

Why building your personal brand can help you stand out in the job market

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As hundreds of thousands of matrics write their exams right now, both these students and their families are no doubt wondering what kind of future lies in store for them next year. With our employment rate hitting an all-time high of 30.8%, and the ravages of Covid-19 still being felt across the country, job opportunities are more rare than ever. Undoubtedly, in today's competitive job market, there is no room for being just another face in the crowd. You have to separate yourself from the competition and be more appealing to potential employers. It's much easier to achieve this if you create a personal brand for yourself.



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What is a personal brand?

A brand is a name, design, or symbol that distinguishes a company or product from its competition in the eyes of the customer. Your personal brand is your calling card and it's what you are known for. Just like a brand name – such as Nike, Coca-Cola, or Apple – it is your unique strengths and skills that will make you stand out in the eyes of potential employers or customers. Building a personal brand is first and foremost developing an understanding of who you are and what you can offer, and then portraying that image to the people who you come into contact with. Personal branding is really the ongoing process of establishing a certain impression about yourself in the minds of others.

What is your vision?

An important step in creating your personal brand is having a vision for yourself. A vision statement for a company describes where that company wants to be in the future, based on its goals and aspirations. The same applies to your own vision statement, which will give you a focus and help you reach your goals, be it to land a job, get that promotion, or start your own business. A common question people get asked in job interviews is: "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Surprisingly, few people can answer that question. You can gain an edge over other candidates and your competition by creating a vision for yourself, focusing on it, and being able to explain it to others.

What are your core values?

Your core values are what you believe in and what is important to you, for example being reliable, or showing commitment, or valuing honesty, or being efficient. What would you like potential employers to think of you? Your personal brand is built

from how you present yourself publicly. This is something that you have control over and is rooted in your core values. You can decide how you would like people to see you and then work on portraying that image.

What is your purpose?

Most successful companies have a clear purpose or goal that they aim to achieve. For example, Capitec Bank, which has grown impressively over the past 15 years, states that its purpose is to “help people bank better to live better”. The company’s policy on low banking fees is one of the ways that it proves this commitment to its customers every day. Another example is social media site Facebook, which has over two billion active users. This company has said that its purpose is “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. To figure out your purpose in life, you need to ask yourself what motivates you, and find your strengths and passions and try to incorporate these into how you live your life. Reflecting on these questions is very important if you are going to build a personal brand that will impress potential employers or customers.

How does social media contribute to your personal brand?

Social media presents numerous opportunities to grow your personal brand, but there are many dangers you should be aware of. Remember that anything you post online is out there forever, so think before you share anything on social media. Every tweet you send, every status update you write, and every picture you share, reflects your personal brand. Once you work out how you want people to see you, you can start to be much more strategic about your personal brand and be purposeful in what you share on social media. Every day, ask yourself: “What are you going to do tomorrow to grow your personal brand?”

Five steps to building your personal brand:

1. What is your vision – where do you see yourself in 5 years? How are you planning to get there?
2. What are your core values? Make a list of the most important values that you live your life by.
3. What motivates you, and what are your strengths and passions? Find a career aligned to your purpose.
4. Be true to yourself and tell your story, on social media, on blogs, and to potential employers.
5. Beware of being irresponsible on social media.

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