Monitor discussion boards and brand mentions on social networks. Technorati, a name-search site, lets you check “trackbacks to see who is using the data on your blog for their own.” Continue to create content and interact in conversations to improve your search results. If you run into a negative mention of your brand, be prepared to respond by writing a comment explaining your side of the story, explaining the mistake on your blog, or contacting the poster privately to explain or apologize. Sometimes doing nothing is your best alternative. To avoid negative mentions, stay true to yourself and your brand. Establish a web domain name that represents your brand and create accounts using your brand’s name as your identity. To avoid identify theft use different passwords when signing up for new accounts.

The Five Rules of Job Searching 2.0

For Generation Y the rules of job searching and contacting hiring managers have changed. Say goodbye to job boards and hello to social networking sites. To increase your chances of getting positive replies during your job search, follow these five rules:

1. **“Create a consistent and attractive social media presence”** – Post completed profiles on each of your social network pages featuring up-to-date, coherent information that reflects upon you positively. To earn the confidence of potential employers and improve your chances of getting hired, maintain a pleasant, consistent image.
2. **“Build your (social) network before you need it”** – Having an existing network of people who know who you are earns more attention for your resume and sets you apart. Otherwise, your résumé will seem like spam.
3. **Set your targets** – Instead of applying at every company in your present town, search for companies that interest you in cities you might like. Build a network by making connections with employees who work in departments that appeal to you.
4. **Have public discussions, then send an email** – Before sending a résumé, use public sites such as Twitter or Facebook to have online exchanges with hiring managers. They will be more likely to respond to you if they already know you.
5. **Follow up with real interest** – People gravitate toward those who are attentive and ask questions. Don’t initiate a follow-up interview by overselling yourself. If you show that you care about the company and express your desire to learn more, you’re more likely to get an optimistic reply – even if you lack qualifications.

Take Control of Your Brand

Contrary to common wisdom, two-thirds of all start-ups last at least two years, while half make it to four years. You don’t have to be a natural entrepreneur to succeed, but you can emulate some of the methods that such entrepreneurs use. They plan short- and long-term goals from the present to 15 years ahead. They look at the big picture and work toward their objectives daily by using creative marketing, solving problems and striving to be the best. Passion matters. If you don’t love and breathe your business, you may not exert the energy required to ensure its growth.

“Social networks are part of our culture now and will soon be part of larger global movements.”

For example, author Dan Schawbel struggled with finding the career he wanted. He left a miserable job and took control of his career in promotion and publishing. Schawbel demonstrates that successful people sometimes experience low points, but they move forward. Just like them, you can use this toolkit to build your brand and command your career.

About the Author

Dan Schawbel is the publisher of *Personal Branding Magazine* and founding partner of Millennial Branding, LLC.
