

Creating an Influential Brand

Transform your personal passion or business idea into a
world class digital brand



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Introduction

Welcome to a level playing field

Our world has changed dramatically in the last few years with the rise of the internet, social media, mobile computing and other technological developments. This online evolution is transforming business, careers, marketing, socialising, learning and practically every other aspect of life.

Democratisation of media and publishing means that marketing yourself or your business has changed for ever.

Suddenly anyone, anywhere in the world has access to communication tools which are powerful, instant and free - and there are no limits on what they can achieve.

- Small up-and-coming brands can trump established major players simply by engaging with customers online (for free).
- Online merchants can set up shops which offer cheap, highly targeted products for a specific niche. Their low capital expenses mean they can make a profit on margins a bricks and mortar store couldn't dream of.
- If a customer is happy – or unhappy – with a product or service they can tell 100's of people about it at the press of a button.
- Celebrities, sports stars and politicians, and companies of all sizes are far more visible, accessible and **accountable**.

We have moved from a world where big media and big companies had control of the conversation to one where individuals, smaller brands and large companies are on a more or less level playing field.

You'll pay less, but you gotta deliver more

But while these online platforms are often cheap or even free they do take time, and having the right quality content for a given audience has become more important than ever before, because people have so many more options.

Traditionally, you had to pay big bucks to access broadcast media and advertising, but in return you got direct access to your customers' attention – you could interrupt their day and convince them to buy or believe something. Now, powerful multimedia publishing platforms with global reach are accessible and affordable for anyone, but your audience can tune in or turn off whenever they want.

Social media: handle with care

Before you attempt to develop and market your personal or business brand it's essential that you get your message right.

It's vital to remember that social media isn't a new advertising platform. It's all about human interaction, and if you approach it as an exercise in blatant self-promotion you are likely to fail – catastrophically. Social media, the internet and world wide connectivity means we can reach a vast audience – which can be amazingly powerful, but also means that if you don't hit the right note you can do a huge amount of damage to your reputation almost instantly. That means both your brand and your messages need to be well thought out, meaningful, sharable and authentic. Sometimes this means you need to change your whole approach to business.

Become the one they listen to

To be influential online you need to have something worth saying, and have the right tools and strategy to achieve the results you want.

It comes down to being likeable, authentic and authoritative in the topics you talk about. Becoming educated and finding information is no longer a challenge, but expert opinions are still essential to help us make sense of the avalanche of information available online. And we don't just want put our trust in a random 'expert' - we want personalised information, tailored to our needs and reflecting our world view. When we find someone who can provide this for us - on a topic that interests us - we identify with them and begin to value their opinion. These are the people and businesses we'll listen to, talk about, and buy from:

- People we know, like and trust
- People like us
- People who understand and provide what we need
- People who know what they're talking about on a specific topic.
- People who are memorable and stand out

In many cases, these people will be people we know via traditional media - such as journalists, celebrities and TV identities, or household name companies.

But with the right brand, strategy and effort they could be **you**.

About influential.com.au

We help you develop powerful digital brands, build social businesses and become more influential.

We build websites, set up social media accounts and provide online marketing strategies for Australian and international businesses.

Over many years of helping businesses to get online, attract more customers and grow their businesses, we found much of our time is spent teaching people how to nurture their personal and business brands online.

Many of our clients come to us saying “I need a website” or “I need to get on social media”. From the beginning our emphasis has been on building websites that will get found by your ideal customers, and will convert those visitors into buyers. But just having a website isn’t going to bring you customers – it’s what you do with it that counts.

We run full online marketing and lead generation campaigns for larger companies, but we find we get the best results when business owners and the whole team are directly involved in reaching out to clients, building online influence and creating a powerful brand.

We can build you a fantastic, mobile-friendly website you will love and get it found on Google. We can set up social media pages and develop a strategy for you. We can teach you how to harness the power of social media and the internet to get more customers, build your authority and establish you as a leader in your market. **But this won’t bring you lasting success unless the business is 100% on board and involved.**

For this reason, we’ve developed a set of training materials, including E-books and webinars, to help motivated business owners, individuals and teams to create an amazing online brand and turn it into a business success by harnessing the power of the internet.

This is the beginning of an amazing journey for you. We wish you fun and success on your path toward becoming influential.

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What is a digital Brand?

*A **digital brand** is what people see, hear, feel and think about in connection with your name or business online.*

***Digital branding** is the deliberate process of creating consistently positive, appealing brand images and messages*



What is a digital brand?



Personality that shines through

Let's start by taking a look at a few Australians who have developed a strong personal brand. These people are all famous for some reason, but they've gone beyond that by branding themselves in a way which makes them more memorable, meaningful and appealing.

Dr Harry Cooper
Steve Irwin
Lance Armstrong

Richard Branson
Jamie Oliver
Ita Buttrose

Julia Gillard
Karl Sandelands
Alan Jones

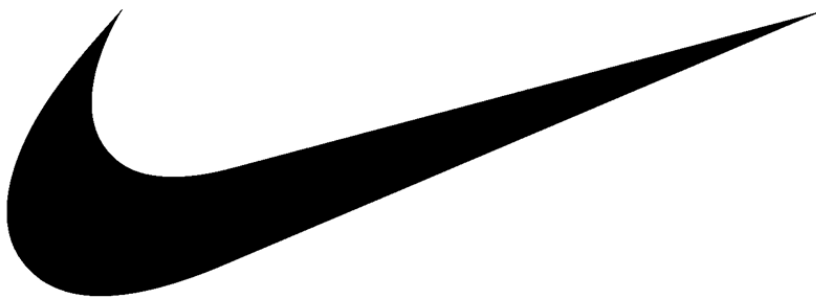
OK, so most of these people are influential within their sphere. They have money, fame, and/or power. But the reason they are most recognisable is that they have a strong personal brand. Their personality shines through. We can imagine them dressed in their particular style. We know what they like doing, what they stand for and where they hang out. There is a certain way we expect them to behave and it bothers us when they don't.

Successful personal branding



What one word do you think of when you see this man?

A strong brand creates premium value. Some top athletes make zero money unless they attract a major brand sponsorship. Being good is just not enough – both athlete and brand rely on each other to maintain the strength and value of the brand.



The value of a brand relies on strong positive associations – included in our list of strong personal brands are a few which have eroded their value by behaving in a way which is not consistent with their brand. (Below: *Lance Armstrong*)



"The top people in an industry have become brands,

Businesses and individuals are converging
We are becoming more connected and social online



"The top brands are trying to become more personal" – Dallas McMillan

Companies with personality

Now let's take a look at a few companies which have developed a striking, powerful brand.

Apple	Levi's	King Island Beef
Nike	Bose	BMW
Pandora Jewellery	IKEA	Rolex
Red Bull	Noosa	Lonely Planet

Now these companies have become successful by creating high quality products. But even when there's a rival product that's technically superior, these companies garner more loyal followers, command a higher price, and have extra clout in the marketplace.

So what do these brands stand for?

In each case they are mass-producing a product, whether it be cars, watches, furniture or books. They are one of many players in the market, yet they've positioned themselves as being superior in value, or quality, or other positive association, and can thus command a higher price in their marketplace.

Does Nike's brand say 'sportswear'? Does BMW say 'car'? Not really! In each case, the brand represents something about the people who buy it, rather than the product itself – maybe that they are 'cool', 'successful', 'affluent' or 'adventurous'.

The people who choose these brands may tell themselves they want the best quality, or need specific features, but they are really choosing the brand because of what it says about them.

Our consumer decisions are part of our personal brand

Social media like Facebook and especially MySpace (yes, it's back!) are built around the human desire to facilitate and share these overt displays of taste or affluence.

This tendency to self-publicise looks set to continue as young people grow up in a world immersed in branding and marketing. These digital natives are often acutely sensitive to the nuanced meanings associated with brands in their life. Narcissistic? Yes, but no more so than other generations with their fixations on BMWs, power suits and designer sunglasses. The inclination to define and broadcast our personality through what we buy, use, wear or drive hasn't changed; it's just become easier to achieve.

What this means is that as a business you can't neglect your brand, and you can't afford to get it wrong. A weak brand will limit your business success anyway, but with the intense focus and amplification of online marketing and social media, a strong brand can generate enormous value, while digital faux-pas can seriously damage your image.

Great brands succeed because they make it personal. They offer unique value which is only available to their customers - like an exclusive club you can only be a part of if you buy the product. Brands often achieve this by marketing themselves through brand advocates, people whose opinion customers will trust. Nike pays millions for celebrity sports stars (with a strong personal brand, naturally), always looking for a good match between the person and the brand.

Telling your story

The keystone of building your brand is telling your story. The greatest successes and creations in human history owe their existence to a powerful story, and the greatest idea or product is almost worthless without one.

"As humans we are the product of the stories we tell ourselves – we are fundamentally narrative beings" – Dallas McMillan

Creating the right narrative for your brand is essential – in fact focusing on the story with everything you do is critical. What people care about is people – what happens to them, what motivates them and why they do what they do.

They want to know why you started that company, chose that design, decided offer that service. They want to know how you found your way to where you are and why you believe in what you are telling them. Above all they want to know why other people buy or use your product or listen to what you have to say. A compelling narrative is far more effective at attracting a passionate audience than a list of benefits or a sales pitch can ever be.

The power of your "tribe"

Great brands excel because they use that powerful narrative to create communities, or "tribes" of passionate brand advocates who care about the brand and what it represents.

This concept of "tribes" is vital to understanding the modern marketplace, because they are hothouses for creating referrals and feedback for your brand. Brands which can build their own growing community of loyal followers gain a huge advantage over those who don't have them.

Tribes have immense power within the marketplace. Brands which build them then ignore them, or treat them with disdain, can literally ruin themselves. As social media first took off we saw a lot of this.

Getting it right from the inside out

It's important to point out here that this doesn't mean branding or marketing or building a support base can replace being great at what you do. The best brand in the world is a poor substitute for the essential work of building and managing a career or a business.

It's still critical that you strive to be exceptional, to understand exactly what's needed and put everything into achieving it. You need to live your brand from the inside out, operating with integrity and dealing fairly and transparently with everyone you encounter. You need to have confidence in what you do because you know you do it well. These things will become part of the DNA of your brand if consistently applied.

But when you combine 'looks great on the outside' with 'is great on the inside' with effective digital marketing then you have a world class brand – even if you're a local company or individual.

Becoming a Social Business

What we mean is that to survive and thrive as a business in the new digital economy you need to do far more than just put out digital equivalents of your TV and print advertising.

There is an argument that if businesses aren't ruthless, self-serving and deliberately ignorant of the needs of others they will go broke, and this has certainly been the strategy of some of the most successful businesses over the past decades. However business leaders are increasingly adopting a new approach that combines the benefits of capitalism with respect for society and others - an approach in which businesses behave as responsible members of society.

And the approach is working. This growing community of "social businesses" is proving that it is possible to excel in the business area by operating with logical self-interest, but also building concern for customers, society and the planet into their corporate makeup. As ethical and fair trade practices become more widespread, businesses which persist with antisocial practices are beginning to be penalised.

People are becoming ever more concerned about the ethics and behaviour of the companies they buy from – and the transparency offered by social media places companies under constant public scrutiny.

Why do I need a digital brand?

Who needs a digital brand?

Professionals, business owners & executives who want to become leaders in their field or organisation

People and companies who are already influential and want to maintain, consolidate or focus their authority, market share and profitability



What's going on out there?

As we said: in the business world, everything has changed. Every profession and industry has been impacted by widely available technology, more rapid communication and changing consumer expectations.

For the last few hundred years businesses succeeded and grew by being faster, more efficient or cheaper than their competitors - and the result has been an endless array of cheap, mass-produced goods. But geographical, language and cultural barriers are falling away in the face of unrestricted information flow, viral sharing and the universal appeal of visual media. **Customers suddenly have unlimited capability to search until they find exactly what they want. And nobody's going to settle for less.**

Big businesses are trying to respond by offering personal service and customised product bundles, but are hindered by the very standardisation and production economies which allow them to perform efficiently on a large scale. They simply can't afford to specialise enough to meet the diverse needs of all their potential customers.



This leaves the door wide open for small businesses and entrepreneurs to capture and delight those customers. A whole new business ideology has developed around these amazing opportunities within the digital arena to identify a niche market - and establish a position as a leader, a trusted expert, within that market. With the right tools, strategy and mindset you can identify a profitable sphere and become influential within it.

So what impact does this have?

Many professionals and business owners fail to grasp the potential disruption to their expertise, employability and business model. Advances in computing and communication mean that many jobs which once needed an expert – a highly trained and paid professional – can now be done better and faster by a computer.

Even if not, chances are someone in India or Singapore (or even Europe or America) can be trained to do the same work for a fraction of the price. Australia is especially vulnerable to job loss, reduced pay and business failure, because we remain one of the few economies where most people are employed in high paying (in world terms) positions.

Obviously ignoring the threat is a recipe for disaster – but it's also a mistake to give up. The key is to position yourself as someone able to utilise new tools and opportunities, and navigate the changing landscape of your profession.

In today's online economy **information**, which was once the exclusive domain of professionals and experts, is now instantly accessible through Google. But more information doesn't always lead to better decisions. Without guidance it can be almost impossible to distinguish truth from speculation. Today, more than ever, specialised, personal knowledge is a precious commodity.

The key to success here is keeping up with the latest news and developments in your industry, listening to the needs of your customers and market, and becoming well recognised as an authority in your industry.

Social media makes all this possible, affordable and easy, but if you ignore it too long you may find yourself, or your business, a casualty of outsourcing, cost-cutting or technical change.

What does this mean for me?

What all this means is that if you have an amazing idea or product, or some unique, valuable knowledge to share on a subject, there is a tangible opportunity for you or your business to become highly sought-after. Provided, that is, that you are prepared to put some real effort into it.

The key to success in this social marketplace is authenticity; which means building your expertise around something you really care about, then promoting it with a brand which appeals to other people who share your passion.

- By drawing on your genuine knowledge, passion and enthusiasm as you reach out to people who feel the same way about the same thing; you will explore and expand your networks until you find the ideal audience for your idea, service or product.
- By thinking about the specific needs of that audience, letting them tell you what they actually want and making a genuine effort to provide something which meets those needs (rather than using tricks to sell them something they don't need) you will attract people to your brand – people who value what you do **and want to share it with their friends and colleagues who will also benefit from it.**
- By contributing something new and useful, and by building a name for yourself as others begin to notice and talk about that contribution, you will gain reputation and influence within your niche.
- By repeatedly meeting their needs and working with customers in your niche, you will develop truly specialised expertise, and a toolbox of useful strategies and systems so you will work more efficiently, deliver better results and stand out as one of the top providers in your field.

As a person or business of influence, you are someone whose opinion and knowledge people respect. You are someone whose advice, service or products people actively seek out.

This is the goal. So, how do you get there?

Q. What do these vets have that you don't?

(Other than a smooth tongue and pet food sponsorship?) –



A. A strong personal brand!

What does digital branding involve?

Where do I start?

Do your research

The absolute best place to start is with a with an old fashioned SWOT analysis of your strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats you face in your market. For most people, and almost every industry, changing technology will feature prominently in each of these categories.

Combining an understanding of how YOU can use the latest technology in a market which has not yet been revolutionised by it, with a good awareness of how to brand and promote your activities, is a recipe for creating an outstanding business which will lead your market. Of course you need to get the rest of the business basics right, but this can let you seize a lead in your industry as consumers begin to move online or go mobile.

Figure out where you fit in

Once you're clear on where your strengths lie and what's happening in your arena, you're in a great position to refine your ideas and decide exactly what your business is going to do, or what direction to focus your career. Following the niche marketing model we talked about earlier, this is the opportunity to identify precisely where to position yourself within your market.

At this point you really need to draw on your existing knowledge to work out what is missing from your market, what gap you could fill or contribution you could make. Remember, the goal here is to build a profitable business or career, so you need to be specific and realistic about what you have to offer and what you can expect to receive in exchange.

You'll need to be ready with the answers to these questions, because your customers are going to ask them:

- What information or product are you planning to sell?
- Is anyone already offering something similar?
- What is your product worth?

Remember, authenticity is the key to creating a brand people will trust.

Work out what's special about you

"There are 6 billion people out there, and we've met thousands of them. Why should I choose you rather than a competitor? Why do I even need your product or service? Why should I listen to you?"

Developing a brand is a difficult task unless you offer some genuine benefit or special feature. This is often referred to as your unique selling proposition - what do you offer that the next guy doesn't?

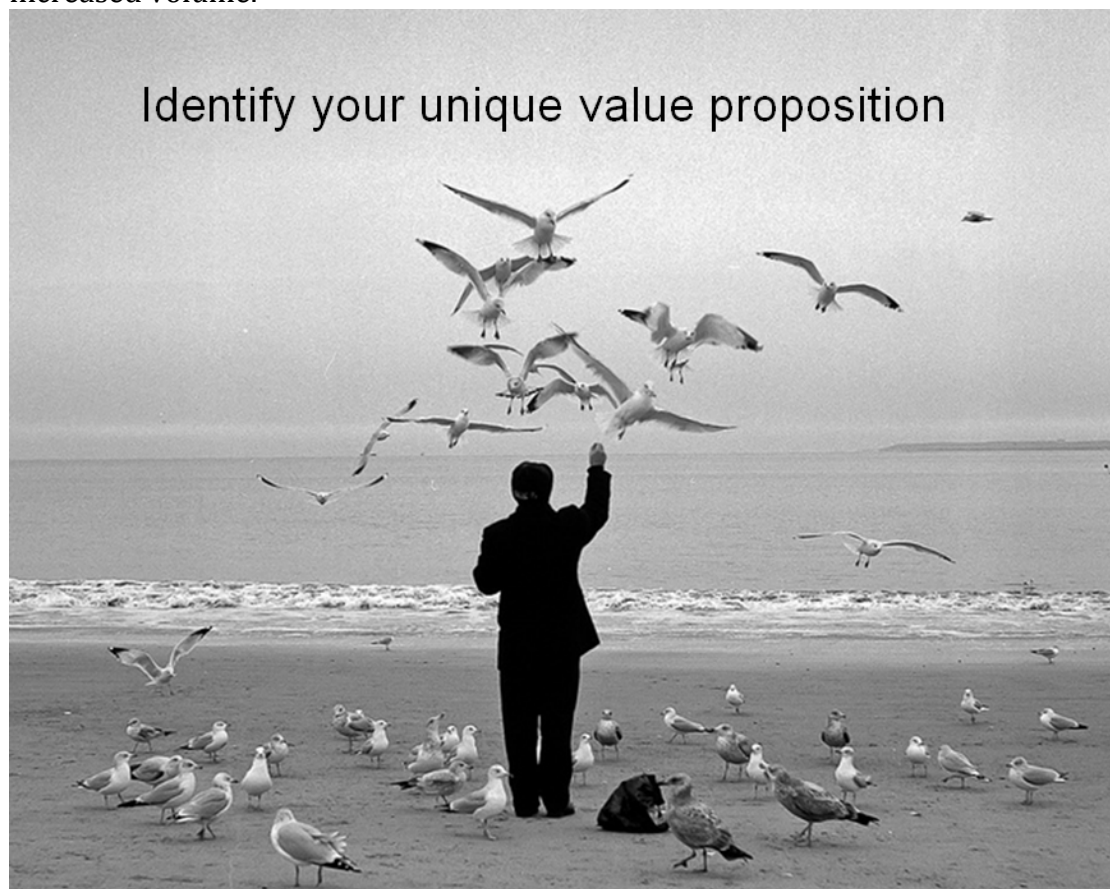
Another way of looking at this is your 'brand promise' - when people think of your brand they should also think of why you are better than the competition, or why they would rather work with you. A great example is a promise of time or quality benefits.

"When it absolutely, positively, has to be there overnight"

"30 minutes or its free"

"Never miss a deadline"

Basically, you need to stand out as being unique and more appealing in some way, or more professional than others in your industry, to give customers a reason to choose you and pay more. Be wary of trying to compete on price alone, unless you are able to offer substantial efficiency improvements or a greatly increased volume.



What do you do better than anyone in the world?

Better to be creating a brand known for its high quality, personal touch, innovation or environmental benefits. These sorts of points of differentiation are much more sustainable and also help you be seen as a leader in your industry, rather than just someone who undercuts their colleagues (often risking profitability and stability in the process).

Your USP or brand promise should speak directly to the needs of your audience or market. What keeps them up at night? What is stopping their business succeeding? What do they talk to their friends about? What do they wish they could do?

Decide who you're talking to

So you know who you are and what you have to offer, but that's only half the picture when it comes to creating your brand. The other half is your audience. When you start to speak, who do you want to be listening?

If your business is going to succeed, you'll need to know quite a bit about your target customers:

- Where are they? If you want to attract their attention, you need to seek them on the platforms they actually use.
- Who are they and what do they want? Are they respected business people seeking to share and gain knowledge, students looking for guidance, enthusiasts who just want someone to share their passion?
- What do they expect? Are there already conventions within your market? Do your competitors offer giveaways, price-matching guarantees, free downloads? If so, are they likely to pay more attention if you follow the herd, or break the mould?

If you want to gain the respect of your audience you'll need to come to them where they are, and speak to them with authenticity in the language they understand. Becoming a person of influence is not about simply gathering followers - it's about developing real relationships with your ideal clients, colleagues and mentors from around the world.

Create a brand that speaks to your audience

This brings us neatly to the subject of branding. The point of your brand is to attract the attention of the people who will want what you offer. Which means that everything about your brand – your name, the design and layout of your materials, the colours and font you use and the tone of voice you use in your communications – needs to appeal to the people you are trying to reach. It needs to make you memorable, likeable and trustworthy.

What's right for you will vary enormously depending on:

- which industry you work in
- the demographics of your audience
- what values you are trying to promote
- what kind of product / information you are offering

Whether you already have a well-developed corporate identity to draw upon, or are starting from scratch, you need to be sure that your personal or business brand is a perfect match for your chosen niche before you progress too far along the path.

So how do you get to be sure? The great thing about the approach we'll use is you don't actually need all the answers up front. When you start out you need a strong concept for your business and brand, which we can test and develop at low cost. But before you commit too much to your approach you can interact with your prospective market and others in your industry and get direct feedback on how well it works, until you have complete confidence in your brand. Establishing an outstanding reputation takes time and persistence, which means that you can spread the cost, review the results and respond to your audience's reactions at every stage. We'll work with you to build your brand in layers, starting with a solid foundation which will consolidate over time as you build your influence.

ACTIVITY

Creating a successful business with a stellar brand depends on knowing exactly what you want to achieve - and where you're starting from. Without a clear, thorough and above all dispassionate examination of your market it's impossible to be sure that your concept is viable and worth investment. Just as essential is a realistic, practical appraisal of your own abilities, so you can identify and play to your strengths and get help with anything which is likely to hold you back.

Strengths

As we've said, successful online interaction is all about authenticity and passion. This part of the exercise is about being completely clear on what motivates you and exactly what you have to offer. It's also about acknowledging what you already do well and noticing what foundations you already have in place.

- What do you know – and care – most about?
- Why do you do what you do? What's your story?
- What knowledge or skill do people come to you for?
- What networks do you already have in place (friends, family, professional, online, corporate)?
- What do people compliment you on?
- What experience do you have to draw on?

Weaknesses

However knowledgeable and experienced you are, there will be some things you could do better. Frank and honest recognition of your weaknesses is an essential part of this process – and this is no time to be squeamish. It's both prudent and rather liberating to admit that you could use some help with your bookkeeping, or that your organisational skills aren't quite up to scratch.

- What do you hate doing?
- What do you know you could do better?
- What skills do you need training on?
- What skills / roles would be best outsourced or delegated to someone else?
- What complaints do customers make about you?
- What scares you most about building your digital brand?

Opportunities

You probably already have a strong idea of what market / field you plan to target, and a pretty good idea of who your typical customer / audience is. This is a chance to get specific, using what you know about the real people in that niche to identify what they most want or need and how you will deliver it.

- What market and specific niche do you plan to target? (Demographic, location, unique interests)
- What type of business / companies / people most need the service you have to offer?
- What (product / service / information) do you think these customers (this audience) really need?
- What do they most talk about? What is at the top of their wish-list?
- Is there any existing technology / system / service you could bring to this market?
- Are there any introductions / referrals you could make between your networks?

Threats

If your target market is already well established you may have to break down substantial entry barriers before you can gain influence. If not then that's fantastic – but you can't assume that you'll be the only person/ business with eyes on your niche. If you have something valuable to offer then there's every reason for you to succeed, but you need to be realistic about your prospects before you invest in your idea.

- Which people / companies are already influential in your market?
- What similar products / services / information are already available?
- What are your competitors doing that you can't realistically match? (e.g. large-scale, low-cost operations)
- Does your concept rely on specific technology which may become obsolete?
- How easy would it be for someone else to copy and compete with you?
- How adaptable is your concept, should your customers' fashions / tastes move on?

So I've created my brand – how do I bring it to life?

A fully developed brand starts with physical and digital assets, but is given life by the way you use it. It's dynamic, animated and constantly evolving. Every aspect of the way you do business and interact with your customers will have an impact on your reputation and how you are regarded.

If you want to be seen a professional, credible and trustworthy thought leader – a person or business of influence within your market – then you need to think and act like one from the outset.

Lay strong foundations

The first step is to create high quality, memorable digital assets to build your brand. The goal here is to establish your identity as a significant professional organisation or individual within your field. By 'digital assets' we mean a suite of tools which you will use to communicate with your audience and promote your idea or product online, such as your website, email database, mobile apps and social media accounts.

You also need to put together a digital media kit and make it available on your website. Your media kit is an essential marketing tool which pulls together all the most important information about you or your business and products into an accessible, digestible format. The point is to make sure that anyone who is looking for information about you can find exactly what they need quickly and easily, before they lose interest and give up. Media kit contents vary, but most contain brief company profiles, personal profiles on the people who lead the business, FAQs, contact details and a portfolio of references, recommendations or media coverage the business has received. You'll need to keep this updated with your most impressive achievements.

A media kit is invaluable for both businesses and individuals. As your reputation grows you may often need to provide personal or company profiles for talks, websites, social sites or brochures. Having all this information organised, planned and accessible makes it much more efficient to market yourself or your business.

Depending on what is expected within your industry you may also need some physical printed documents, such as business cards, a cv and portfolio, letterhead or corporate literature, to enhance your credibility.

Taking stock

Creating an inventory of all your digital and physical marketing assets is an absolutely crucial step in the process of building your brand.

The purpose of this exercise is to identify exactly what you already have and make a realistic assessment of what is strong enough to be used, what needs to be updated and what's completely missing. The secret to a successful brand is consistent tone, style and message in everything people see or hear about you, whether on or offline. That doesn't mean it should be rigid or static –far from it. To thrive you'll need to respond to feedback from your customers / clients / audience and refine your style and messages as your business / brand evolves. But the key is to make sure you implement any changes consistently across all aspects of your brand.

The eventual goal is to pull everything together into a comprehensive, coherent marketing 'library', giving you quick and easy access to whatever you need when an opportunity arises. It's incredible how much effort is duplicated because people / businesses completely forget that they have already created something which would be perfect for a particular press piece or client enquiry - or simply can't lay their hands on it when they need it. Your library needs to be a living resource, something you update regularly with any new assets, testimonials, press coverage, and so on.

It's simplest to start with a basic stocktake, listing out all the assets you already have and gathering up copies of any physical items like logos, cvs, portfolios, brochures, articles, adverts and posters, mission statements or business cards. The next step is to work out what you don't have and prioritise the things which are most essential for you or your business. What matters most to you will depend, of course, on where your audience is and what kind of content you intend to create. For instance, you'll not need a YouTube account if you only intend to blog – but if you want to share videos then you can't do without one.

It's also very valuable to have a wish list of things you hope to add later, and revisit this regularly as your online presence and experience grows. You may need to follow – or even lead – your audience onto new networks or technology as the online landscape changes.

ACTIVITY

This exercise is an absolutely critical part of the process of building your brand. Taking stock of your existing assets, and deciding which ones you most need to update or create, lets you map and prioritise the work ahead. The finished portfolio (*nautical word*) of your assets will be one of your most valuable marketing tools.

Part 1: Stocktake

This is a gathering and realistic evaluation of every piece of marketing and channel of communication you already have.

Digital assets

Asset	Details (address, account name etc.)	Notes
Website		
Mobile website		
Email addresses		
Blog		
Facebook account (personal)		
Facebook page (professional)		
LinkedIn account		
Twitter account		
You Tube account		

Physical assets

Asset	Details (address, account name etc.)	Notes
Corporate brochure		
Logo		
Advertising campaign		
Business cards		
CV		
Portfolio		

Part 2: Things to do immediately (you can't do everything!)

Think about what you / your business **really** needs in order to get your brand off the ground. Be realistic about what you can achieve with the funds and time available.

Digital assets

Asset	Notes
Website	
Mobile website	
Email addresses	
Blog	
Facebook account (personal)	
Facebook page (professional)	
LinkedIn account	
Twitter account	
You Tube account	

Physical assets

Asset	Notes
Corporate brochure	
Logo	
Advertising campaign	
Business cards	
CV	
Portfolio	

Part 3: Wish list

Once you get established and start to build influence you can expand your activities and open new channels. Revisit this wish list regularly as your brand evolves.

Digital assets

Asset	Notes

Physical assets

Asset	Notes

Get your strategy right

The next stage in your preparations is to figure out exactly how you will use your new assets to achieve your goals. Those goals will need to be measurable and specific, with clear targets for each aspect of your digital campaign. You'll need to adopt a strategic approach, based on the research you've done about which marketing channels are available to you, where your customers spend their online time and what your competitors are doing. This will help you to decide where to focus your budget and concentrate your time.

From the outset you need to think and act like a successful business, establishing efficient, reliable and above all **sustainable** systems which will allow you to manage and keep track of your online activity as your business and reputation grows. You can save a lot of time by repackaging your content into different formats and recycling it across all your channels, but it's vital that you keep things fresh or you'll quickly lose the attention of your audience.

The best way to build a powerful, cohesive and recognisable brand is to bring everything together: connect your online profiles, blog to your social feeds and lead your audience back to your website wherever possible. This will take care and organisation, and sooner or later you're going to need help - which means building a strong, motivated team and forming partnerships with other professionals or businesses who share your vision.

Give your brand a soul

Right, so you've created your assets and nailed your strategy. What will make or break your brand is what you do next. Your brand is about who you are and how much you care about what you're offering, so it's time to show your passion and prove your commitment. The results can be incredible, but it's not going to happen without effort.

- Create or source and publish content which contributes something relevant and useful for your particular audience in the channels they frequent. Be inventive and varied, and make it easy for people to share what you contribute. You'll need a steady stream of new material and you'll be most successful if you monitor current events or trends in your field and make your content topical.
- Engage in an authentic way with your audience, on the forums they value and respect. Tell your unique story, enter into discussions, and share your knowledge, enthusiasm and passion for the subject and for your idea or product. Answer questions, post relevant comments on other blogs, get involved in conversations and make sure that you respond quickly to any feedback or queries you receive.
- Aim to form real relationships with other people who are influential in the same field or a similar niche. Partnerships between respected individuals or businesses can help both parties to build credibility and reach new, relevant audiences.
- Combine and leverage your online and offline networks. Be a connector. One of the most powerful ways to become influential is to help connect people who need something with people who can provide it. Both parties appreciate the referral and you are seen as someone who makes things happen. Making a habit of doing this regularly can help you grow your network and reputation, which are both key elements of becoming more influential.

In the next section we'll be getting specific about how to get the most out of each of your digital assets.

How do I establish and nurture my digital brand?

This section is about to getting real value out of your digital assets. We'll look at each tool in your digital marketing arsenal and give you tips on how to use it to build your influence.

The essence of developing your brand is forming relationships with your market, audience and clients. And those relationships follow the same rules as any other. When you start out with a new client, market or audience you are completely unknown and invisible. Over time, with care and effort, you can build visibility, credibility, likeability, authority and profitability.

The easiest way to begin relationships is to help people out, without asking for something in return. You can do this when by giving free advice or information to prospective clients – whether on the phone, on your website or in a webinar.

Once this initial contact has been established you can reach out and encourage them to take the next step, but you need to make this as personal, welcoming and engaging as possible. All too many businesses just start bombarding customers with advertising spam the moment they have their email address, losing any tentative goodwill they may have gained.

The rule of successful digital branding is to engage your market (by offering something attractive), reward them for their efforts (by delivering on your promise of valuable advice or information and thanking them for their attention) then re-engaging at a higher level (by offering more in exchange for closer interaction). At each step you need to deliver value, a positive experience and a sense of who you are. If you don't continue to work at and build the relationship your initial gesture will be quickly forgotten amongst the flood of online offerings.

Your website: the heart of your digital brand

Make your website speak for you

Your website is the absolute core of your online personality. In today's Google society it's the number one marketing tool available to your business. It's the place where you capture and convert your customers and sell your product. It's your constant presence in the continually evolving landscape of social media fashions and trends, and it's the one place in the digital arena where you have complete control over what is said about your business.

All your other online activities should be geared towards driving traffic to your website.

As we said, building influence starts with establishing credibility, so you need your site to look and sound professional, starting with a relevant site name e.g. yourname.com, yourbusiness.com. Given its importance, it's pretty obvious that you'll need to invest in a smart, functional site which will properly showcase your business. That doesn't mean you have to spend millions – just put some careful thought into the design and layout to make sure that visitors can find what they need quickly. Build your site with purpose, with the layout geared towards getting the results you want – collecting leads, establishing relationships, building your authority, selling your product, or whatever.

Don't forget to make sure your visitors can properly view and navigate your site, on whatever device they are using. That means making it, and all the links and content on it, mobile and tablet friendly (more on this later). In a nutshell: if visiting your website is an enjoyable experience, people will keep using it. If not, they'll go elsewhere.

Get spotted

“93% of purchasing decisions begin with an online search” – Jeff Bullas

So, you've got a great website, but will your customers be able to find it? There's really no point in putting all that effort into building a first-rate site unless you make sure it gets seen by the people you're trying to reach. These days that means just one thing: search engine optimisation, or making sure you're at the top of the search results. (As they say, the best place to hide evidence of a crime is on the third page of a Google search – where no one will *ever* look).

There are a number of technical aspects to SEO, starting with the choice of host, the layout and the selection of keywords to use on your site. There's some pretty comprehensive resources available on the subject, but it's important to remember that the algorithms used by search engines are constantly evolving so this is an ongoing process - you need to **keep** improving and optimising your site. At influential we build sites which are optimised from the inside out, and provide ongoing advice to clients on how to stay at the top of the search rankings.

Technical jiggery-pokery aside, there are two essential things you can do to improve your search rankings:

- make sure all the content on your site is appropriate, relevant and useful
- work at building links to your site from other relevant, respected sites, by posting appealing, shareable content and building relationships with other people of influence within your niche

For businesses, your Google business pages can show up in a map on search pages for your industry or service. Setting this page up well can improve your search position and give prospective customers useful information like opening hours, specials and photos of products or premises.

Keep 'em coming

It's not enough to get people to visit your site once - you need to keep them coming back. Which means giving them something to come back **for**. These days a blog is a pretty much essential element of a successful website, and it's really easy to get started with free technology available from sites like wordpress.org. Your blog is your primary opportunity to reach out to your audience and share your ideas. There are many techniques to successful blogging, the most important of which are:

- write about relevant topics which will interest your audience
- post regularly to your blog, on a consistent schedule if possible
- make it interactive by allow readers to comment and contribute
- invite suggestions for blog topics and respond to feedback
- promote new blog posts through all your social media channels

A blog is great, but it's probably not going to be enough. To make your site a go-to place you should consider offering other great content, such as videos, webinars, e-books or infographics. Again, the point is to provide something your customers need, or something cool and fun they will love, which will make them want to talk about you. Don't forget to build in functions to allow social sharing!

Watch and learn

Like we said, your website is your most important ambassador. To get the most value out of your site you need to keep up with new trends and technology, try new things and make sure it's continually evolving. But to be successful at this you need to know what's working and what isn't, which means making full use of analytics tools.

There's a lot of free software available, as well as some really fantastic full-service options, which will allow you to track visitors to your site and analyse the way in which they travel through it. There's so much to learn from this data – how people are finding you, what search terms they are using, which elements of your site are most attractive to your visitors. You can track the success of your marketing activities and use the information to decide where to focus your marketing efforts and budget.

By monitoring and responding to the way your visitors use your site you can dramatically improve its effectiveness, so that it works as hard as possible to build your reputation.

Going mobile: making it easy for your audience

Go wherever your customers go

The role now played by mobile devices in the business world simply cannot be overstated. The 'anywhere, anytime' information access of smartphones, twinned with the convenience of location-driven search results, offers boundless opportunities to be found by people at the exact moment they need you.

The statistics are incredible: according to Google's highly informative Mobile Playbook, a definitive resource for companies on how to use mobile:

"85% of smartphone users have searched for local information, 81% called a business after searching and 40% visited in person"

"24% of consumers use their smartphones to compare prices in-store"

"57% of users say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile site and 40% have turned to a competitors site after a bad mobile experience"

Even more powerful is the knowledge that more and more customers are using mobiles at the **final** stage of the purchasing decision process. They're standing in a store looking at a product and making last-minute price comparisons. They're hungry and are looking for a decent local place to have dinner. They have time to kill and want something fun to do. They are **ready** to buy what you have to sell, and all they need is to find you.

Speak when they have time to listen

And it's not just retail websites which benefit from the omnipresent mobile culture. People are no longer content to sit on a train and stare out of the window. When they're on the move they're doing research, reading blogs, interacting on social media - living their online lives. It's during these moments, when there's no work, no chores, no partners or children or pets claiming their attention, that your audience has time to spend with you.

What this means is that unless your website is optimised for mobile customers, you risk alienating a large percentage of your audience or missing out on a huge percentage of your possible customer enquiries. But if you design or adapt your site so that all your functions work seamlessly, your images load quickly and your content resizes to fit any sized screen, you'll give them every reason to stick around and read what you have to say. Many mobile sites still feel like a poor relation of the full-function pc version, which is extremely frustrating for users. Yours will have much greater impact if you think about what your mobile customers are trying to achieve when they're using it and design it around their needs.

Stand out in the T-commerce arena

Going mobile isn't just about smartphones, either. There's the tablet market to consider – a category growing and changing consumer habits so fast that it has companies across the globe scrambling to respond. Tablet customers already account for an enormous percentage of online purchases and casual browsing time, mostly while users are at home relaxing during the evenings or at weekends. Whatever you have to say, share or sell, this is a sector you simply can't afford to ignore.

"72% of tablet owners make purchases from their devices on a weekly basis"
Google Mobile Playbook

Offer something extra with a mobile app

Mobile apps are another great opportunity to increase customer loyalty and get your brand noticed. You'll need to get creative here, because apps come in and out of fashion with dizzying speed. If you can design an app which helps your customers access your service, and saves them time and hassle, then great. Those are the apps that get kept and used day after day, building customer loyalty with every swipe. But if your business doesn't lend itself to a practical app then it's all about building your brand, creating something relevant to your niche which your clients will want to learn from or play with. And, importantly, talk about.

Email: direct and personal

Reach out with email and open a dialog

Email addresses are extremely valuable to your business, especially when they come with information about the specific interests of the potential customer, partner or supporter. By offering quality content on your website which can be downloaded for free in exchange for an email address you are opening a direct channel of communication with someone who has already shown interest in what you have to say on that subject.

You should treat your email address list a significant asset, and make the most of it. Companies which are focused on converting leads into sales use email marketing campaigns to great effect, but if your goal is to build influence there are other ways to use the contact details you collect. A carefully worded, personalised email which is relevant to the recipient is one of your best opportunities to open a conversation and begin to build a relationship.

Be targeted with your email marketing

Of course it's unlikely that you'll have time to write personal emails to everyone on your contact list. But by using a CRM or other system (such as organising

contacts into groups according to their interests in Gmail or Outlook) you can craft and send emails in batches to relevant contacts. This is a great opportunity to direct traffic back to your website by promoting new content with links to landing pages.

A swift, relevant response to email enquiries will create a powerful impression, so try to monitor and answer your emails regularly. You can save time by drafting high-quality, informative responses to common enquiries and then adapting these as necessary.

Newsletters are another great way to reach out to your customers or supporters. If you follow the same guidelines as you use when drafting posts for your blog, ensuring that the content is relevant and topical for your readers, this can be a powerful way to engage with your audience. A mail service such as MailChimp will help you to organise and deliver your newsletter effectively.

Make your email your ambassador

Don't forget to make sure that your email signature is professional and comprehensive, with complete contact details and **working** links to your website. As with every other aspect of your digital personality, your email address needs to reinforce your credibility, so try to set up an email name which properly reflects your identity, e.g. yourname@yourbusiness.com.

If you are not available to answer emails then you'll need to make sure your customers know when they can expect a response. Set up out of office and holiday replies which provide alternative names and contact details if appropriate, or indicate when you'll be back online.

Social media: escalating your influence

Why social media matters

Social media represents a revolution and democratisation of media. Only a decade or so ago, the only people with the tools to communicate instantly to an audience of hundreds or thousands of people were huge media organisations and governments. Other companies could buy access to this media - via advertisements in newspapers, magazines and television - but it cost thousands of dollars to reach a large audience.

Social media has meant that a blogger, someone with a Facebook page or a YouTube channel can reach and influence thousands of people - effectively for free. Of course it's not quite that easy. It takes time and effort - and something worth saying - to build up an audience, especially one who will listen well or even buy from you.

Become a publisher and start building influence

We are now overwhelmed with media options, but you still have a big decision to make - will you be a passive consumer of digital media (like you used to read the paper and watch TV), or will you be one of the people contributing, creating and publishing new content. One of the deciding factors as to whether people become influential online is how effectively they embrace and utilise online media.

"The decision to become a publisher rather than a consumer of media is a key step toward becoming more influential" [attribute quote]

Using social networks and social media is a valuable step in that direction - it gets you used to expressing your voice and exposes you to the most influential people in your industry - the thought leaders and the people whose opinions are valued by others.

Once you produce content such as articles on your own website and blog, or film clips and infographics, social media is critical to getting it seen by your target audience.

Likewise, when you have a product or service you want to promote, social media is a key tool in getting new leads and building a 'tribe' to do your marketing for you.

Most important of all, social media lets you build real networks with the top people in your own and related industries, providing opportunities to help each other grow and opening the door for possible joint ventures.

Be someone worth talking to

Probably the most important advice we can give is to be professional, positive and personable when interacting on social media. Don't just use it to blast out advertising or links, use it to share insights, discuss, network, exchange valuable information, ask questions, and generally connect with your market. If you're creating quality content yourself it's appropriate to share this, but only where it's relevant and useful to others

The most important part of social media and social networking is that it's SOCIAL

Social media is really no different to real life networking, and the same behaviour will help you to succeed in both. If you go to a networking event or a party and spend your whole time talking about yourself or trying to sell people stuff and don't really engage you aren't going to succeed at making new friends **or** at growing your business.

The goal is to connect with people, learn about them, learn how you can help each other and grow from the experience. If you win some business or find a great provider while doing this, consider that a bonus.

Choose the right platforms

There are hundreds of social media channels, with more appearing every week. In reality, only a handful of these sites will be critical to building your brand. Rather than trying to get a social presence on dozens of different sites, it's far more effective to concentrate on two or three platforms and do them really well.

You'll need to start by assessing which ones are most relevant and useful for **your** business. It may be that one site will be important for networking with peers and keeping up with your industry, while another will be more valuable for reaching out to existing clients or acquiring new customers.

Let's take a look at the top social media sites and how they might be useful to your business.

Facebook

Facebook is the undisputed leader of social networks at the moment. The bulk of your clients will be on Facebook, with many of them **ONLY** being on Facebook.

When using Facebook for business purposes you'll need to set up a 'company page', rather than using your personal account to promote or represent your business. (It's critical you don't create a personal profile in the name of a business as this is against Facebook's terms of use and it will almost certainly be removed).

If you are developing a personal brand rather than a separate business identity, the best choice may be to set up a separate Facebook page to promote your professional persona, and keep this apart from the personal profile which you use to connect with friends and family. This way you can engage with clients or colleagues without sharing details of your private life, and your friends and relatives won't see you talking about industry news or your latest specials unless they choose to (you can and should invite them to like your professional page as well).

Facebook has been **THE** social network for businesses for a while now, but it's becoming less appealing to both users and businesses because of its increasingly commercial nature so you should also explore alternatives.

Linkedin

In the world of social media, Linkedin is the heavyweight **business** social media network.

As a professional, Linkedin is a great place to connect with colleagues in your own and related industries, as well as a place to feature your skills, experience and work for prospective clients or employers.

What sets LinkedIn apart from other social networks is the level of seniority and income of LinkedIn users. Most CEOs and senior professionals will be on LinkedIn, and in many cases you'll find them surprisingly accessible and responsive.

Many people use LinkedIn as an 'online resume/CV' and if you're going to use it that way then it's vital that it's up-to-date. But the real power of LinkedIn comes from the potent social search, networking and group functions. LinkedIn is a formidable tool which lets you keep up with the latest trends in your industry, connect with key contacts in your industry, and be visible to employers or key decision makers in your target market.

LinkedIn strongly rewards networking, because making new connections on LinkedIn gives you immediate exposure with all the people they know. Forging a deep and broad network in industries relevant to yours is critical to getting the most out of LinkedIn.

LinkedIn groups, which let you network with others sharing similar industries or interests, are a great way to grow your network in a targeted way.

Google Plus

Google Plus is Google's own take on social media. It's still smaller than Facebook and LinkedIn, but it continues to grow strongly and offers some unique benefits, including a highly positive impact on Google search results.

Your position in Google search results is a massive part of growing your profile online, so you want to be sure you make the most of your opportunities. The latest feature of Google search results is 'rich snippets' – the inclusion of pictures alongside search results. Google will display links to the Google Plus page of the verified author of most content, along with images which can include thumbnails of pictures, logos or products and - most exciting for personal branding - photos of the author of online content. Having your photo or logo appear in Google next to content you have written is very powerful for branding, and is likely to improve your click through rates because results with photos stand out among the sea of text on a Google search result page.

You can only access this potent feature if you have a Google Plus account, which makes it a critical part of your digital branding efforts. For this reason it's vital that you set up Google plus authorship on your website and any blogs or other sites you post on.

YouTube

Another Google property, YouTube is a major player and the number one forum for sharing your visual content, like videos, presentations etc.

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-messaging social network, where people exchange 140 character messages with their followers. Twitter is great for keeping up with industry trends, breaking news and general chit chat. It can be a bit advertising/spam heavy but that can be improved by being selective with who you follow.

To become popular on Twitter, don't spam your followers - concentrate on offering insight, conversation and useful info and links. Twitter is misunderstood by many people and is most relevant in some industries like IT, where it can be a great way to be the first with the latest news or to connect with the most influential people in your field. Twitter is wonderfully democratic - you can talk to or about anyone by mentioning their @username, giving you an opportunity to reach people you wouldn't easily contact otherwise.

Pinterest

The latest rising star social site is Pinterest. It's a primarily a visual social site, where people share images like photos, illustrations and infographics. It's excellent for anyone with a visual product, like designers, artists, and the beauty or travel industries. Its lots of fun and integrates neatly with Facebook and Twitter.

Instagram

Is a free photo-sharing program and social network that was launched in October 2010. It allows users to take a photo and apply a digital filter to it, and then share it with other Instagram users that are in their social network. It just two years it already has over 100 million registered users.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. There are loads of other social networks, often with a strong following in a particular industry (for example, Dribbble is popular among designers and engineers). Every industry also has its own special interest sites and forums so check out what's important in your field. Being active on these specialised forums can be a great way to connect with your peers and build your expertise. It's also a great way to explore your industry, find your voice and engage with colleagues or customers on things that matter to them.

So, start by picking the networks which are best suited to your business. If you're already on Facebook, it makes sense to start there and create a professional page for yourself or your business. As you get the hang of using Social media marketing you can strategically add other relevant social media or social network accounts. For example, if your business lends itself to video content then YouTube (or a similar social site like Vimeo) is an obvious choice. If images are more useful then Pinterest or Instagram would work well for you

So which is the best social network?

That's the million dollar question.

For most professionals and businesses LinkedIn is the essential social network for connecting with colleagues and looking professional.

Facebook is still a good bet to reach your customers, but we consider Google Plus to be the most useful network after LinkedIn for both businesses and individuals, because of its impact on personal branding and Google search results.

How does it all add up?

Our goal with online branding is to develop a cohesive, meaningful and authentic digital footprint that contributes positively to our brand perception in our target market.

Conclusion

So, that was a lot of information. To help you get it all straight, here's a summary of the most important points.

What is a digital brand?

Your brand is your public persona. It's what you think, say and do - and it's what people think, say and believe about you. It incorporates the values you stand for, the way you behave and all the things that make you different from your peers or competitors.

Your **digital** brand is what people see, hear, feel and think about in connection with your name or business online. Digital branding is the deliberate process of creating positive, appealing brand images and messages using digital platforms such as websites, email, social networks and online forums.

Why do I need a digital brand?

If you run a business you already know that if you want to attract customers and grow your company you have to be found. You have to stand out and convince customers that you have more to offer than your competitors, and you've probably spent a lot of money on advertising to achieve this. With the impact of traditional media rapidly diminishing, you need to reach out and connect with your customers when and where they are listening.

Likewise, if you want to build a reputation and become someone others seek out for advice, guidance or collaboration, you have to be visible. You have to attract and hold the attention of your audience, your peers or your potential employers. You have to establish your identity and grow your reputation as someone with specialised knowledge and a genuine contribution to make.

Unless you build a mobile-friendly website, invest in ongoing SEO and interact on social media in order to establish your influence in the online sphere, there's a very real risk you'll end up invisible.

What's more, with the almost unlimited reach and speed of social media you can be sure that if you make any sort of mistake the news will spread like wildfire. Unless you establish yourself or your business online as a recognisable, credible and respected personality you have no opportunity to participate in the conversation, demonstrate your integrity or influence what is being said about you.

What's the goal?

The purpose of digital branding is to help you achieve your goals, whatever they are:

- Stand out from your competition
- Create strong networks
- Become a go-to person
- Make a living doing something you love

The objective is to establish your authority within your field or market, by making a contribution of real value and being recognised and respected for that contribution.

Building a brand isn't a sprint, it's a marathon. That means consistent effort over time - creating the fundamentals then committing to a regular practice of building your presence. It isn't hard, but it will take time. It's a steady accumulation of the little things that attract the attention and loyalty of your audience, which over time add up to something powerful and substantial.

Where do I start?

Establish your credibility by creating a professional identity which resonates with your target audience, and then begin to build your influence through consistent, genuine and constructive engagement with your customers on the forums they prefer.

Start by creating digital assets such as a website and an email contact list, and set up accounts on the social networks which are most relevant to your business.

Take a practical, strategic approach. It's easy to be overwhelmed by the options – or over excited by the possibilities. Bear in mind that the maximum return on investment doesn't come from doing EVERYTHING at once: it comes from identifying the key tools for you or your business or industry and getting those RIGHT.

How do I grow my influence?

Get active online in your interest areas – participate in blogs, social media and chat forums. Be authentic in your interactions and invite feedback. Remember that social media is a dialogue not an advertising channel - treat people with respect and listen to what they have to say.

Create and publish content which is of genuine value to your specific audience: books, interviews, ebooks, training materials, podcasts, internet radio and anything else you can think of. Develop and publish multimedia content too, as visual media tends to have a powerful impact. Make it easy for people to share everything you publish by adding buttons and links to social networks etc.

Cross-pollinate your different networks – ‘real world’ networks of friends, family, colleagues, professional groups, networking groups, mothers groups, sports teams and so on are still where some of the greatest opportunities lie. Your online influence combined with real world networks can be very powerful.

How do I take it to the next level?

As your influence grows you’ll have the leverage to increase your profile by reaching out to all forms of online and print media. Guest posts on respected blogs, articles in newspapers or magazines and interviews or appearances on radio or TV will further build your reputation. You can leverage industry authority sites in the same way, offering content for industry publications, web forums or blogs.

Form partnerships with likeminded people / businesses. Collaboration with other people of influence within your niche helps you to reach new, receptive audiences. Mutual recommendations can help grow the influence of both parties.

How can influential.com.au help?

We’re here to give you clear, practical advice on how to design and build your digital brand to achieve the best possible results. We can help you hit the perfect tone and style to appeal to your target audience and establish your online presence with unforgettable digital assets.

We’ll guide you toward the best ways to create your brand and spend your time, money and energy online.

Where to from here?

The internet is in constant flux. The technologies, websites and tools you use to create and represent your digital brand online will change over time. If you’re going to stay ahead you’ll need to keep looking for promising new channels and new ways to reach your audience.

Embrace and leverage new technology and try to be an innovator in your field. This doesn’t mean trying every new thing (if you do this you won’t get anything else done) – it means keeping an ear to the ground for game-changing tools and making sure you have a presence wherever your audience goes. Monitor and analyse the results of everything you do and seek feedback to help you adapt.

As you get more practiced, gain confidence and start to have fun with social media you’ll be able to expand your reach. Aim to establish a strong presence on new social media sites as they emerge, connecting your profiles wherever possible to strengthen your brand.

Since the strength of your brand relies on the quality of your relationships you need to develop a consistent habit of reaching out – whether by email, a phone call or a targeted social media message to your key clients or supporters. This needs to be as personal and engaging as possible. Treat your online relationships just like physical ones, building on the positive outcomes of each encounter and offering closer interaction as the trust and respect between you grows.

Above all, **persevere!** As long as you want to grow your business and your influence there are no limits on what you can achieve.



 influential

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