

Establishing your personal brand

The road to a successful career



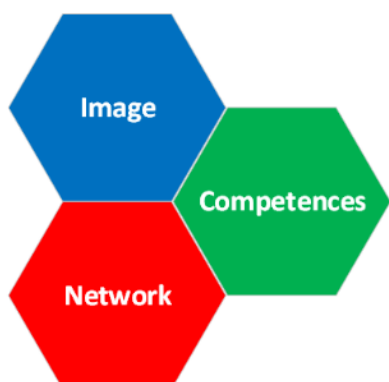
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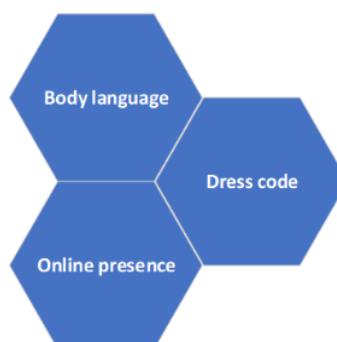
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The road to a successful career is to establish a unique personal brand. Your personal brand (or what marketers name as your Unique Selling Point) is a construction over time-based on three pillars: I. Your **Image**, II. your **Competencies**, and III. your **Network**.



Why it is important to establish your personal branding?

Personal branding is the process of creating and communicating a unique and memorable identity that sets you apart from others in your field or industry. Personal branding is important because it allows you to have a distinct advantage over others, builds trust and credibility, generates professional opportunities, helps you attract employees (customers and clients), and helps you reach your goals. Personal branding also helps you stand out from the crowd and gain the trust of your audience, who will likely screen you online before engaging with you.



I. What is Image?

First impressions matter. The way you present yourself, and your Image, has a profound impact on your career. It is equally important as your body language, how you dress and your online presence, either in establishing ways to bolster your personal brand or to ruin it.

As a recent graduate, it is an often overlooked aspect when thinking about applying to jobs, especially the aspect of online presence. In this day and age of social media, especially if you have public accounts, it is important to ensure what is online is within reason and won't paint a bad image of you. It is important to keep accounts up to date such as your blog or LinkedIn profile as it will boost your online presence and ameliorate your search engine optimisation. It is, therefore, more and more important to keep your private life also private online and boost your professional achievements on your profiles.

I.1 What is Body Language?

Body language is a silent orchestra, as people constantly give clues to what they're thinking and feeling. Non-verbal messages including body movements, facial expressions, vocal tone and volume, and other signals are collectively known as body language.

<u>For the recipient it is important because:</u>	<u>For the emitter it is important because:</u>
It gives the first impression about us.	It improves self-confidence and influences persuasion.
It assists in understanding what the person is saying and interpreting their emotions	It enhances our conscious understanding of people's reactions to what we say and how we say it.
It adds meaning and can enhance the power of verbal communication.	

I.2 What is Dress Code?

A dress code is a set of rules or guidelines that specify what kind of clothing is appropriate or acceptable for a certain situation, environment, or occasion. Dress codes can vary depending on the culture, context, and purpose of the dress. Dress codes can also reflect the social class, identity, or attitude of the wearer, as well as the political or religious affiliations.

Presenting a positive representation of yourself is a key component of experiencing professional success. What you wear, along with how you communicate with others both verbally and nonverbally, can impact the image others form about you. Dressing professionally in your workplace can help you to make a first good impression, to communicate that you take your job seriously, give you confidence, help you feel part of the team, enhance your credibility, and command

attention and serious consideration from your peers and your hierarchy.

Dress codes are equally important for employers because they promote a positive work environment, ensure employee safety and comfort, project a positive image of the company to the public, help maintain a sense of professionalism in the workplace by focusing on productivity, and generally eliminating any feelings of inequality based on attire and appearance.

I.3 What is Online presence?

In today's digital age, having a consistent online presence is crucial for building a personal brand. This includes having a professional website or blog, and social media profiles where you can share your thoughts and expertise. Keep your social accounts relevant and up to date. Post frequently and use social scheduling apps to ease the task. Find and join relevant online groups.

Make sure your online presence reflects your brand identity and values. Be consistent in your messaging and tone of voice. Ultimately, your social media presence can inspire others to achieve similar goals and help build a sense of community among your followers. Engage and build relationships with your audience by responding to their comments, questions, and feedback.

Make sure to avoid being inauthentic. Your followers will see right through this. It's important to be true to your brand identity and avoid trying to be something you're not. Don't use gimmicks or try to create a persona that doesn't align with your values or personality.

II. What are the Competencies?

Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviours that contribute to individual and organizational performance. Knowledge is information developed or learned through experience, study, or investigation. Skill is the result of repeatedly applying knowledge or ability. Ability is an innate potential to perform mental and physical actions or tasks. Behaviour is the observable reaction of an individual to a certain situation. Employers use competencies to determine whether you have the potential required to succeed in a job position.



The top competencies employers are looking for are Teamwork, Responsibility, Staying up to date in your domain, Decision-making, Communication skills, Leadership, Trustworthiness & Ethics skills, Results orientation, Problem-solving, Organisational skills, Adaptability and Analytical thinking.

As a student, this is probably the one aspect we learn about the most and are taught to enhance, gain, and obtain. We also, most likely, all have completed our studies, applied for internships, and are looking for jobs. It is also crucial to note that competencies not only come in the form of those above mentioned but also volunteering and hobbies are often overlooked competencies which are highly valuable to an employer.

II.1 What is Studying?

Studying is the activity or process of learning about something by reading, memorizing facts, attending school and/or seminars. It refers to time spent reading and processing material, either to review what's already been covered or to prepare for future classes. Many students think of studying as something they do to prepare for an exam, however, studying is learning skills to be applied in the professional world.

Studying makes you more focused & helps you in time management, makes you more responsible & responsive, gives you the confidence & increases your confidence level, helps you in problem-solving & makes you more discipline, helps you to gain more knowledge & increases your curiosity level, and increases your reading speed & your comprehension level.

II.2 What is Volunteering?

Volunteering is a voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and labour for community service. Volunteering can be done for various reasons, such as to help others, to learn new skills, to express a willingness to undertake a service or to find meaning and interest in one's life. Volunteering can be done formally or informally and without financial gain.

The benefits of volunteering for those receiving help are obvious, but they're equally important benefits to the receiver and the wider community, such as:

- Connects you with others (avoid loneliness, make new friends and strengthen existing relationships)
- Builds a sense of purpose (boosts your happiness), self-confidence (creates a natural sense of accomplishment) and self-esteem (gives you a sense of pride and identity)
- Improves both mental and physical health (carrying out an altruistic act makes you happier; the so-called 'helper's high')
- Helps you forget your problems (focusing on others can give us a deeper sense of perspective and help distract us from negative thoughts)

Builds up your resume and enhances your career prospects (It shows potential employers that you can take initiative and that you took the opportunity to practice important common skills used in the workplace, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, planning and organization)

II.3 What is an Internship?

An internship is a short-term work experience offered by companies and other organizations for people—usually students, but not always—to get some entry-level exposure to a particular industry or field. It is as much of a learning experience as it is work. Ideally, interns spend their time working on relevant projects, learning about the field, making industry connections, and developing both hard and soft skills. Internships sometimes even lead to full-time job offers. Internships are important because they:

- Enhance the qualifications on your resume.
- Present you with new skills and opportunities that you may not receive otherwise.
- Offer an opportunity to build greater levels of engagement with potential employees.
- Allow you to gain hands-on experience in an industry that interests you before you progress further.

II.4 What are Jobs?

A job is a work you perform to earn money to support your basic needs. It can be a full-time or part-time job and may be short-term. Employers expect their employees to perform their jobs in exchange for regular payment and to be responsible for the duties laid out for them. Every job you take teaches you lessons you can apply to future jobs. You will also gain a variety of skills, knowledge, and experiences. A positive outlook, an eagerness to learn and consistently high-quality work can set you apart, create new opportunities and earn you recommendations for future jobs. With each job, you build a network and community of professional contacts. If you maintain a productive and professional relationship with all your colleagues and employers, you can provide yourself with the ability to reach out to these connections throughout your career.

A career is a long-term professional journey you may determine based on your passions. It is the path you embark upon to fulfil your professional goals and ambitions. A career might last for your entire life. You could hold numerous jobs under many employers in your chosen industry that you progress through during your career. There exist four types of careers: Knowledge-based careers depend on the knowledge you acquire over time (accounting), Skills-based careers depend on your understanding of specific job functions (artistry), Entrepreneur-based careers depend on working independently (starting a company), and Freelance-based careers depend on performing a specific task for someone else (consulting).

Work experience refers to the experience you acquire in any professional work setting. All professionals, regardless of their age and seniority, accumulate work experience over time. Work experience can benefit your career in multiple ways, such as:

- It boosts your confidence as a professional. The more tasks you take on, the faster and more accurate your execution will become. In turn, this increases your faith in your ability, which is crucial in advancing your career down the line.
- It allows you to acquire new skills and enhance existing ones. Hands-on experience is a sure-fire way to build a strong skill set. The longer you work, the more diverse and impressive your range of technical and soft skills will be.
- It makes you more employable. Since work experience has the power to increase your confidence on a professional level and build your skill set, it automatically makes you a more desirable candidate in the eyes of recruiters.
- It allows you to form connections. Working within a team is a great way to find mentors who can guide you as you progress, as well as people who might be able to open new doors for you in the future.
- It lets you gain a greater understanding of the industry you plan to work in.

II.5 What are Hobbies?

A hobby is a regular activity done for enjoyment, typically during one's free time. Hobbies are usually not done professionally or for payment. Hobbies vary greatly and can include physical/active hobbies, collecting interests, mental/game endeavours, and creative/artistic pursuits.

Hobbies are important because they can provide a range of benefits, including:

- Strengthening your relationships as you collaborate, share, teach and learn from and with others making you an interesting person that others enjoy being around and talking to.
- As self-care activities are great for your physical (increased heart rate and brain function) and mental health (having fun, relaxing, and reducing stress).
- Helping you learn new skills, which can lead to improvements in your job and other areas of your life.
- Offering you interesting challenges that overcoming them can help you build creativity, confidence, and self-esteem.
- Helping to improve your memory, concentration and focus as well as your fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- A variety of hobbies (could be referred to as "personal interests" added to a resume will help make you look more well-rounded, interesting, and attractive to a potential employer).



III. What is Networking?

Networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, especially to further one's career. Networking is different from socializing as socializing is related to or designed for activities in which people meet each other for pleasure, and not necessarily to develop contacts.

This aspect can often be forgotten by some students. It is only later in life, we tend to learn the importance of networking from attending events like seminars, conferences, and networking drinks. It is important to put ourselves out there and create both professional and friendly relations, either that being staying in good terms with an old manager who can give you a reference, or a university lecturer you particularly enjoyed working with or attend networking specific events. Networking is a two way avenue where you are each beneficially to each other, even if the support might be given in different ways. As students it is important to start early and develop your network of people you can fall by for support regarding job applications, references or other private matters.

III.1 Professional Networking and Collaboration

Networking and collaborating with others is an excellent way to build your personal brand. Attend relevant events, join professional associations, and connect with like-minded individuals on social media. Collaboration with others in your domain can also help you gain exposure and credibility.

III.2 Network of Friends

The term Network of friends designates the interconnected relationships among a group of people who provide social and emotional support for each other. Good friends relieve stress, provide comfort, and joy, and prevent loneliness and isolation. Developing close friendships can also have a powerful impact on your physical health.

According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of friendships:

- Friendships of utility: exist with someone useful to you in some way.
- Friendships of pleasure: exist between you and those whose company you enjoy.
- Friendships of the good: are based on mutual respect and admiration.

Both the Professional and the three kinds of Friends networks will help you demonstrate your value to others with these simple successful networking tips:

- Let others speak on your behalf instead of bragging about yourself.
- Expand your network by meeting new people through your old contacts.

- Leverage your social media postings via reposting and/or getting likes from your network

The road to a successful career

You've probably heard a lot of different definitions for success, and it can be tough to know what matters. It's easy to get bogged down by all the conflicting advice out there.

What does it mean to be successful? How do you achieve success? The three pillars of success (as explained in ten distinct parts) articulated in this article are the author's understanding and the way forward he had developed over the years.

