



Turn on, tune in

The personal brand coach's view with **Lesley Everett**

When we think of our personal brand we tend to focus on the visual impression we make, the perceptions that others have of us and the reputation we have built up. However

not keeping control of your brand, but you are potentially missing out on a great opportunity to build your brand visibility and profile.

While I am not a social media expert, I do know about building visibility and positioning yourself for where you want to be. Research shows us now that if you don't exist online when your name is searched on, then you

is it crucial to have an online brand presence, but that being present online can be incredibly rewarding and significantly enhance opportunities and career success.

You know that you search for individuals that you might be meeting, considering hiring or doing business with – they will be doing exactly the same in relation to you! So, you need to know if your online brand is working for or against you?

So let's take a look at my top 10 dos and don'ts for building a strong personal brand online.

LinkedIn

Rule number 1 – make sure you have a LinkedIn profile – without one you can be quickly dismissed by potential recruiters for not being visible or connected enough. Having a profile and good levels of visibility is attractive to potential employers today and is a crucial career development tool for you. Remember your LinkedIn profile page is often the first glance others have into the window of your brand. The outside world will look at your photo first, then your summary, then your career history and then perhaps the connections you have. Is this all in line with the brand you want to create?

Make sure your profile has a good quality, close-up and up-to-date photo – without one you will appear as though you have something to hide. Have it taken professionally preferably – it will be worth it.

Your summary statement should 'sell' you. Make sure it says something about who you are, what motivates you, what you bring to the table and your aspirations, not just the operational element of your role. This is your chance to communicate something attractive about your brand. Keep your career history short and relevant, so that it makes an impact. A simple overview is enough; only include that which is appropriate and necessary. Superfluous career history will only serve to dilute the good stuff and therefore your brand.

Be careful about who you are connected with, as this can reflect on your brand. Have a weed out every few months.

Join relevant groups that interest you and give a good impression of your brand.

Twitter

Don't use Twitter for trivial items that dilute your professional brand. Use it for well-informed, intelligent comments that add value to your followers.

Use Twitter as a listening tool to learn about what's going on in relevant areas to you. You can retweet interesting comments and articles and become known in an area of expertise by



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today, a significant percentage of your personal brand is made up of what is said about you online on social media. We can also damage our brand dramatically if we get it wrong when using social media.

How often do you Google yourself to see what footprint you are leaving in the social media sand out there? If you don't know how your brand appears online then you are not only

instantly lose credibility and status in the mind of the searcher. In fact Executive Search firm Holtby Turner say that, 'if we are looking for a business developer or client-facing role and they've only got 15 LinkedIn connections, we will almost certainly disregard them.' Not fair, you might say, however this is the reality. Even those people who are opposed to using social media are now having to admit that not only

offering your own opinion. Be careful to be appropriate – controversial is good as long as it's professional. Remember, you cannot undo a bad tweet and once it's published it has the potential to damage your reputation, as many high profile figures have found to their detriment.

Blogs, articles and other tools

Consider having your own blog via one of the blogging tools that are currently available, such as Blogger.com or Blogspot. You can use a blog to comment on topical stories and trends in line with the brand you want to project, with room for extended comment, which could not be accommodated by Twitter.

Look out for articles in online magazines that you can comment on – if they are prominent magazines your Google rating will increase and you'll appear on the first page of a search on your name.

Be aware of the other social media tools that are becoming popular such as Google+ and Pinterest. Work out what they can do for you and how they can help your brand rather than getting bogged down in a sea of social media that ends up taking up a lot of your time. You only need to dedicate one hour a week to maintaining a strong online presence.

As far as personal branding is concerned, I don't consider Facebook to be a tool for building your professional brand. It is a great tool for keeping in touch with friends but not necessarily for business contacts. However, do remember that when others look for you online using search engines, your Facebook page will come up on the first page, so make sure it doesn't dilute your professional brand with the image on your profile header!

The key thing to remember is if you are serious about building your brand and visibility as part of your efforts to progress your career, you cannot ignore social media. Therefore, if it is something you have shied away from in the past, now is the time to attend a short seminar which explores how social media can work best for you in the corporate world, rather than just hoping it will go away. ■

» About the author

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Should work be fun?



Work for many people has ceased to be fun. It seems that pressure on staff and budgets, cost-cutting measures, redundancies and salary freezes have all added to the doom and gloom that many employees feel about their careers at present.

Yet in a poll conducted by www.huntfun.co.uk, 95.2% of people said they believed it was important for work to be fun. When asked if their companies gave office parties, organised social days out, team building exercises or awards, over half (52.5%) of the

people polled said that their companies didn't offer any of these morale boosters.

Some might argue that work isn't meant to be fun; it's work, you get paid for it and should just get on with it. But it doesn't take a scientific study to conclude that people who are happy and enjoy their job are more productive, loyal and effective. The challenge lies in adding a bit of fun back into the workplace without spending a fortune. Huntfun's solution to the problem is to offer organisations a treasure hunt that they can send employees on. The answer might be even simpler than that, however. How about holding a quiz night or organising a night out? Your employees might appreciate your initiative and not expect you to foot the drinks bill – that way everyone's a winner. One way or another it is worth remembering that your employees are more than a number and deserve to be treated as such; you will no doubt benefit in the long run.

Venturing further afield

According to a recent relocation trend report carried out by Aviva, UK employers are looking further afield to exploit new business opportunities in the globalised marketplace. The survey found that 58% of employers sending staff overseas are posting employees to new locations, with the emerging BRIC economies such as China (41%), India (41%) and Russia (25%) featuring prominently on the list of destinations.

One in five employers (21%) said they have sent more employees abroad over the past few years. A further 13% are looking to increase the number of staff they send on overseas assignments. The research reveals that macro-economic issues have prompted businesses to consider international opportunities. Over half (55%) of companies are targeting new markets to expand their business. Meanwhile 29% believe they can make more money in overseas markets.

Despite an appetite to increase global workforces, an overwhelming 68% of employers describe the re-location process as challenging, with 60% saying that different rules and regulations in relation to issues such as health provision cause them the biggest headache.

Although half (50%) of employers admit

that they struggle to get their rewards package right, Aviva's research reveals that a key priority is protecting employees' health and wellbeing. Over half (57%) say that they want to know that their staff can access medical support when they need it – and that treatment is paid for (43%).

Three quarters (75%) of employers include international health insurance as part of their relocation package; placing it the second most offered benefit behind housing (78%). Other widely offered benefits include paying expenses (72%), arranging schooling (52%) and life insurance (40%).

Despite this support, over half of employers (51%) have seen international assignments fail. The trend towards relocating employees to more culturally diverse countries could further increase the challenges employers face – especially considering that the two main reasons for employees returning home are cultural (37%) and language (26%) barriers.

