

Lifestyle

How to establish your personal brand to compete in the millennial marketplace, according to experts

Neglect your personal brand and you could miss out on all sorts of opportunities

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The concept of a personal brand is nothing new, but in a [competitive](#) world, it's arguably becoming increasingly important if you want to stand out.

Whilst your Twitter GIF-game may be on point and you may be posting witty musings on your [blog](#) on a bi-weekly basis, are you really branding yourself the right way?

'Personal branding' has become something of a buzz phrase, but if you want to make sure you're marketing yourself to the world in the best possible way, it is of course of utmost importance to first understand what exactly a personal brand is.

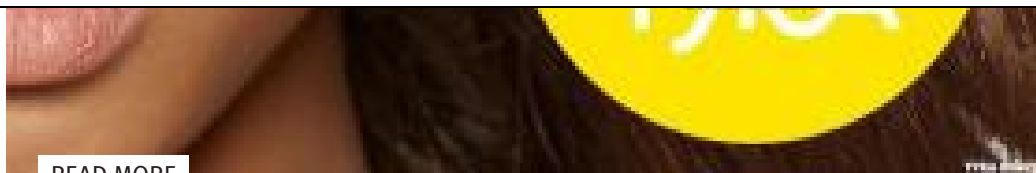
What is personal branding?

According to personal branding specialist Lesley Everett - author of *Corporate Brand Personality* - your personal brand is "what

people say about you behind your back, when you've left the room or when you've finished the presentation.



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“Of course this may be very different from who you really are,” she told *The Independent*. “So personal branding is a method you can use to help you focus on your authentic core and what you want to be known for or ‘famous’ for and then package and project that brand consistently so that others can engage with you, market or sell you more effectively.”

But a personal brand is - like any brand - made up of a mix of factors, thoughts and ideas that people have of you when they think about you.

Some of these factors are tangible (your knowledge and experience), others are intangible (your personality, attitude and morality), but they all come together to “give people a feel of both what and who you're all about, so they can decide if they're going to buy into that brand,” personal brand expert **Jennifer Holloway** explained to the *The Independent*.

So you have to consciously work out what your brand is in order to market it to others.

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Why is personal branding so important?

Both Holloway and Everett agree that establishing your own personal brand is crucial because it gives you control of how people see you.

“You could leave that to chance, or you could define what you want that brand to be in others’ minds, then convey that in all that you say and do in an effort to influence it,” says Holloway.

And it's by "making a conscious plan and effort to define and build our personal brand we ensure that we manage our reputation much more effectively and in a way that carves out a way to greater success and career progression," according to Everett.

She also believes that millennials should have a particular interest in personal branding because we like to progress quickly in our careers, be recognised and valued for what we bring and feel part of the bigger picture - having a strong personal brand can help us achieve that.



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are helping them at an early adult age to discover what they are great at, capitalise on that and manage their reputation in an authentic way that works for them," Everett says.

Does social media make it easier or harder to establish a personal brand?

It can sometimes seem like if you haven't got thousands of followers across all the social networks you're doing something wrong, but the experts aren't all in agreement.



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Everett is of the firm opinion that social media is helpful in establishing a personal brand: “You can gain visibility so much more rapidly for things you’re passionate about or what you’re great at. If you manage your digital brand carefully, you will quickly become known for the positive things about you.”

She also thinks it’s an error not to have a digital brand presence, which will significantly dilute your reputation “by sheer fact you’re not visible and therefore you don’t ‘exist’ in some people’s eyes.”

Holloway believes the plethora of social networks we have today is a double-edged sword - whilst social media offers an effective way to reach lots of people with your brand messages and build a network (on LinkedIn, for example), it can also be dangerous:

“If something were to go awry with your brand messages (say you tweet in the heat of a moment) it’s out there and can be travelling around the world before you can do anything about it,” she says.

“Whole reputations have been trashed in just such a way and it’s hard to come back from that.”

How to establish your personal brand

There are a number of steps involved in building a strong personal brand.

Firstly, remember that for your brand to be powerful, consistent and sustainable it has to be authentic. “That means spending some time thinking about what you really stand for, what your



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She then recommends asking others how they'd describe you and what can get in the way of your positive brand. See where the gaps are and work on those.

As Holloway also points out: "If you don't know what you're selling, how can I know what I'm buying?"

You then need to work out what really motivates you and how you want people to talk about you. Everett recommends asking yourself what you can do everyday "that adds a layer to your brand to reinforce this."



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in person and online - then asking yourself: "If I didn't know me and this was my first impression, what would I think?"

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Video: Building a strong personal brand

The next step is to work on a visibility plan - who needs to know who you are and what you're great at? Create a plan to ensure you are more visible to these people.

Think about your non-verbal communication and image next - is it in alignment with the messages you put out about your brand? Does your wardrobe need sharpening up, refreshing and de-cluttering? "People believe what they see initially so make sure your image is up to scratch. It matters," according to Everett.

The most important thing to remember when it comes to personal branding is to be consistent - if you don't, other will be confused by you.

Holloway believes that if you ignore your personal brand you could be missing out on all sorts of opportunities.

"Your brand takes work, but it's rewarding," says Everett. "So create time to focus on it, keep at it and reap the benefits in your

life and career.”

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