



How to
**MASTER
YOUR OWN
PROFESSIONAL
BRAND**

Introduction

In today's world, it is imperative to have a strong brand online. Why? Employers use the internet to learn about potential new employees. Business people use the internet to do research on potential new partners. Marketers use the internet to connect with thought leaders and promote content. The list goes on and on. If your brand online is not up to par, you might be losing out on opportunities you didn't even know existed! Read on to learn how you can get up to speed today.

Contents

In this guide, presented by LinkedIn, HourlyNerd, and HubSpot you will learn in detail how to create a professional brand online that will position you as a thought leader.

We'll cover:

1. How to set a goal for your professional brand
2. Optimizing your social media profiles for your brand
3. Online action best practices
4. Real world examples
5. Additional tips and tricks for your professional brand

Topic

1

PREPARE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE + GOALS

**WHAT DO YOU
WANT TO DO
ONLINE?**



Set a Goal

There are several reasons why a person may want to improve their brand online:



FIND A NEW JOB



START IN A NEW INDUSTRY



PROMOTE PERSONAL CONTENT



POSITION AS A THOUGHT LEADER



PROMOTE CURRENT COMPANY

Before creating an online presence for yourself it is important to define your professional goal. Defining your goal ahead of time will give you a clear roadmap for how to develop your professional brand. Ask yourself:

1. What do I want to achieve from my online presence?
2. What do I want to be known for?
3. How do I want others to view me?

Depending on what goal is more relevant to you, each section we cover in this ebook will vary slightly. Keep your goal in mind while reading, as all our advice can be used for each of the above goals.

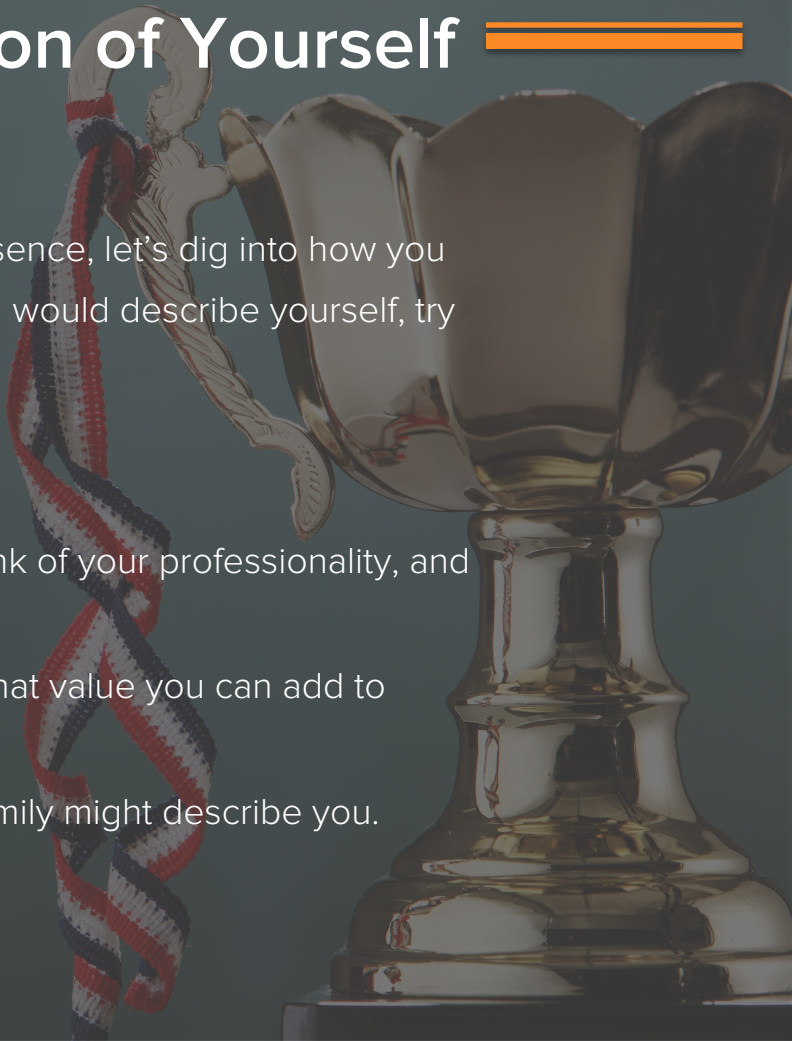
**YOU HAVE A BLANK
SLATE, WHAT DO
YOU WANT TO SAY?**



Make an Ideal Description of Yourself

Now that you have a goal in mind for your online presence, let's dig into how you would like to be portrayed. If you are unsure how you would describe yourself, try doing the following exercise:

1. List three words that come to mind when you think of your professionalism, and your desired professional brand.
2. Think about how you want to help others, and what value you can add to individuals or companies.
3. Write down how your colleagues, friends, and family might describe you.



Make an Ideal Description of Yourself

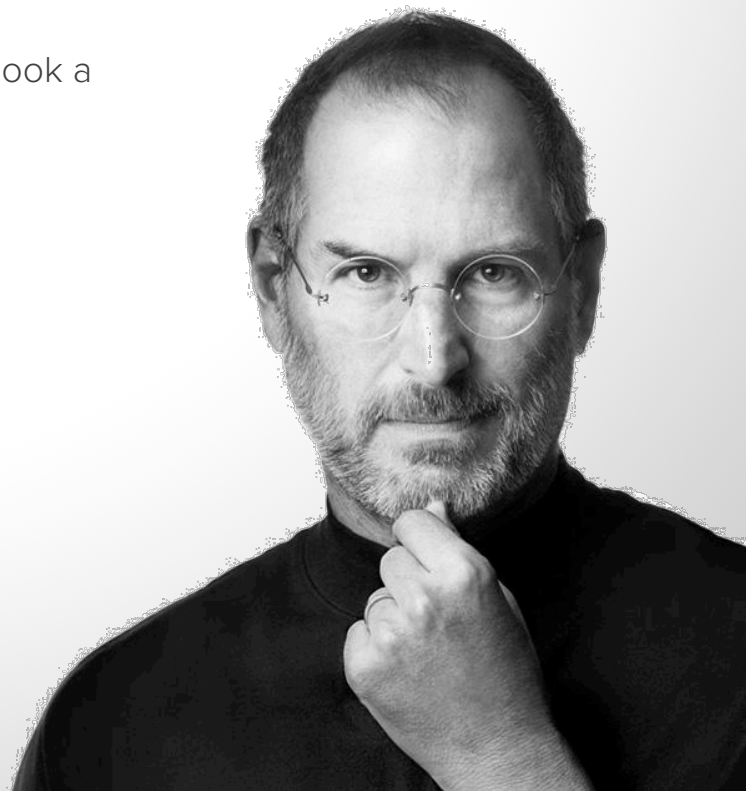
If we were to do this exercise with Steve Jobs in mind, it would look a little something like this:

- **Entrepreneur, creative, design**
- **I challenge them to see the world differently**
- **Ambitious**

We can now transform these words into a brilliant brand:

“Changing the world through innovation.”

You don't have to be famous to craft your own professional brand, you can come up with a great description for yourself if you take a few minutes to think about it in this way.



Always Add Value

The Internet is saturated with content. Readers frequently have to sift through countless amounts of irrelevant content to find valuable information.

What you publish on your online channels should address a need. Whether it is something your expertise can solve or someone who is looking to learn more about you, only post content that will add value. Here are some questions to do a quick gut check on the content you are about to post:

1. Do you have a specific expertise that benefits others?
2. Have your life experiences given you a unique outlook on how things work?
3. Will a potential employer see the value you can add to their company in your online posts?

Asking yourself these kinds of questions will help you ensure that you are adding value to your online audience, and help grow your professional brand.

Wrap-Up

Now that you have an idea of what you want your professional brand to look like, and you know how to add value, let's start creating! In the next section, we will set up your online profile so that you can start building up your brand!

Topic

2

Social Media for Your Professional Brand

Social Media for Your Professional Brand

Your social media presence makes up a large portion of your professional brand online. Not only will potential employers, partners, and clients use your social profiles to “judge” you, social media is also a great outlet for your content and opinions. For your professional brand, LinkedIn is the most powerful of the networks to build your brand and network to help you reach your goals. That doesn’t mean other social media networks aren’t important. Keep your brand consistent across all online channels and platforms, and apply all the best practices covered later on in this ebook to all networks. Now let’s dig into setting up your LinkedIn social media presence.



On LinkedIn you can establish yourself as an expert or a thought leader if you have a great public profile, publish quality content, answer posted questions, and give solid business advice in discussion groups. Unlike other platforms, LinkedIn allows you to make important business connections that can be critical to the success of your professional brand. There are numerous benefits from building an active presence on this social network and we encourage you to explore the boundless possibilities. Let's get started with creating an optimized profile for your professional brand.

Create a Great Profile

The first step in your social media presence for your professional brand is to have a great profile. This should reflect the positioning you created earlier. Here are some tips and tricks to get you started:

1) Put a face to your name

Professional headshots generate more profile views and drive higher overall engagement.



2) Create an optimized headline

Your headline is the first thing people look at on your LinkedIn profile. The headline should accurately reflect your job, industry and passion as it will help you show up in search results.

3) Tell your full story

Use the Summary and Experience sections of your profile to showcase your career and accomplishments. These sections are foundational and help establish your brand on LinkedIn.

Create a Great Profile

4) Optimize your profile for search

If you want to be found for specific keyword searches, be sure to include those terms and phrases throughout your profile. Don't "keyword stuff" include them when you are discussing relevant projects and topics.

5) Create a unique URL

Choose a professionalized URL to improve search engine optimization (SEO) and make it easy for people to find you.

EXPERT TIP:

Make your custom URL:

<http://linkedin.com/in/yourfullname>

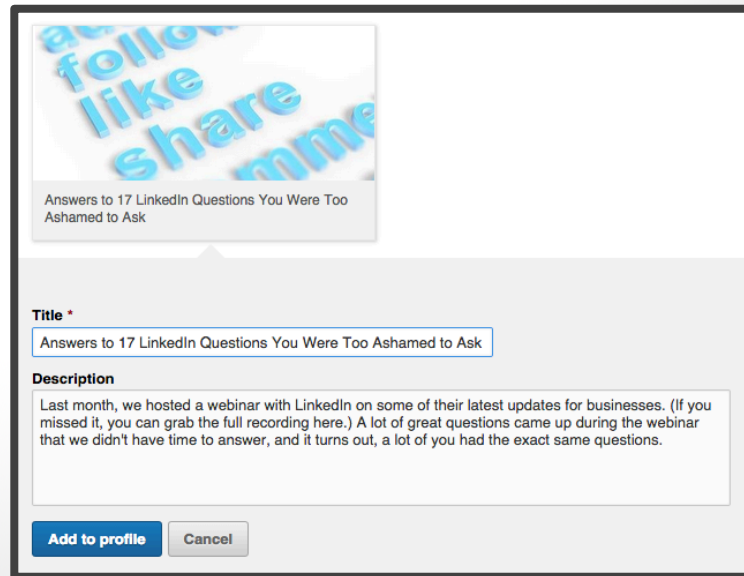
This will help your profile appear higher on Google search results.

6) Link to the rest of your web presence

Maximize opportunities to showcase your work experience by linking your LinkedIn Profile to your websites, blogs, and other social platforms.

Showcase Your Work

Nothing shows your quality of work to potential business contacts better than rich, tangible examples. Upload or link to your previous work, such as blog posts, presentations, images, and websites. These projects not only add credibility to your brand, they also shows others what you are capable of. When deciding what projects to take on you should think about how these projects impact your brand. These can be professional projects that help build your credibility, or professional projects that you are passionate about. Anything you work on that is posted online, will contribute to your professional brand.



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile showcase form. At the top is a preview of the showcase card, which features a blue background with the text 'follow like share' in white and a thumbnail image. Below the preview is the title field, which contains the text 'Answers to 17 LinkedIn Questions You Were Too Ashamed to Ask'. Below the title field is the description field, which contains the text 'Last month, we hosted a webinar with LinkedIn on some of their latest updates for businesses. (If you missed it, you can grab the full recording here.) A lot of great questions came up during the webinar that we didn't have time to answer, and it turns out, a lot of you had the exact same questions.' At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'Add to profile' and 'Cancel'.

Answers to 17 LinkedIn Questions You Were Too Ashamed to Ask

Title *

Answers to 17 LinkedIn Questions You Were Too Ashamed to Ask

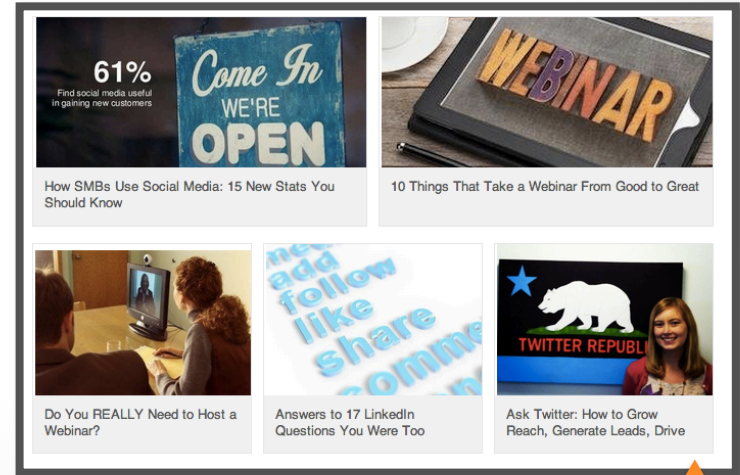
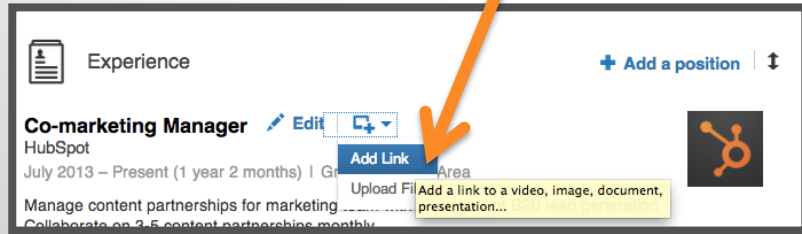
Description

Last month, we hosted a webinar with LinkedIn on some of their latest updates for businesses. (If you missed it, you can grab the full recording here.) A lot of great questions came up during the webinar that we didn't have time to answer, and it turns out, a lot of you had the exact same questions.

Add to profile **Cancel**

Showcase Your Work

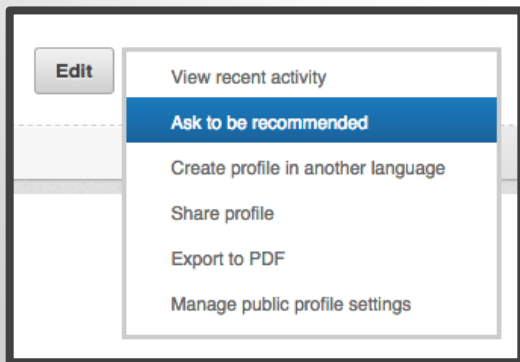
To add projects to your professional profile, simply begin editing your profile. Next to each position you will see an edit and a + option. Click on the + and this will appear:



To add a piece of content hosted online, add the link here. LinkedIn will automatically pull in the title and image used in the content. After you are done, it will look something like the example above.

Ask for Recommendations

Gaining recommendations will help bolster your credibility while galvanizing your intended professional brand. General “experience,” “honors / awards,” and “projects” simply don’t match the insight that recommendations provide. Ask colleagues, employers, and customers who can speak credibly about your abilities and contributions to write recommendations, or endorse you for a skill. This will help catch the eye of potential employers, prospective customers, and clients.



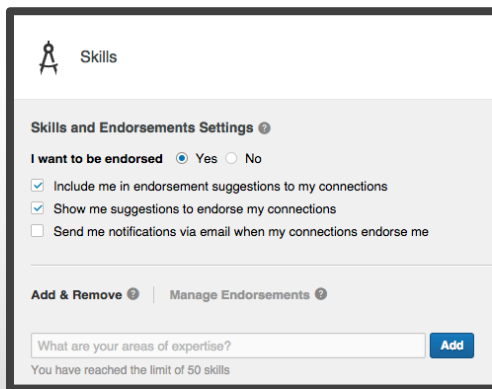
When asking for a recommendation, offer to write one in return, it’s the kind thing to do and will give you a greater chance of obtaining one. Also, ask for specifics. If you don’t ask, people will write vague, non-specific recommendations won’t do you any good. Gather specific recommendations to show razor sharp examples of your professional brand.

Include Skills & Endorsements

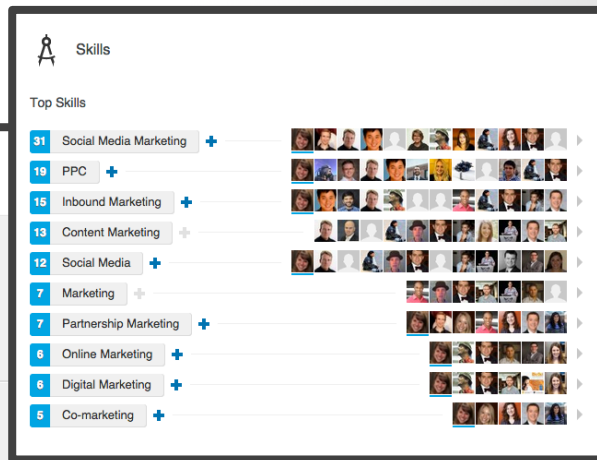
Endorsements validate your experience, skills, and overall character while highlighting the industry relevant individuals you're connected with. Include endorsements that are relevant to who you want to be portrayed as. Don't put "animation" if you're an accountant. Over time, people will endorse you more and more as you take more actions on LinkedIn.

When editing your profile, go here to include skills:

People will begin to endorse you, at which point you will see + signs and names next to each skill.

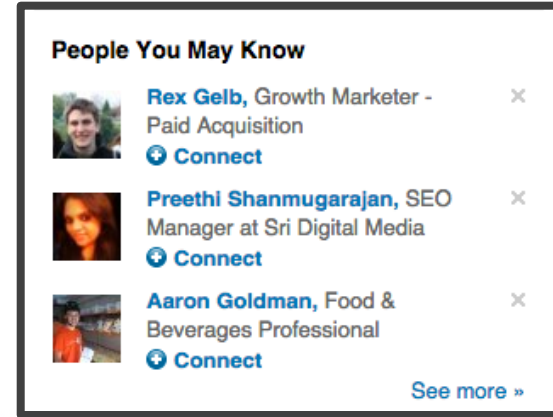


The screenshot shows the 'Skills and Endorsements Settings' page on LinkedIn. It includes a section for 'Skills and Endorsements Settings' with options to 'I want to be endorsed' (Yes/No), 'Include me in endorsement suggestions to my connections' (checked), 'Show me suggestions to endorse my connections' (checked), and 'Send me notifications via email when my connections endorse me' (unchecked). Below this is a section for 'Add & Remove' and 'Manage Endorsements'. At the bottom, there is a text input field for 'What are your areas of expertise?' with an 'Add' button and a note: 'You have reached the limit of 50 skills'.



Establish Your Network

Connecting with the right people online is critical to your professional brand success. Your connections open up opportunities for you, such as closing big deals, striking up new partnerships, landing a new job, or meeting new influencers. To get started, connect with colleagues, clients, friends, and family.



Building your network helps you connect not only with who you know, but also who they know. Further down the road, you can use your network to ask for introductions to people in their network that you want to connect with to discuss new jobs, sales deals, or other related topics.

More Ways to Establish Your Network

1) Reach out to fellow alumni: Broaden your network by connecting with members from your alma mater. Using University Pages, sort alumni by function, location, and current company, to find contacts that will help you achieve your goals.

2) Search on LinkedIn: Run a LinkedIn search to find contacts that can help you achieve your goals. Use keywords and filters like location and industry to illustrate the type of connection you're looking for.

3) Message potential contacts outside your network: Message any potential business contact on LinkedIn using InMail. On average, the response rate for InMail messages is 3x higher than email.

4) Stay in touch: Keeping an active line of communication with your contacts is key to maintaining a quality network

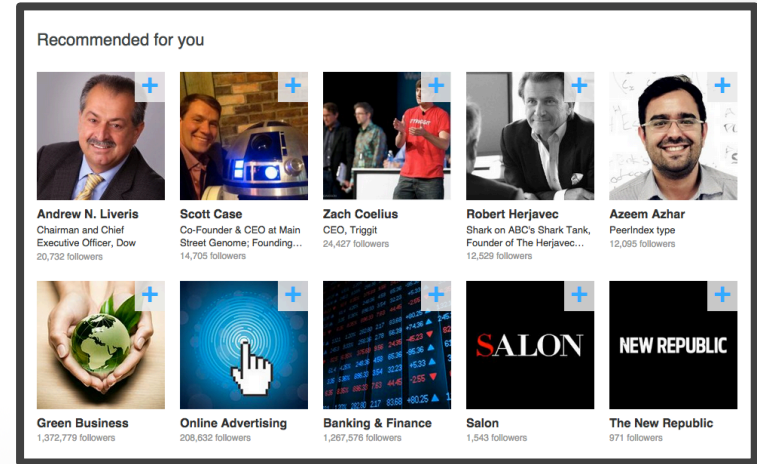
Stay Informed on LinkedIn

Follow relevant channels and Influencers

Stay informed and challenge your current thinking by following channels and Influencers relevant to your industry or specialization, which can be found under the “Interests” section on the navigation bar.

Follow companies

Learn directly from industry leaders and best-in-class brands by following companies on LinkedIn, getting their updates right in your feed.



Get Involved in Groups

Joining relevant groups will allow you to achieve your networking goals. These groups connect you with the right people who can offer advice and open doors. Unlike professional networking groups that cost money, these groups on LinkedIn offer the same value for free!

EXPERT TIP: To get the most out of groups, engage and post frequently. Because this is important, you can only successfully engage in a handful of groups, so don't try and over commit.

Focus on groups that:

- Are related to your industry or one you want to work in
- You are an expert on the topic
- Benefit your professional brand
- You will add to the discussion in a meaningful way
- Will teach you something new and beneficial

Once you have joined several groups that are relevant to your industry, use the groups as a forum to discuss topics and trends with thought leaders or experts. By providing knowledgeable insights, you can build a rapport with other top contributors and eventually establish yourself as one, too.

Grow Your Brand on LinkedIn

1) Share updates with your network

Pass along interesting articles, news, or videos you find informative. Not only will your network appreciate getting this information but they'll start to look to you for expertise and insights.

2) Like, comment, or share updates you enjoy

Taking an action on updates keeps the conversation going and helps spread that information across LinkedIn. And remember, if you found it interesting, chances are your network will too.

3) Integrate your brand into updates

Don't be shy. Promote your accomplishments, bodies of work, and other accolades through sharing on LinkedIn. For every four updates covering news and trends, try sharing a post promoting your professional brand.

Grow Your Brand on LinkedIn

4) Get a deeper look at who's viewing your profile: See the types, industries, and locations of members viewing you, as well as which keywords are being used in LinkedIn search to find you. Use this information to fine-tune your professional brand, and connect with other LinkedIn members. For example, if you notice that you are showing up in searches for “Graphic designers,” which is your old job, but you really are interested in a position similar to a “Creative Director,” try and refine your profile, posts, and discussions to be more focused on your goal of being seen as a “creative director.”

5) Start a dialogue: Ask and answer questions in both your posts as well as in groups. Providing answers to other's questions will allow for you to demonstrate the value that you can bring and position yourself as an expert. It also shows that you are personable and responsive to people online.

Topic

3

Online Action Best Practices

Online Action Best Practices

To build your professional brand online, you need to post relevant content, get into discussions, and add value. You already have (or know how to) create a great professional profile. In the next section, we will cover best practices to keep in mind when posting on your professional profile, in groups, and online in general.

Portray the Job You Want

Your online brand should portray the job you want. Describe yourself in a way that promotes your skills and accomplishments that will help you get that job. Your professional brand should be crystal clear and the job you want should be obvious to recruiters and anyone else looking at your online profile. Be sure to highlight your:

- Work ethic
- Critical thinking skills
- Creativity
- Management
- Scale
- Passion
- Problems you enjoy solving

Leveraging these skills shows recruiters that you have valuable talents that anyone would want in their office.

Focus On Thought Leadership

Being a thought leader in your industry is a way to set yourself apart from the rest. Being seen as a thought leader doesn't happen overnight. Even if you aren't ready to become a thought leader in your industry, the best practices here still apply. Here are some steps to get you started on this path:

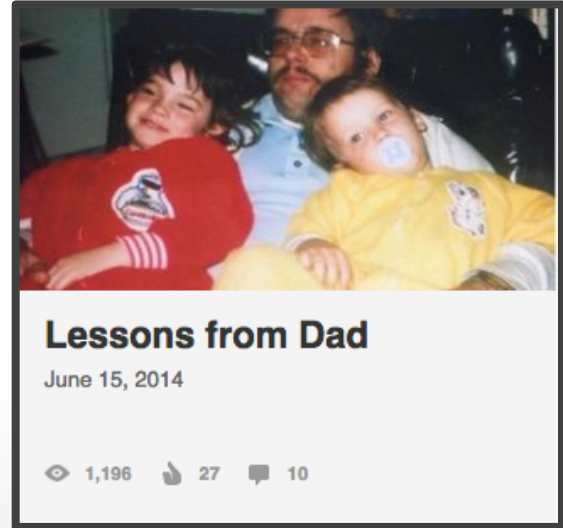
- Sign up for Google Alerts
- Stay up to date on news in your industry
- Follow industry blogs and forums (Check out alltop.com if you need a place to get started)
- Read opinion columns and try to come up with a counter argument - even if you agree with it
- Solicit advice from different industries about your own industry to hear all perspectives
- Frequently write content and share online for all to read!

The content you produce and share should reinforce your professional brand. You want to ensure that it portrays you in the right way – as an expert. We'll review this on more detail in the blogging section.

Show the Real You

People want to know who they are interacting with. This makes them feel more connected with your professional brand and you. When this professional connection through social media occurs, your followers will engage with you more often.

EXPERT TIP: Be authentic. People know when you're saying generic, over-used thoughts and sayings that have been iterated time-and-time again, so mix it up!



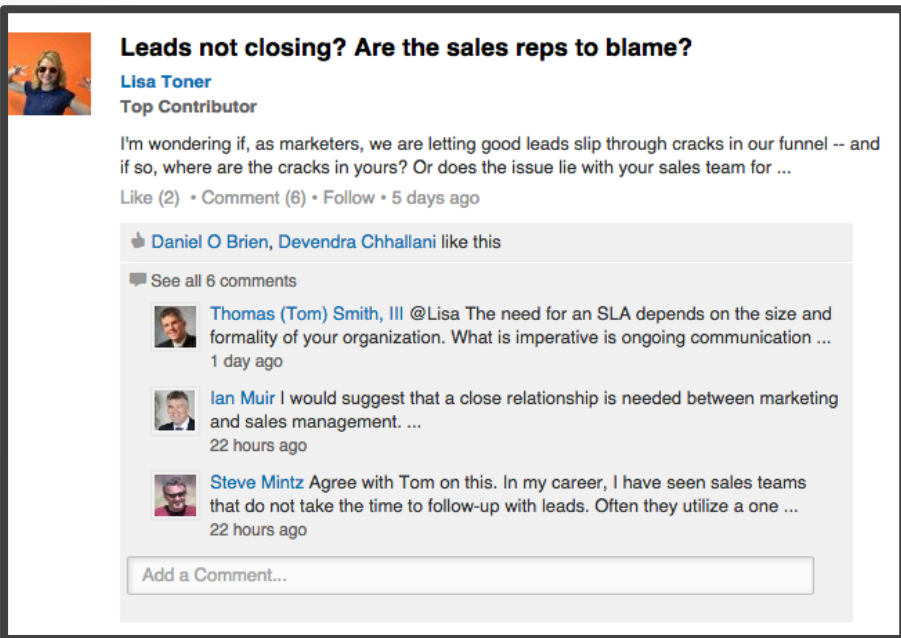
Use good judgment when posting professional content on your online profile. A picture of you at a 5k you ran? Sure. A video of you at your best friend's bachelor party? Maybe not.

Stand Out with Your Content



If you want your professional brand to stand out, use media rich content (videos, blogs, pictures, etc.) that allow for you to vibrantly tell your story. Doing so allows emotions, tone, and passion to jump through your profile, creating a robust online presence for your professional brand.

Create & Keep Your Own Tone



Leads not closing? Are the sales reps to blame?


Lisa Toner
Top Contributor


I'm wondering if, as marketers, we are letting good leads slip through cracks in our funnel -- and if so, where are the cracks in yours? Or does the issue lie with your sales team for ...


Like (2) • Comment (6) • Follow • 5 days ago

👍 Daniel O'Brien, Devendra Chhallani like this

💬 See all 6 comments

 **Thomas (Tom) Smith, III** @Lisa The need for an SLA depends on the size and formality of your organization. What is imperative is ongoing communication ...
1 day ago

 **Ian Muir** I would suggest that a close relationship is needed between marketing and sales management. ...
22 hours ago

 **Steve Mintz** Agree with Tom on this. In my career, I have seen sales teams that do not take the time to follow-up with leads. Often they utilize a one ...
22 hours ago

Add a Comment...

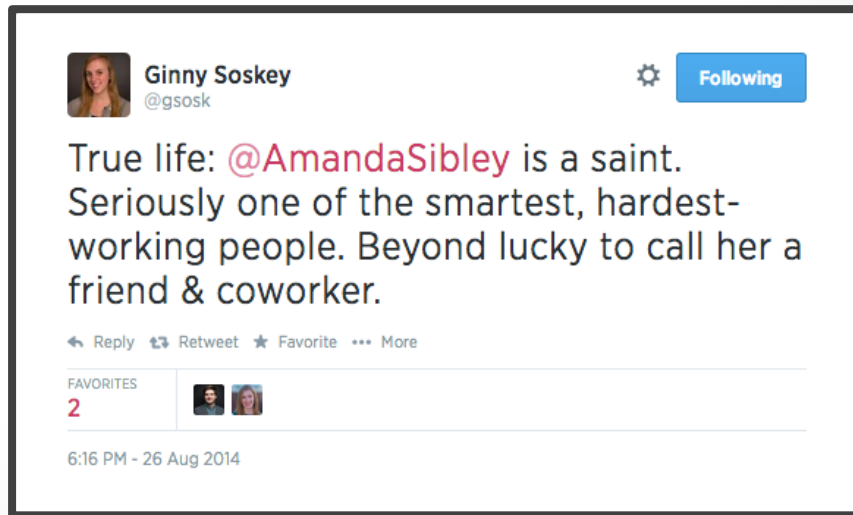
Keep your own professional tone and voice when commenting in discussions. Try recording yourself speaking, transcribe it, and see what happens. Your tone and voice may be easier to create than you think!

Make Your Audience Feel Valued

To make your followers feel valued -
Randomly highlight and compliment them
on social media. *Example: @xxxxxx,*
Thanks for being a follower, keep rockin'!
#HappyMonday

If you're sharing a happy moment with
someone offline, let your online community
know how much you appreciate spending
time with this person.

Let people know you believe in them and care about them by sending positive words out to your
network. *Example: @xxxxx is running her first marathon today! So proud! Best of luck! #26.2*



Create & Curate Content

When it comes to building your expertise, you need a steady supply of content to post online. Content you post should be related to your industry and reflect either something you are passionate about, have a question you would like to pose to your audience, or relevant in your industry. That cat photo may be cute, but is it really helping you reach that goal you set earlier?

On top of posting other's high quality content, why not try creating content of your own?

Start Your Own Blog

Blogging can be a great way to grow your professional brand. Whether you start your own professional blog, or guest blog for other publications, blogging not only positions you as a thought leader online, it also shows both potential employers or partners your areas of expertise. Being able to express your own thoughts on a blog gives your audience the ability to see the real you. It allows for you to show your expertise, your skills, your talent, and your worth, without spending a lot of money.

When it comes to blogging, have a clear purpose for writing your blog. By knowing your goal, you will be able to create content and post things that will help you reach that goal.

Blogging Best Practices

1) Set goals and expectations: Set goals for your blog, to help you stay focused. Let your audience know your plan. (Example: “I’m writing a blog on baseball and will post once every 3 days here: (insert site). I hope you enjoy the posts!)

Making this declaration will help you stick to your goal.

2) Stay relevant: Write about what people in your target market are interested in. Give them content they’re craving to read about.

3) Make it useful: Your blog content should help your audience do something better, whether it is their job or something in their professional life.

4) Blog often: People who blog more often are more likely to reach the goals they set for themselves.

EXPERT TIP: A good blogging frequency to start at is to post once a week. If that does well, try to increase the frequency and check out the results.

Successful Blog Examples

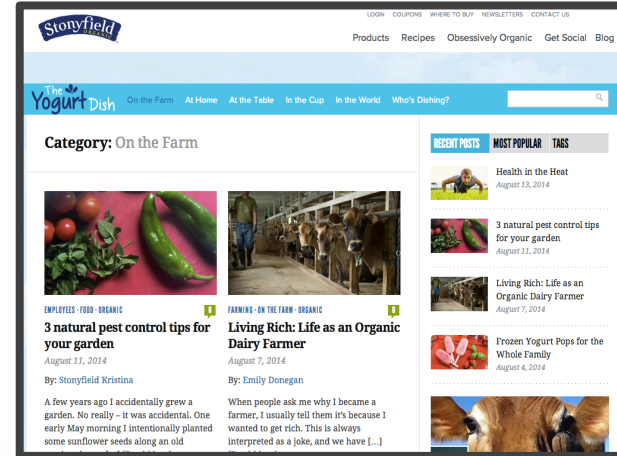
Sweet Tea Leaf humanized their blog while staying true to their brand. Instead of writing as a marketer, they're writing as humans. Sweet Leaf Tea also highlights their employees by posting photos of them giving the reader insight into their culture. By providing various dimensions to their brand and employees, it allows for more ways in which people can relate to them.



HOW TO APPLY TO YOU: Have a section on your blog that highlights your interests and hobbies. You write that you ski at Vail CO in your spare time. If someone reads this and also skis there, they may connect with you through your shared past experiences. The more relatable you make yourself the greater chance you have of connecting with more people.

Successful Blog Examples

Stonyfield Farms stays true to their brand by creating a consistent theme throughout their blog. They include articles about healthy living and pictures of happy families giving the sense of “natural.” The articles and posts customers read reinforce their initial image of Stonyfield Farms.



HOW TO APPLY TO YOU: Keep your professional brand true to who you are. If you are one person online, and another in person, you are less likely to reach the goals you set early on. When your perceived professional brand and actual professional brand align, it creates a supernova effect, resulting in one strong, unbreakable professional brand.

Be True to Your Brand

It's easy to get caught up in the “blog-o-sphere” and lose sight of your professional brand. People get temporarily passionate about something, write an emotionally charged post, and share it with their blog network. Before you start writing, always play devils advocate, reflect inward and ask, “Will this post enhance my professional brand?”

Your professional brand should reflect who you really are, and highlight your strengths correctly. If you misrepresent yourself online, it could have a serious impact on what a future employer may think of you. This could lead to uncomfortable conversations and interviews in the future.

Drive Website Traffic

For people who have professional websites, blogging can be a great way to drive traffic. Each blog post is another opportunity for a website to rank for search terms on Google. Every new indexed page equals one additional reason for Google to consider your site relevant and fresh. Having a relevant and fresh site means you'll most likely be ranked higher in Google search. This has an additional compounding effect on social media. Writing compelling content gives your readers a greater reason to share with their networks, resulting in more eyes reading your content.

Topic

4

Real World Examples

A Behind the Scenes Look

In 2013 Microsoft realized people knew little about their culture, other than the fact that they produced computers. In response, they rolled out a new marketing campaign on social media that displayed a rare behind the scenes look at the company's vibrant personalities. By showcasing their employees, it humanized the company and allowed their customers to relate in a positive and meaningful way, ultimately improving their brand.

HOW TO APPLY THIS: Use social media to build a professional brand that is relatable, welcoming, and honest. Sometimes people put up a front that give a skewed of who they really are. Don't fall into that trap; it will catch up with you, just like it did with Microsoft.

Use Visuals to be Unique

UNIQLO, a Japanese casual designer, rocked the Pinterest world with their visually appealing mosaic branding strategy. They created a mosaic of pins that lined up and formed perfect images across the screen in a mesmerizing form of online creativity and imagination. In just five days, they pulled 55 million impressions and 6 million mentions on Twitter. Popular blogs such as AdAge, Mashable, and Business Insider rendered 37 million media impressions.

HOW TO APPLY THIS: This example signifies a worthy lesson, to gather people's attention, you can't be afraid to try something different on Social Media. It sounds cheesy, and possibly contrived to make this point. In fact, it's not. Personal brands that are successful are ones that deviate from the status quo.

Put a Personal Spin on Posts



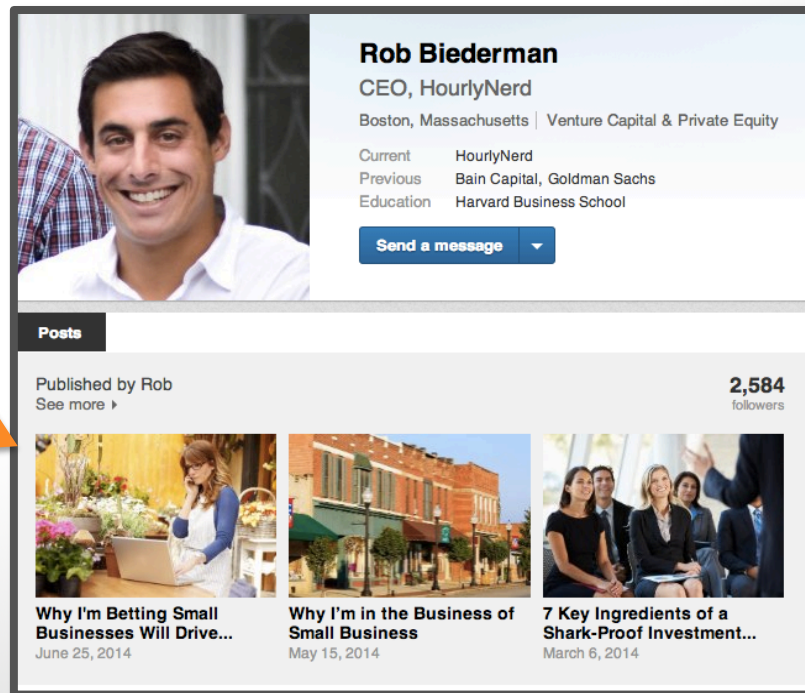
From a business standpoint, slang like *okay* and *awesome* may not fly, but from a professional branding standpoint, this is very relatable and highly successful. Rob is also congratulating someone in the post, making Peter feel valued, while additionally letting people know what he cares about!

EXPERT TIP: Let your professional brand be an extension of your inner spirit. Use language you professionally would use.

Show Off Your Expertise

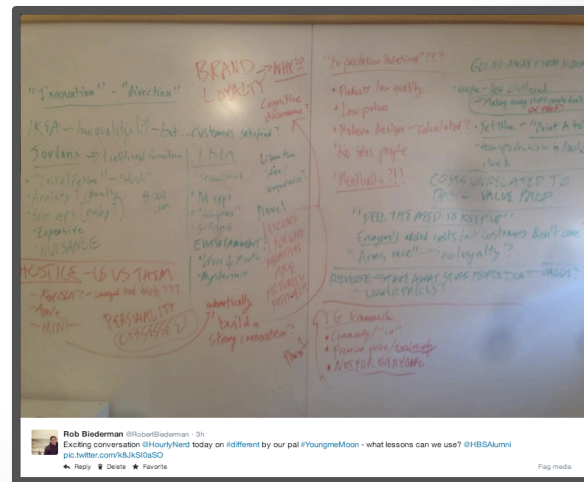
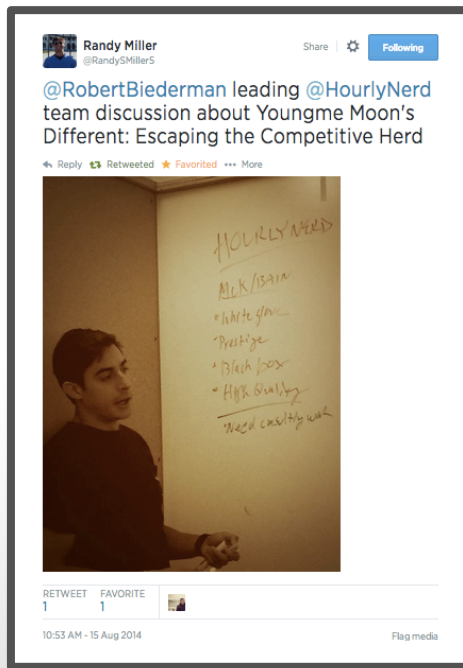
Show your audience you are immersed in your industry and are truly a thought leader. Rob Biederman, CEO of HourlyNerd includes his recently published blog posts and news articles at the top of his LinkedIn profile.

EXPERT TIP: Link any recent posts in industry publications to your LinkedIn profile.



Mix Your Passion with Your Brand

Show what you are passionate about while keeping a light tone. Here you can see engaging photos that are showing what Rob is passionate about. He is keeping his tone light and fun for his Twitter audience by adding in the words “exciting” and “pal,” while still showing the work he is passionate about.



EXPERT TIP: Mix your passions with a fun and playful tone every once and a while.

Conclusion

All in all, with these insider tips, tricks, and valuable know-how, you can use your online presence to advance yourself and your professional brand in unparalleled ways. Enjoy the process, and good luck branding!

Can't get enough of our content?

More on professional branding:



Professional branding

Shape your professional identity on LinkedIn—and make your business stand out from the crowd.

More on social selling on LinkedIn:



About Your Content Creators

LinkedIn connects the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. With more than 300 million members worldwide, including executives from every Fortune 500 company, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the internet.

HourlyNerd offers a flexible consulting platform bringing experienced professionals directly to your business. With over 7,000 premier consultants and alumni from the top 40 global MBA programs, their on-demand offering accommodates any and all project needs from SMBs to Fortune 50 enterprises.

HubSpot is the world's #1 inbound marketing software company. More than 10,000 companies, agencies, and non-profits in 56 countries use HubSpot's software, services, and expertise to engage with prospects, leads, and customers through social media, blogs, email, landing pages, and more.