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PERSONAL BRANDING SERIES • VOLUME 01

Building Your Personal Brand

Figure out what you want to be known for, back it up with real evidence and share it in a way you can actually keep up with.

01

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A note before you dig in

Let me say this up front: you already have a personal brand. Everybody does. It's whatever people say about you when you're not in the room. The only question is whether you're shaping it on purpose or leaving it to chance.

A lot of folks think branding means a logo, a nice headshot and posting every day. Those things can help, but they're the paint, not the house. What really holds up a reputation is the work you do, how you treat people and whether you deliver what you said you would.

This guide walks you through building that on purpose. No big audience, no business and no budget required. Just honesty about where you are and a plan you can live with.

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YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- A clear picture of how people experience you right now
- One real goal your brand is supposed to serve
- A short list of proof that backs up what you say about yourself
- A two sentence introduction you can use anywhere
- A simple, sustainable routine for showing up

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Know how people already see you

02 Pick a direction that means something

03 Show what makes you credible

04 Know who needs what you offer

05 Say what you do so people get it

06 Show up in a way you can keep up

Time: 60 to 90 minutes, then a month of small steps

Best for: working professionals, business owners, career changers and anyone figuring out what is next

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read a lesson, look at the example, then answer the questions in your own words. Pencil is fine. Messy is fine. Treat your first answers like a rough draft and check them against real conversations and real evidence before you put serious time or money behind them. Then come back to the 30 day plan and actually do it. That part is where the change happens.

LESSON 01

Know how people already see you

Your reputation is already out there. Start by finding out what it says.

What a personal brand really is

Your personal brand is the set of things people connect with your name: the kind of work you do, how you think, how you show up and what you're good at. Three words get mixed up here, so let's separate them. Your identity is how you see yourself. Your reputation is how other people experience you. Your positioning is the choice you make about what to put in front.

The gap between the first two is where the work is. You might see yourself as a strategic thinker, while your coworkers mostly know you as the person who keeps everything on schedule. Neither one is wrong. But you can't fix a gap you haven't looked at.

Your personal brand and your business brand are not the same thing

A business brand belongs to a company and what it sells. A personal brand follows you everywhere: across jobs, businesses, boards and community roles. They can support each other, but they don't have to match. Your business might be about plumbing while your personal reputation is about being the most dependable person in your industry.

Also decide early what is public and what stays private. You get to choose. Being authentic doesn't mean telling everybody everything.

WORTH KNOWING

Identity	How you understand yourself and your work.
Reputation	How other people actually experience you, based on what you've done.
Positioning	The deliberate choice of what to emphasize for a specific audience.
Brand assets	Logos, photos, colors and fonts. They support recognition. They don't replace good work.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Dana works in bookkeeping. She doesn't own a business and has no plans to. But every month, coworkers come to her desk to ask what a confusing report actually means. When she asked three colleagues what they rely on her for, all three said some version of "you make the numbers make sense." That's her brand: financial clarity. She can build on it inside her company without launching anything or sharing a single personal detail.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Starting with the logo, colors or website before you know what you want to be known for
- Guessing how people see you instead of asking them
- Assuming "authentic" means you have to share your personal life
- Trying to be known for everything, which usually means being known for nothing

YOUR TURN

What do people already come to you for? Ask at least three people and write down their exact words.

Where is the gap between how you see yourself and how others describe you?

What do you want your professional reputation to include a year from now?

LESSON 02

Pick a direction that means something

Visibility is not the goal. Visibility is a step toward the goal.

Start with the opportunity

Before you post anything or update anything, answer this: what is your brand supposed to help you do? Get more referrals? Move into leadership? Land clients? Break into a new industry? Share what you know with people who need it?

Being "more visible" sounds good, but it's not a goal on its own. Plenty of people are very visible and still not getting what they want. Name the real outcome.

Make the goal realistic

A good goal has a time frame, an action and a way to measure it. Then separate what you control from what you don't. You control whether you send the application, ask for the introduction or publish the article. You don't control whether you get hired. Build your goal around the part you control.

And be honest about your real life: your time, your money, the people depending on you and any rules your employer has about what you can post or do on the side. A plan that ignores your actual life will not last.

> **EXAMPLE** (fictional)
>
> Marcus is a project coordinator who wants a promotion. Instead of "get more visibility with leadership," his goal is: document three completed projects and request two development conversations with his manager within 60 days. He controls every piece of that. Whether the promotion comes is up to someone else, but now he's given them something real to work with.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Chasing followers when what you actually want is referrals or a job
- Setting a goal that depends completely on someone else's decision
- Building a plan for the life you wish you had instead of the schedule you actually have

YOUR TURN

What opportunity do you want in the next six months? Be specific.

What part of that is in your control? What part is not?

How will you know you made progress? Name the number or the evidence.

LESSON 03

Show what makes you credible

Anybody can make a claim. Credibility comes from proof.

Skills, experience and evidence

These three work together. A skill is something you can do. Experience is where you've done it. Evidence is what proves it: a work sample, a result, a credential, a reference or feedback from someone you've worked with. Some skills carry across industries easily. Others, especially regulated services, may require training or a license before you can offer them. Know which is which.

Collect evidence the right way

For each thing you want to be known for, write down the situation, what you specifically did and what happened. Be honest about your role. If it was a team win, say it was a team win and explain your part. That honesty is part of your credibility.

Get permission before you share client work, private numbers or anyone's testimonial. And if you don't have impressive numbers, that's okay. Describe the process or the finished work accurately. A clear description beats a made up percentage every time.

WORTH KNOWING

Skill	An ability you can demonstrate on demand.
Experience	The settings and situations where you've used that skill.
Evidence	Something a stranger could look at and believe: a sample, a result, a credential, a reference.
Transferable skill	A skill that works across different jobs or industries.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Renee volunteered to coordinate a neighborhood block party. She didn't run the whole thing alone, so she doesn't claim she did. Instead, she saved the schedule she built, the emails she sent to vendors and the sign up sheet she managed, all things she was allowed to share. That shows coordination clearly, without overstating her role.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Taking credit for a whole team's result
- Sharing client work or private details without permission
- Rounding up, guessing or inventing results to sound more impressive

YOUR TURN

Name one skill you want to be known for. Where have you actually used it?

What evidence could you show for it, with permission?

Where would honesty about your role make your story stronger, not weaker?

LESSON 04

Know who needs what you offer

Your audience is defined by a shared situation, not just an age range.

Choose your audience on purpose

Your audience could be hiring managers, clients, peers in your field or community partners. Each group cares about different things and decides in different ways. A hiring manager wants to know you can do the job. A client wants to know you can solve their problem. A partner wants to know you're reliable.

It helps to describe your audience by their situation or problem, not just demographics. "Women 35 to 50" tells you very little. "Restaurant owners getting ready to change their seasonal menu" tells you exactly what they need.

Check your assumptions with real people

Talk to people in the audience you have in mind. Ask what they're trying to get done, what makes it hard, what they use now and how they decide who to trust for help. Then listen more than you talk.

Look for patterns, but keep perspective. A handful of conversations will point you in a direction. They won't prove that a big market exists. Treat what you learn as a strong hint, not a guarantee.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Kim is a photographer who wants restaurant clients. She assumed owners wanted "creative" photography. After talking to four owners, she learned what they actually needed was consistent menu photos ready before each seasonal promotion. That gave her a much clearer message than "creative photography," and it came straight from the people paying.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Describing your audience as "everyone" or "small businesses"
- Asking people if they like your idea instead of asking about their real problems
- Treating three conversations as proof of a whole market

YOUR TURN

Who could benefit most from what you know or do? Describe their situation.

What three questions would you ask them to learn what they need?

Who are three real people you could ask this week?

LESSON 05

Say what you do so people get it

If people can't repeat it, it isn't working yet.

Build a clear introduction

A strong introduction does three things: says what area you work in, who you help and what difference you make. Use plain words and strong verbs. If your introduction needs a glossary, it's not ready.

Skip the big, vague titles. "Visionary," "guru" and "passionate problem solver" don't tell anyone anything. Specifics do.

Adjust the length, keep the facts

Your networking introduction, website bio and resume summary each have a different job. Change the length and the emphasis to fit the setting, but keep the core facts the same everywhere. If your LinkedIn says one thing and your website says another, people get confused, and confused people don't refer you.

Here's a simple test: say your introduction to someone, then ask them to explain back what you do. If they can, you're there. If they can't, keep working.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Weak: "I'm a visionary problem solver who helps teams reach their potential."

Clear: "I coordinate projects for small organizations. I help teams keep deadlines, vendors and communication organized so the work actually moves forward."

The second one is less flashy and far more useful. Someone could repeat it at a dinner party tomorrow.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Industry jargon that only people in your field understand
- Titles and adjectives that praise you instead of describing your work
- A different version of you on every platform

YOUR TURN

Write your introduction in two sentences: what you do, who you help, what changes.

What one specific detail would make it more believable?

Who will you test it on, and what did they say back?

LESSON 06

Show up in a way you can keep up

One well kept profile beats five you abandoned.

Choose your channels on purpose

You can build visibility in a lot of places: professional associations, referrals, local events, a portfolio, email or social media. The right ones are where your audience already goes to find help. If your clients are at chamber breakfasts, an elaborate TikTok strategy may not be the best use of your time.

Pick fewer channels and do them well. One profile that's current and useful will serve you better than five that haven't been touched since 2021.

Clean up what's already out there

Look at your bios, contact info, work samples and privacy settings. Remove anything outdated. Make sure your current focus is clear. Then share useful things at a pace you can actually keep.

Measure what matters: conversations, introductions, inquiries and invitations. Follower counts are nice, but they don't pay the bills or get you promoted.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

Tasha is a consultant with about two hours a week for her brand. She updates her portfolio once a month, attends one industry event a month and shares a practical lesson twice a month. She tracks inquiries and introductions, not daily posts. It's not flashy, but it's steady, and steady is what people remember.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Signing up for every platform and keeping up with none of them
- Measuring success by followers instead of conversations and opportunities
- Old titles, old phone numbers or old services still floating around online

YOUR TURN

Which two channels fit your audience and your actual schedule?

What is one outdated thing you can fix this week?

What will you track to know it's working?

WORKSHEET

Personal brand snapshot

One page that captures where you are and where you're headed. Update it every quarter.

Fill in the left column first with these eight questions: What people rely on me for. What I want to be known for. My six month goal. My main audience. Their biggest need. My two sentence introduction. My two channels. What I'm tracking.

QUESTION	MY ANSWER TODAY	EVIDENCE OR SOURCE

QUICK REFERENCE

The short version

Tear this page out, screenshot it, tape it by your desk. This is the whole guide on one page.

01	Your brand already exists. Find out what people say about you before you change anything.
02	Tie your brand to a real opportunity, not just "more visibility."
03	Build goals around actions you control.
04	Back up every claim with evidence you're allowed to share.
05	Describe your audience by their situation and talk to real people in it.
06	Write an introduction someone else could repeat accurately.
07	Pick fewer channels and keep them current.
08	Measure conversations and opportunities, not followers.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your 30 day plan

Small, real steps. Pick the dates now so this does not turn into one more thing you meant to do.

WEEK 1

Get your direction

Choose one professional goal. Ask three people who know your work what they rely on you for.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 2

Gather your proof

Collect two examples of your work you have permission to share. Draft your two sentence introduction.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 3

Show up

Update one professional profile so it matches your introduction. Start two relevant conversations.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 4

Check and adjust

Write down responses, inquiries and what you learned. Tweak your message and lock in a routine you can keep.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

My very first action, the date I will do it and how I will know it is done:

What support, time or resources do I need to line up?

THIRTY DAYS LATER

Look back, then keep going

Come back to this page a month from now. Compare what you planned with what actually happened. No judgment. You are collecting information, not grading yourself.

What did I learn from actually taking action?

Which assumption turned out to be wrong?

What is worth continuing, and what will I change next month?

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Emily Wale Koya, Personal Branding Roadmap, pages 3 to 10 (brand foundations and launch). Supplied reference.
- Personal Branding Expertise Guide, pages 3 to 15 (value, content, credibility, networking and review). Supplied reference.
- Business Start Up Training Programme, Trainee Workbook 1, pages 4 to 14 (learning objectives and case based learning). Supplied reference.

Examples in this guide are made up to teach a point. They are not real clients or documented results. This guide is educational and does not guarantee any professional, business or income outcome. Rules change, so double check anything legal, tax or regulatory before you act on it.