



International Association of
WOMEN

HOW TO BUILD A WINNING PERSONAL BRAND (without Losing Your Peace of Mind)



The most successful entrepreneurs are more than just leaders — they are a brand unto themselves. They create a unique persona that can capture customers' attention and establish an authentic rapport.

It's easy to think this all happens effortlessly — that certain people have innate charisma and a knack for branding. But in reality, effective branding is a skill that needs to be developed over time, just like any other. Few people can simply roll out of bed and command attention.

That's why we recently partnered with Stacey Ross Cohen to discuss what makes a personal brand work, how to develop one, and some of the challenges you might face in the process. Stacey is the founder of Co-Communications, a full-service marketing communications firm that works with businesses and leaders across a range of industries and expertly positions and delivers their narratives in fiercely competitive markets. since 1997. Stacey is also co-founder of College Prime (www.college-prime.com), a company that provides social media and personal branding training to high school students to succeed with college admissions, internships, and beyond. A TEDx speaker, Stacey is a sought-after speaker for Fortune 500 companies, industry associations and more in the realm of personal branding, public relations, and marketing,

In Stacey's recent HERizon Insights Webinar with IAW, she discussed the three primary steps to building a personal brand. We've collected her insights here to help jumpstart the process and guide business leaders in getting ahead in their industries.





What Is Personal Branding?

“We are CEOs of our own companies: to be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You.”

~ Tom Peters

Management guru Tom Peters coined the term Personal Branding in 1998 Fast Company article. He famously wrote: “You are the CEO of ME Inc.—to be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called YOU”

His point: companies aren’t the only ones with brands. **Everyone** has a personal brand that defines who they are: It’s your passions, expertise, accomplishments and values. Your personal brand can be positive, neutral, or negative. What we say, write, publish, post, and click all adds up to a personal brand that carries tremendous weight — in the professional realm and the personal. This is more true than ever today, where our outputs — photos on social media, posts on blogs — are public and permanent.

A brand represents what a business stands for: its values, its personality, its mission. A personal brand represents what you stand for: your individual values, strengths, and professional goals. Personal brands aren’t unique to corner-office executives: the scholar athlete in high school, the well-read intern, and the diligent new hire all have personal brands that can play an outsized role in their success.



To be successful, you need to hone your brand, and then publicize it. And not just when you're seeking a new job or opportunity — personal brands require ongoing attention and maintenance.

Your personal brand is critical in finding new career opportunities, launching a business, growing your existing endeavors, or establishing yourself as a trusted thought leader. And so it's vital to understand exactly what's required.

To start crafting your personal brand, ask yourself the following four questions:

- What are your skills?
- What value do they create?
- What assets make you different?
- What have you done to stand out?

Far too often, people are quick to put themselves down, diminish their accomplishments, or forfeit credit to a team of colleagues.

You know what, though?

You are a huge part of everything you do, no matter the circumstances. Your ability to identify and communicate what makes you unique, the value you bring to the table, and the specific things you've done in your career that make you **stand out** are the keys to career success.

So answer these four questions honestly — and don't let humility get in the way.



The Benefits of a Powerful Personal Brand

Often, I find that women in particular will ask why they need a personal brand. There's an array of benefits, so let's focus on the most impactful:



Greater Credibility – People will trust you because they can see what you've accomplished and how you've helped others like them. A strong personal brand sets up success even before that first handshake



Recognition and Prestige – You'll get recognition in circles outside of your personal and professional network for your accomplishments. This ranges from the small – endorsements on LinkedIn, RTs on Twitter – to larger opportunities like speaking invitations and job offers



Higher Perceived Value – The value of what you do will be higher to those who hire you. When you have a strong personal brand, your company is eager to tout your reputation and past successes



Increased Career Opportunities/Upward Mobility – There will be more opportunities to expand and move up in your career as you showcase your value to senior decision makers

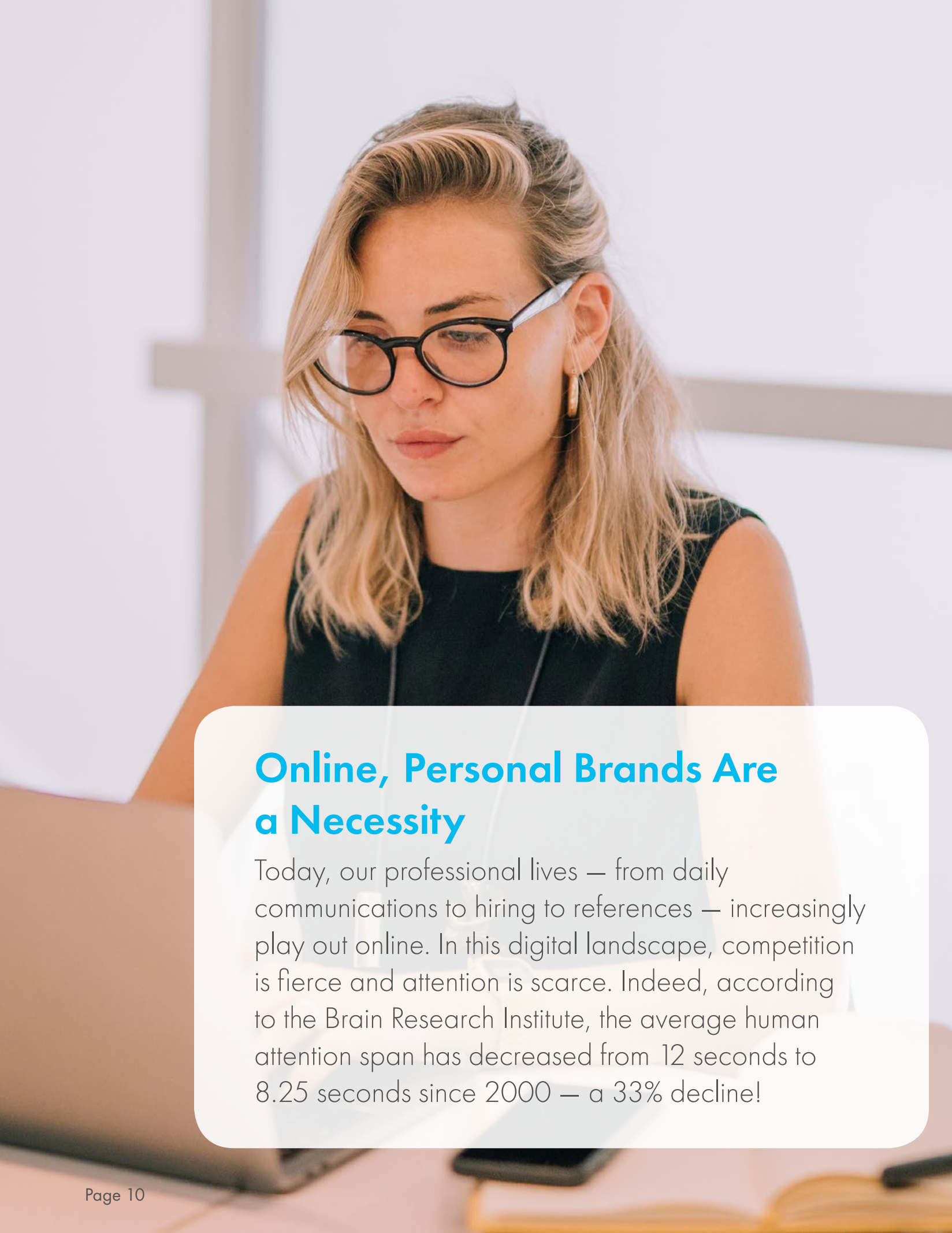


Rewarding Partnerships – You can build new partnerships that will help grow your business efforts, both now and in the future



Higher Salary – Demand a higher salary as a result of your greater expertise within the field

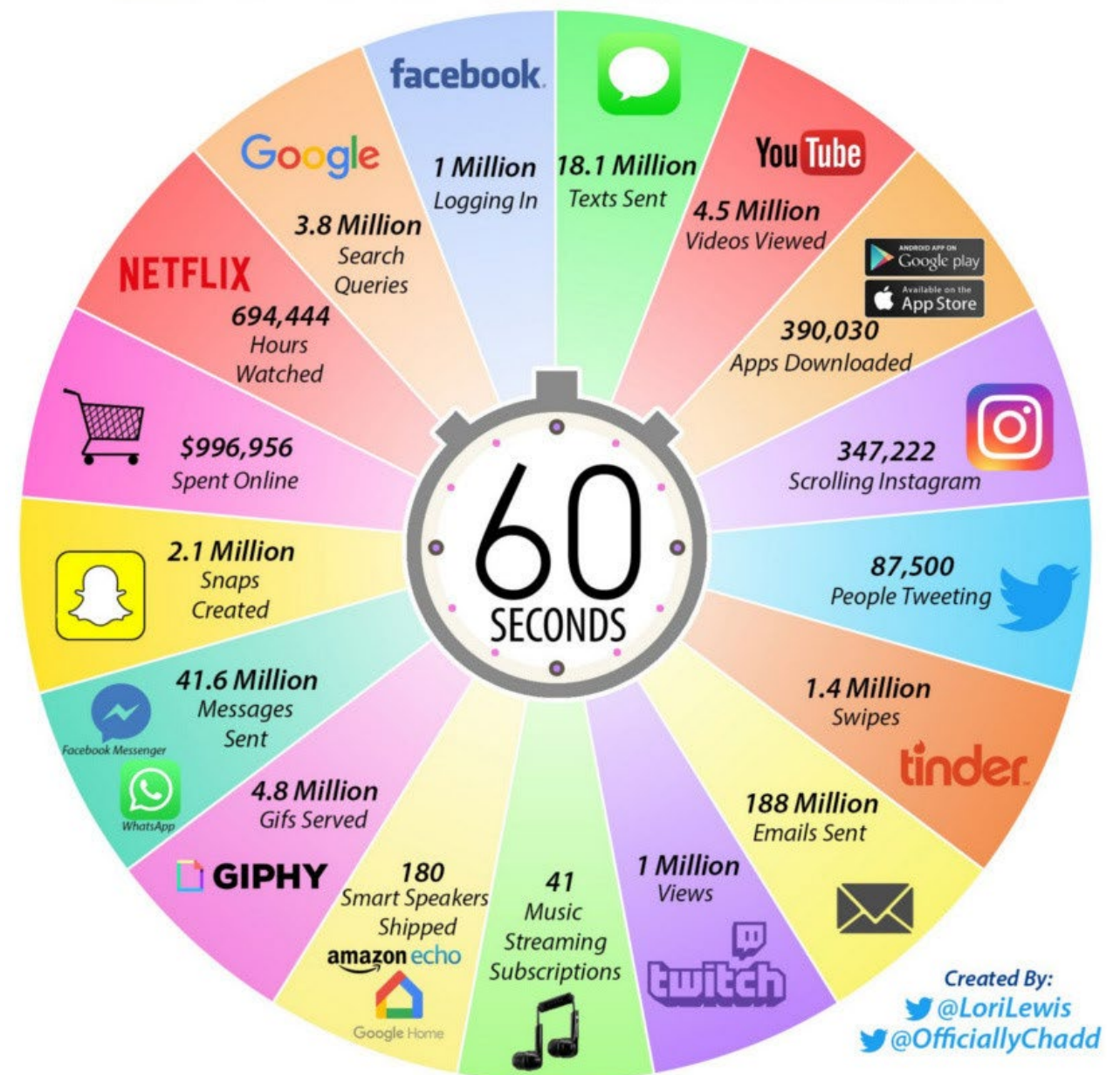
The better you position yourself as a credible expert that people turn to for insights, the more successful you will be in all of your endeavors.



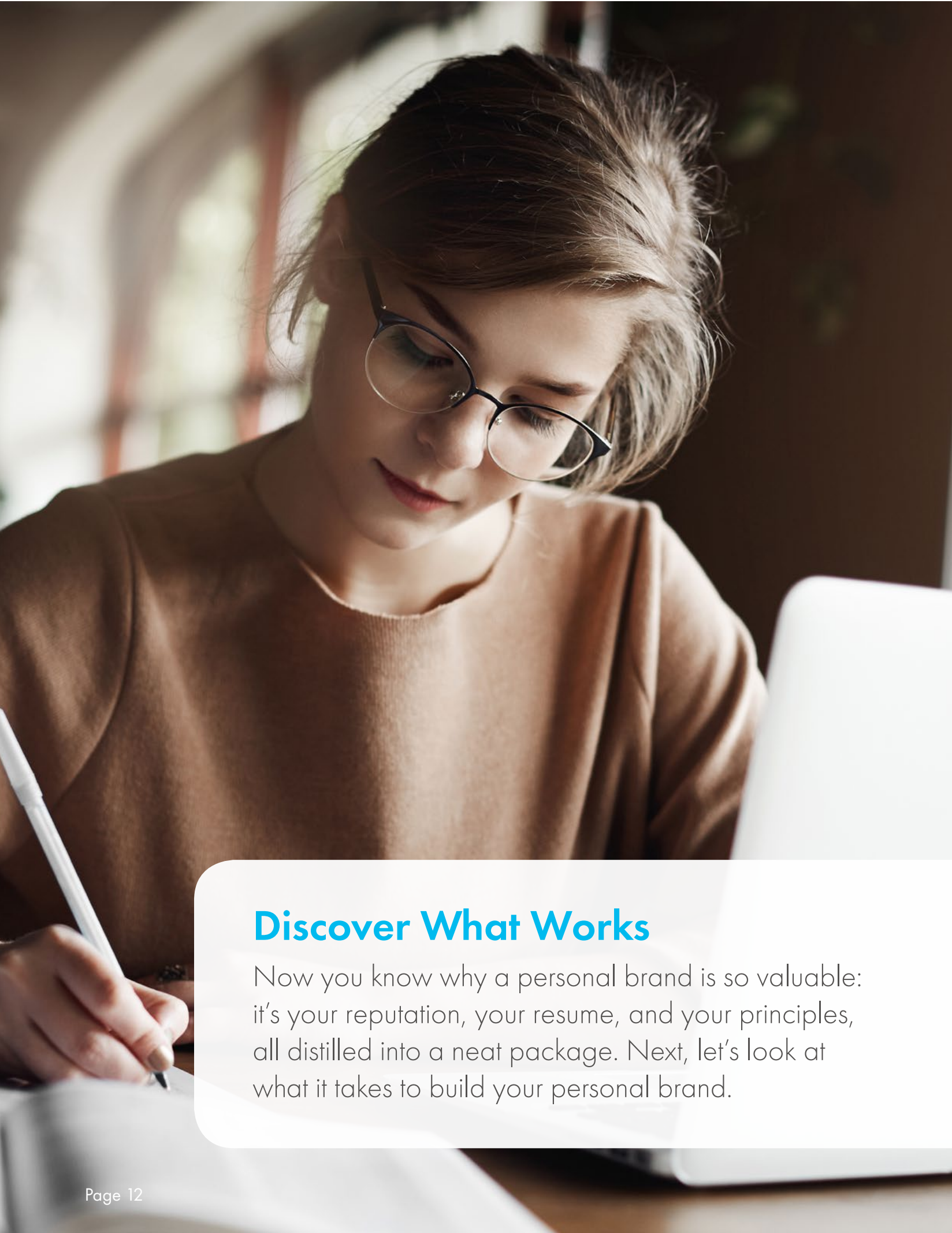
Online, Personal Brands Are a Necessity

Today, our professional lives — from daily communications to hiring to references — increasingly play out online. In this digital landscape, competition is fierce and attention is scarce. Indeed, according to the Brain Research Institute, the average human attention span has decreased from 12 seconds to 8.25 seconds since 2000 — a 33% decline!

2019 *This Is What Happens In An Internet Minute*



For this reason, personal brands are now a necessity, not a luxury. A personal brand makes you memorable and ubiquitous — you can break through the clutter of the internet minute, and stand out among the dozens (hundreds? thousands?) of similar resumes or online profiles.



Discover What Works

Now you know why a personal brand is so valuable: it's your reputation, your resume, and your principles, all distilled into a neat package. Next, let's look at what it takes to build your personal brand.

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Step one in that journey is to create a map — an action plan that clearly defines your personal brand in a way that is unique to you.

Far too often, when people begin this process, they throw things at the wall to see what sticks: You may feel drawn to platitudes ("team player"), or feel obligated to generate a long list of skills. You'll quickly find yourself going in circles — it's like getting in the car without a destination.

To focus your work and build a more effective roadmap, follow these three simple steps:

01

Understand Your Target Audience

02

Know Your Competition

03

Define Your Value Proposition



1

Understand Your Target Audience

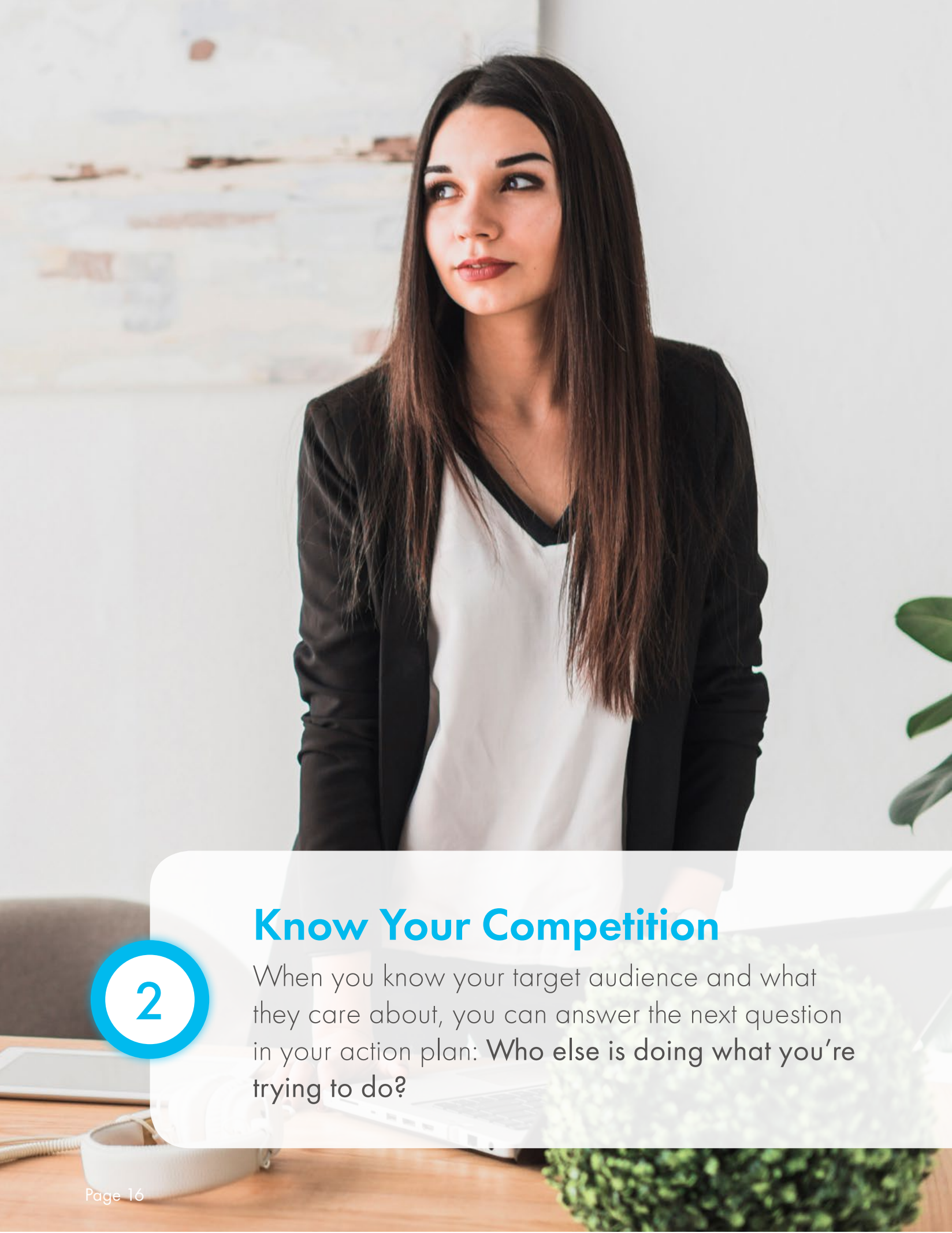
Ask yourself: Who are you trying to reach, what do they care about, and where do they spend their time?

No matter what your goals, these three questions should be the first step in building your personal brand. The answers will vary wildly from person to person: Perhaps you're trying to reach hiring managers in your industry, Fortune 500 executives who are assembling new teams, or small business owners seeking marketing expertise. Regardless, answering these questions will provide you with the baseline you need to fully understand your audience. To continue the car metaphor: You now have your destination.

For inspiration, look to your existing client base or network. Most likely, your target audience is among this group. Pick one or two relevant people, and put yourself in their shoes: What does the perfect hire, or consultant, look like to them?

By identifying your precise audience, you can build a personal brand that speaks directly to them; one that answers the most fundamental question — **what's in it for me?**

All said, don't make this more complicated than it needs to be. You likely already know the answers to these questions. Just take the time to write them down.



2

Know Your Competition

When you know your target audience and what they care about, you can answer the next question in your action plan: **Who else is doing what you're trying to do?**

Spend time on Twitter, LinkedIn, and other platforms, studying how similar professionals are presenting themselves, framing their work and accomplishments, and weighing in on relevant news. Do they have personal websites? Portfolios? Case studies?

Competitive research has several benefits. To start, it helps you know where the bar is — you don't want your personal brand to underwhelm. You'll learn what you need to accomplish to break through the noise and stand out, whether that means a Twitter handle that dispenses industry wisdom, or a digital portfolio that lays out your past successes.

Additionally, through conducting competitive research, you'll learn:



The types of messaging that are currently resonating with your target audience



The value propositions that are already being presented



Some of the tactics others are using to reach your audience

Again, it's all about breaking through the noise of the internet minute. Give yourself every advantage in doing so.



Define Your Value Proposition

3

Finally, take a moment to clearly define your value proposition. That is: Why should someone choose you over the competition?

At this stage, you know two things:



The identity and preferences of your target audience



Your competition and how they are reaching out to those same people

Your value proposition should be presented with both of these in mind. It should speak to your audience in the language they are most likely to respond to. How do they define the problems they routinely face? Use those words to describe your solution.

It should also speak to the weaknesses you perceive in your competition. What do you do that others don't? Why are you better?

At the end of the day, what you offer may be the same, but how you present it can make all the difference

Develop the Resources to Succeed

By now, you've come a long way: You know what your audience looks like, who you're up against, and how to present yourself in a way that resonates.

Time to take action.

The next step is building your toolkit – gathering the resources needed to execute successful campaigns that build your brand and reach your audience. These tools include:

The Profile / Bio

Craft the perfect profile of yourself. Even if you have a well-written bio already in place, take the time to evaluate it. Does it **really** speak to your target audience — are you using the right vocabulary and tone? Does it answer their questions and tout your core value proposition?

Most of the time, the answer to this question is “no.”

As you rework your bio, keep these best practices in mind:

Use professional photography. Headshots are often the first thing your audience sees and interacts with when they read a profile. Invest in high-quality, current headshots that represents how you want to be seen: thoughtful, curious, stoic, diligent. They might be purely professional, or more casual, depending on your industry. It's often good to have several headshots: a portrait, an environmental portrait, a candid portrait, and a lifestyle shot.

Be economic with your words. Keep your profile concise, but packed with relevant value. Every word counts. If a sentence doesn't highlight a specific accomplishment or skill, lose it.

Customize. Create multiple versions of your bio, both short and long: a tweet-length one, a paragraph one, and a half-page one. You can deploy these versions as appropriate.

Fine tune. Read and reread your bio to make sure all of the core values you offer come through. Run it by your colleagues to get feedback, as well.



Social Media

When it comes to personal brands, your social media presence is paramount. Realistically, you can only manage so many profiles, so choose a handful of social media profiles that represent your target audience best, and invest your time there. For example: If you’re a journalist, Twitter is the place to be. If you’re in human resources, LinkedIn is your go-to platform. If you’re in event marketing, Instagram is likely your best bet. And remember: Be consistent across all social media handles. Your headshot, and tone of voice, should transcend platforms.

Here’s an overview of the most popular platforms:



Twitter



Facebook



LinkedIn



Instagram



YouTube



SnapChat



Pinterest



Reddit



In addition to your bio and social media, there are several other essential components of your toolkit:



Business Cards. Like your bio, keep them short, sweet, and memorable



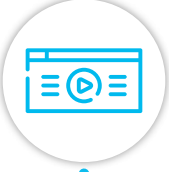
Thank You Notes. Custom stationary and old-school snail mail leave a positive impression



Cover Letter Template. Have a boilerplate template that you can easily customize for new opportunities



Bylined Articles. Show that you're a thought leader in your industry by blogging, or writing op-eds, about relevant news



Video Content. If you've given talks at conferences, spoken on camera with press, or presented on a webinar, edit the highlights together into a sizzle reel



Testimonials and References. Ask past and current colleagues and clients for pithy descriptions of you and your work

The goal here is to display your expertise in as many formats as possible; different mediums may resonate more or less with different members of your target audience.





Deliver through a Multi-Channel Approach

With your tools ready, it's time to deliver the goods and start generating engagement.

This might feel like the most overwhelming moment: There are **so many** options for how to reach your target audience online, and there is a natural tendency to overreach. Why not have a website **and** impressive social media presence **and** lengthy roster of speaking engagements?

To help prioritize, let's dive into some of the most effective channels, and also the content you can produce to share on these channels. While it's important to warn against spreading yourself too thin, it's equally important to build a multi-channel approach that engages with people across several different online locations. One or two isn't enough – no one spends enough time on any one site to ensure they see your content. That's why you need to select a handful of different outlets from the list below:

Website

A personal website allows you to craft content exactly as you want it to look. It's what's called "owned" media. With the right search engine optimization (SEO) program, you can also work to get your content ranked in Google's search results, matching the questions your audience is asking. It's free advertising.

Social Media

A robust social media portfolio includes accounts on all the relevant major channels. You can share content with your contacts and followers, and amplify your reach through paid advertising, partnerships with other social profiles, and more.

03

Media Relations

Press releases and news updates can announce new content you've published, upcoming speaking engagements, or big changes in your business. You can also send article pitches to print and digital media to expand your reach.

04

Speaking Engagements

Apply to speak at upcoming conferences that are relevant in your field of expertise. You can also continue building your local network through speaking opportunities at nearby colleges, business groups, and meetups.

05

Blog

A blog provides a personal platform on which you can write, produce, and publish anything you like in the format that best fits what you want to accomplish.

06

Email Marketing

Send emails to your existing database of contacts. Create a sign-up form on your blog and your website to capture new contacts. Leverage the most effective marketing tool at your disposal — an email list — to deliver high quality content to everyone in your network.


07

Podcasting


Podcasting has exploded in popularity. With direct access to millions of smart devices around the country, you can present thought leadership, engage with other leaders through interviews, and grow your network with audio content.

The Types of Content You Share


Through these channels, content types can vary widely. Blog content should lead the way, as it's the most accessible. Other content includes:




Case Studies




White Papers




Webinars




Podcasts




News Releases




eBooks




Email Marketing




Infographics



Video



Checklists



Bylined Articles



Seems like a lot, huh?

Remember, these are **options** for how to share your expertise. Few experts leverage all or nearly all of these, especially in the early stages. The goal is to produce the right amount of great content, not to produce a lot of mediocre content.

Focus on what you know you can produce at a high level — perhaps you're a talented op-ed writer, or designer, or panelist. Also prioritize content that excels at reflecting your value proposition.



Evaluate, Measure, and Repeat

Everything until now has relied on what you already know about your audience. It's been a lot of assumptions. Educated assumptions, yes, but still assumptions that have the chance to be wrong.

To measure success, you need more tools — this time to analyze, and then optimize, the results of your efforts. This applies to not only social media, but to the core pieces of your content plan. Some of the tracking tools you should have in place include:



Facebook Insights

Facebook provides insights on how many people engage with, read, and click through the content you post on your Page, both paid and organic.



Twitter Analytics

Learn which tweets are getting the most clicks, likes, and generating the most follows — and, which ones aren't.



LinkedIn Analytics

LinkedIn provides a **social selling index** statistic that shows how well you are presenting content, engaging with your contacts, and standing out in a crowded field online. You can also see how your score compares overall in your industry and with people in your network.



Google Analytics

See how many people visit your website, what they read, where they go after they arrive, and what your traffic sources look like.



Social Management Tools

Tools that you can use to manage social media distribution like Buffer and HootSuite also offer more advanced analytics for retweets, mentions, favorites, shares and the like.



10 Rules to Live By

In summary: Your personal brand is your beacon in the professional world. It attracts the attention of the right people, who can engage with your content and establish a rapport with you. Whether you're building a business, moving up at your current job, or looking for new opportunities, your personal brand has the potential to push you to the next level.

This isn't a one-time thing that will help you get a new job (though it certainly can). It is a reflection of your entire career. The more you put into it, the greater rewards you can reap, and the more likely you are to find success in all of your endeavors.

To keep you focused, here are Stacey's 10 Rules to Live By, and a recap of what we've covered in this guide.

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|----|--|----|--|
| 01 | Start with a plan | 01 | Content needs to be great and relevant to your audience |
| 02 | Know who you are, and your value proposition | 02 | Take a stand for what you believe in with your content |
| 03 | Take ownership of your brand | 03 | NETWORK = Net worth – Keep growing your network consistently |
| 03 | Know your audience and best channels to reach them | 03 | Measure results to ensure success |
| 03 | Develop a "ready to go" toolkit of brand resources | 03 | Personal branding is for life — this isn't a one-time action |



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WOMEN

The International Association of Women (IAW) is a global in-person and online professional networking platform that provides women with the forum, education, and services to thrive in an interconnected world.

IAW members have diverse backgrounds, beliefs, perspectives, and lifestyles, but with one common bond — their ability to succeed. Through over 100 local chapters and via in-person and virtual events, our community empowers each member to realize their dreams, acquire the connections and knowledge needed to rise, and helps them build better work–life integration and the confidence that is vital to lead.

Visit <https://hubs.ly/H0fp7180>
to learn more and join today