

Personal Branding, Social Media & Networking and Viral Marketing for Industry

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Sales Aerobics for Engineers

If the Internet is the new Word of Mouth, what are you and your technical team doing to increase knowledge of your brand, capabilities, services and deliverables?

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About Me

Babette Burdick brings to **Sales Aerobics for Engineers** a rich background based on her training in scientific and clinical research as well as in Six Sigma and Lean manufacturing processes and practices. Her experience in sales and marketing, both in the pharmaceutical and industrial arenas, round out her focus on why today's engineers need to be able to confidently incorporate upstream and downstream business information to provide value to their organizations.

Babette incorporates her scientific and medical background and research-oriented approach to today's manufacturing challenges. Throughout her career, she was called on to facilitate meetings between R&D and marketing folks, providing the "simultaneous translation" skill set that resulted in all parties seated around the table speaking productively and respectfully. The result: many "aha" moments, where the technically-oriented, objective science and engineering folks and the subjective and speculative marketing and sales folks got to the "Gee, I didn't know you could do that?!" discussion. Magic. Innovation. Collaboration. Revenue generation.

From a background in scientific and clinical research, Babette moved into New Product Development and Marketing Research as her "simultaneous translation" skill set grew. She focuses on New Product Development involving scaling up prototype products to full-scale production, including anticipation and identification of operations issues.

In 2003, Babette turned her focus to the manufacturing arena. During the course of developing internet marketing strategies for customers involved with ThomasNet.com solutions, she realized that many small- to mid-sized companies had limited budgets and poor understanding of the marketing and sales process. The Internet was growing exponentially, along with the concept of viral marketing. Babette was able to connect the dots for her clients, resulting in developing solid marketing and sales strategies that drive revenue.

Babette continues to strive for the "aha" moments in every dialogue she has with clients, prospects and associates.

Sales Aerobics for Engineers

If the Internet is the new Word of Mouth, what are you and your technical team doing to increase knowledge of your brand, capabilities, services and deliverables?

Introduction

In the past six months, my clients and prospects – industrial manufacturers, distributors and service companies and entrepreneurs in these areas - have been asking me to clarify what is happening on today's Internet in terms of how they should market themselves and their companies. Although the key decision makers in these corporations tend to dismiss social marketing and networking mainly because they themselves aren't participating, they realized from talking to younger employees that they could no longer ignore this aspect of internet marketing.

The economy has exacted a serious toll on the industrial sector of this great country. Many engineers, IT professionals and technical staff of these companies have lost their jobs or have had their workday significantly scaled down. These individuals are now job hunting in a Business 2.0 world, but are limiting themselves to posting on internet job boards such as Monster.com. Their concept of social networking is attending the monthly local career networking breakfast.

These people and companies collectively asked me to de-mystify the Internet-based process of social networking and social marketing. They realized that they could not permit their lack of participation to be a function of their generation's internet usage habits. They conceded that social marketing and social networking is a critical part of ongoing professional development and business planning.

This e-book resulted from a seminar I gave for clients, prospects and displaced engineers, IT professionals and technical staff in July 2009.

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Babette Burdick
President and Founder
Sales Aerobics for Engineers
July, 2009

CHAPTER 1: The Internet: A Paradigm Shift in Communication

Let's face it. I wouldn't be writing this e-book if it weren't for the advent of the Internet. The Internet has revolutionized information sharing. It has globalized how we see ourselves. Enough books have been written on the subject of the impact of the Internet— and will continue to be written on this subject – that I will let this subject rest on its own merits.

Without the Internet, there would be no social networking. Social networking is entirely a function of this mode of communication. The adoption of usage of various social networking venues for various social networking purposes is nothing short of logarithmic.

If you've seen a digital map of usage patterns for the Internet, it looks like a bunch of tangled threads lacing the globe. If you've ever seen a computerized model of evolutionary pathways and chaos theory, you've seen the same thing.

Usage of the Internet to acquire and share ideas, concepts, values and perspectives has no boundaries. Once you put an idea out on the Internet, even with the best of Plans, you have no control over where it will end up, who your idea will inspire or what new products will be developed.

This e-book is a high-level guide to:

WHAT social networking is all about;

WHO is and should be engaged in social networking;

WHERE social networking sites reside; and

WHY social networking should be an important element of personal and industrial business development and branding.

Let's face it, when's the last time you read a newspaper..... in hard copy format?

CHAPTER 2: Social Media and Social Networking: Some Definitions

“At its most basic sense, social media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, v-logs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowd sourcing, and voice over IP (VOIP), to name a few.”
Wikipedia and Brian Clark, Founder, www.copyblogger.com

Social media venues are internet sites where people go to congregate and share ideas. The underlying principle of the people who write for and on social media sites is Personal Branding. This e-book is not a “how-to” guide for getting started on social media sites as much as it is a “why should you be doing so in the first place? A social media site is WHERE you go to engage in activity.

Social networking, then, describes groups of users of social media sites tied together because of shared or similar interests, perspective, expertise, vision, values, etc, Social networking is WHAT you do once on that social media site. It describes your level of involvement and the involvement of others using that site.

Viral Marketing is the process by which information about products and services is disseminated, adopted and used via placement of marketing messages, value propositions and product information on social media sites or pre-existing / specifically- created destination Internet sites for the purpose of brand-building.

Rather than letting the social media venues and social networking conversations dictate how and why you engage in social networking, I strongly recommend having a **Plan** for seeking social media sites, acquiring information and electing to participate in social marketing and networking on these sites and perhaps even on your own site.

CHAPTER 3: Personal Branding

The concept, keyword phrase, development and implementation of **Personal Branding** were created by Dan Schawbel, www.personalbrandingblog.com and the author of many books including his most recent book: *Me 2.0*.

Personal Branding has been embraced by the Gen Y's and Millennial's but may be a foreign concept to older generations engaged in social networking. When you consider that the Internet of the pre- and post Boomers didn't morph into Internet 2.0 until recently, habits and usage patterns need to be moved forward. Participation and engagement in social media isn't confined to young people. Not by a long shot.

I consider **Personal Branding** to be the conceptual process of articulating and validating your passion, expertise and network which are focused around a particular industry, skill set or point of view. It's a cognitive process involving personal inventory.

William Arruda, of Reach Communications, writing about Career Distinction, describes Personal Branding as "unearthing what makes you exceptional and developing plans to use that to demonstrate value and achieve your goals." (*Foreword to Me 2.0*)

"Personal branding describes the process by which individuals and entrepreneurs differentiate themselves and stand out from a crowd by identifying and articulating their unique value proposition , whether professional or personal, and then leverage it across platforms with a consistent message or image to achieve a specific goal. In this way, individuals can enhance their recognition as experts in their field, establish reputation and credibility, advance their careers, and build self-confidence." (Italics and boldface mine),

Dan Schawbel, Me 2.0, p4

Why You Need Personal Branding

By now, I hope you realize that developing a personal brand for yourself allows you to communicate consistently, efficiently and creatively with peers and thought leaders on social networking sites. It's your point of view, the one you've developed over the years, something that's unique to you. It makes the difference between whether a prospective or current employer commoditizes you or differentiates you, whether you are perceived as an asset or a liability and, quite frankly, HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF.

Perhaps the first person you need to validate your Personal Brand to is yourself.

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So why do you need to develop a Personal Brand? **BECAUSE IT'S TIME.....**

You just never know when you might need your Personal Brand, especially in this challenging economy. You certainly can't count on the status quo anymore.

According to Dan Schawbel and Bill Arruda, change is the only constant in the workplace. (Me 2.0, Foreword, xi)

And people use the Internet to "check you out"..... Constantly.

Ask any Gen Y or Millennial and they will tell you that you are only as good as your last project or sale. The days of getting a job for life and then easing into a graceful retirement are long gone. In fact, Gen Y's and Millennial's see nothing wrong in changing jobs in less than 2 year intervals. They feel they are being proactive and managing their next career move. To them, it's the norm.

Developing a Personal Brand makes you a more valuable asset, whether to your current Company, a potential employer, or to your own enterprise, pre- or post- retirement. While those job-hopping Gen Y's and Millennial's may be after you to retire so that your position opens up for them, many pre- and post- Boomers want to (or have to) continue working long past retirement, whether it's putting your skill set into a new venture or some form of stewardship role, or finding a job to pay the bills.

You may be starting a business venture and need investors. Perhaps you are changing careers. Individuals that you approach – investors, lawyers, HR, employers current and future – are using the internet as a resource for personal and professional information.... about YOU! Having and communicating a strong Personal Brand confirms their decision to do business with you.

Think about it.....

Creating a compelling personal and professional brand is not just for job seekers. It can establish leadership and expertise that are often hidden within your current career or stewardship path or retirement mode.

Personal Branding is a way of differentiating yourself from the crowd. If you are waiting for someone to notice you and pick you out from everyone else, don't count on it. If you are counting on your boss to recognize you for the work you are doing for the Company, you won't be distinguished by fading into the wallpaper. You must market yourself, your skills and your value in order to be rewarded.

Personal Branding and marketing are not a form of narcissism. They are a necessity in today's global community.

Personal Branding, the Industrial Sector and Engineers, IT and Technical Professionals

The concept of Personal Branding is counterintuitive to the Industrial sector. The Industrial sector lags behind B2C companies in how they perceive the impact of the Internet in driving revenue for their business. Many industrial websites still tend to be perceived as “informational sites.”

Ask yourself this: with less people doing more work for their companies, who has time to read a website cover to cover? A website needs to convey to the reader, in 2 to 5 seconds, what the Company Brand is and what the Company Value Proposition is all about. Or else the visitor to the website will hit the back button and go elsewhere.

And here’s the problem: because engineering, IT and technical folks are uncomfortable “blowing their own horns” as well. They are hoping that people understand what they do and will choose to do business with them based on some non-articulated assessment that these folks are the guys and gals to do the job.

Let’s face it. No one “gets” what you do unless you tell them. Overcoming the self-articulation hurdle is the greatest rate-limiting step to engaging in social networking and marketing. This hurdle also may be the rate-limiting step in your ability to be successful in your career.

Telling an engineer, IT professional or technical professional engaged in the industrial sector that they need to be who they already are, online, is like speaking Martian. It’s time to learn that language. It is not beyond your grasp. However, it may be a risk that you are going to have to take.

If you don’t already know who you are (and this probably sounds like “what is the meaning of life?”) ask yourself:

1. What do I bring to the table day in and day out at my place of work, throughout all the jobs I’ve had, that no one else can deliver? (thoroughness, breadth and depth of understanding complex technical problems, ability to work in multifunctional work teams, team player, communicator, understanding of impact of solutions on profit and loss, aware of industry trends)
2. Why do I bring this skill set to the table? (advanced degrees, continuing education, prior work experience, being picked for Special Assignments, participating in professional organizations and election to governing body, cross-training, etc.)
3. What are additional skills or areas of interest that make “me” ME: stewardship, mentorship, hobbies
4. What else do I bring to the table that creates **VALUE**?

The Four Corners of Personal Branding

Personal Branding involves, in the words of Dan Schawbel in *Me 2.0*:

Authenticity

Consistency

Accountability

Establishing Trust and Loyalty

Lack of Excessive Self-Promotion

Authenticity in Personal Branding

Let's consider Authenticity, because it's key to Personal Branding and involves taking that Personal Inventory. You are who you are. You have always brought the same skill set to the table throughout school and work. Perhaps even on the playground in kindergarten. Now that's a thought!

Personal Branding isn't a license to "reinvent yourself or recreate yourself a number of times to be all things to all people. If you are job-seeking, you probably have a number of different resumes, well-crafted, shifting around areas of emphasis so that your story appears a "no-brainer" to HR.

You only have one Personal Brand. I repeat: you only have one Personal Brand. It is enduring, continuous and constant. Sort of like an icebreaker ship going through rough seas. It makes you who you are, in spite of your career choices or educational decisions. Discover it, honor it, validate it.

The concept of Personal Branding brings you face to face with yourself. **You cannot be all things to all people in an attempt to be open to all opportunities, just in case. You are a specialist, rather than a generalist.** And while you "could" lend your skills to a number of different types of jobs, and probably have during the course of your career, these stopgaps are not fulfilling or enduring. Being in touch with, and able to articulate, your Personal Brand is essential to finding your next job, career move, business venture, customer and any and everything you touch as an individual.

A note of caution when developing your Personal Brand: take your time and be certain your Personal Brand truly is representative of who you truly are. When you elect to participate and engage in social networking, you must be your own author at all times. Otherwise, you will be found out rather immediately! Borrowing other people's ideas and representing them as yours to gain entry into social groups **WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING THESE PEOPLE AND THEIR IDEAS** is unacceptable. With the volume of people on the Internet exchanging ideas and information, you will be found out and called out for your actions.

While the medium for creating, establishing, maintaining and managing your Personal Brand is the Internet, your Personal Brand is something that you wear like a second skin because it IS who you are. That is why it is crucial that your Personal Brand be authentic.

Accountability in Personal Branding

Being Accountable to your Personal Brand involves taking responsibility for your actions, past, present and future and maintaining open communications when engaging and participating in social marketing and social media.

Your actions must be consistent with your Personal Brand. Consistent delivery of your point of view, values, perspective, and expertise reinforces your Personal Brand. Inconsistency – varying your approach or response – indicates an ill-conceived or opportunistic brand. **Your Personal Brand isn't Flavor of the Week. It's insight into who you are and what you believe, consistently over time.**

Just as you are accountable for your on-the-job performance, be true to your word and your capabilities. If you tell someone you are going to call them on a given day, do so even if they do not pick up the phone. They will remember that you were going to call them.

If you regularly participate in conversations and forums on social networking sites and “disappear,” folks will doubt the authenticity of what your Personal Brand was all about in the first place.

Accountability involves making a commitment to a discipline and following through. Like Sales Aerobics for Engineers, it is a system of thought and expression around what should be your most important attribute: yourself.

Establishing Trust and Loyalty in Personal Branding

People come to believe in your Personal Brand as authentically and consistently delivered over time across various Internet venues and - most importantly - in person. How many times have you said: “She's the real deal” based on some conversation that resulted after getting to know that person over time? Your goal is being the real deal.

When you are able to walk the walk and talk the talk, people come to know what to anticipate and expect from you. They become familiar with your expertise and point of view, as well as your style of delivery. They begin to trust what you bring to the table and develop loyalty towards your Personal Brand.

Keep in mind that you are the physical embodiment of your Corporate Brand: the brand of the company you work for, whether it's your own business or someone else's. With business being done virtually, a person's only point of contact with your corporation may be you. Your corporation's brand becomes synonymous with your service delivery and therefore, your Personal Brand.

How many times has your company won new business because an engineer from Company A moved to Company B, sometimes many states away, can retained your company as a service provider based on the perceived value of the service quality delivery of your company – delivered via you? Personal Branding becomes critical to customer retention. Sometimes an individual's Personal Brand, and way of doing business, is stronger than their corporate brand and business plan.

The next time you question the value that you bring to the table, think about how your customers already “see” you: through your Personal Brand.

Lack of excessive self-promotion in Personal Branding

You've got to strike the right balance. When you enter the world of social marketing and networking, there are a lot of folks that are out there trying to sell you something, all the time. And just like those telemarketers who call you during the dinner hour, it's just over the top.

Your Personal Brand has to be a natural Internet extension of how you communicate with others. You have to be comfortable with the nature and frequency of engagement in social marketing and networking for your Personal Brand strategy to be successful.

Personal Branding is not showmanship nor is it narcissism. It is a dialogue that you are establishing with others, whom you don't yet know, via the Internet.

What has to shine throughout, however, is your faith and confidence in the ideas, expertise and perspective that are part and parcel of your Personal Brand.

CHAPTER 4:

Building a Strong Value Proposition for Your Personal Brand

Tell me, what is your Value Proposition? If you wish to articulate your Personal Brand, you have to understand what you do – and don't – bring to the table. Developing a Personal Brand, and a Value Proposition, is not a matter of waking up one morning and declaring to yourself: "Today I am going to say this or that about myself." That approach to Personal Branding and developing a Value Proposition is like throwing Personal Branding spaghetti against the wall and hoping it sticks.

There is no guess work in Personal Branding. Your Personal Brand results from a lot of thought, introspection, review of your education and career and all of the personal and interpersonal aspects that make you YOU.

In the words of Jill Konrath, Chief Sales Officer of *Selling to Big Companies* (*italics/bold mine for emphasis*):

"A value proposition is a clear statement of the tangible results a customer gets from using your products or services. It is focused on outcomes and stresses the business value of your offering." *(Selling to Big Companies, p51)*

Your value proposition involves articulating how you make a difference to others. By targeting who you speak with and how you engage them in business discussions (including social marketing and networking) you can make a difference in their perception about your area of expertise. You can give them a compelling reason to do business with you.

Building a strong Value Proposition is the first step in developing and building a strong Personal Brand.

Unlike resumes, where you are encouraged to have multiple versions per prospective employer – your Value Propositions, like your Personal Brand, are enduring. You may struggle at first to come up with what your Value Propositions are. However, gradually – and here's where the personal inventory comes in – you will see a trend emerging across all your value propositions across all industries you may be marketing yourself to.

Your Personal Brand becomes your Value Propositions reiterated in various formats: social marketing, social networking, email, hard copy, in person. You become one and the same with your Personal Brand and you articulate your Personal Brand via your Value Propositions. **That is when you truly walk the walk and talk the talk because it is authentically YOU.**

Having a strong Value Proposition and a strong Personal Brand is important for reinforcing your digital footprint. These strategies help people "get" who you are. Value Propositions help you build

compelling resumes, open doors when prospecting for new customers, expand the scope of service for existing customers and attract financial backing for new ventures.

Jill Konrath's book, *Selling to Big Companies*, focuses on Value Propositions. I recommend your reading this book for a thorough discussion on this subject.

An example of a Value Proposition is:

"I work with my customers: engineering-intensive manufacturers, distributors and service companies, to develop internet marketing strategies for business development and revenue generation. In 2008, the majority of my customers had double-digit increases in revenue with many experiencing doubling and tripling of revenue compared with 2007."
(Babette Burdick, January 2009)

The basic elements are:

1. Who you are
2. What you do
3. What the tangible results are (ROI) for your customers

Typically, most engineers, IT professionals and technical folks do not connect the dots between "who I am and what I do" with the crucial and "how this helps my customers." Learning to dollarize the value of working with you in terms of the results you provide to your customers is the hallmark of a strong value proposition.

Insight as to the ROI of your work moves you out of peer discussions with technical folks and allows you to have these discussions with the folks who sign the checks. And their emphasis is the bottom line. A strong Value Proposition helps you expand your potential for business development and career development.

For those of you who are job-hunting – and frankly any C-level executive is always proactive about their next move whether they take it or not – having a Personal Brand strategy that is underscored by your digital footprint is crucial. If you currently are sending resumes to potential employers along with hundreds of other hopefuls, how are you hoping to distinguish yourself from the crowd?

If the truth be known, HR is Googling you. They are looking at your Internet footprint to see whether you are differentiated or a commodity. They are trying to determine the compelling reasons for hiring you. Give them a reason via Personal Branding and an online strategy and a resume full of strong Value Propositions.

When's the last time you Googled yourself? Try it. You may be surprised at what surfaces.

CHAPTER 5: You Gotta Have A PLAN

Corporations have strategic plans. Similarly, you also need to have a plan. There's absolutely no reason to create a Personal Brand or develop Value Propositions if you don't develop these against a Plan.

What are you trying to achieve by virtue of engaging in social marketing and networking?

1. Reinforce value to yourself, your customers and your current and / or future organization
2. Create value for career building and fundraising
3. Create an accurate and accountable legacy for yourself and your family (your brand can enhance the marketability of family members, too)
4. Enhance the brand of your company or enterprise
5. Guide the quality and quantity of information about yourself that appears on the Internet
6. Move in a new direction, pre- or post- retirement

Regardless of what your Plan is, your efforts need to focus on giving people a compelling reason to do business with you.

Here are some low-to-high level Plans for social marketing and networking. Consider them and weigh them against where you are in terms of developing a Personal Brand and creating strong Value Propositions of what you bring to the table. Keep in mind that you get out of this endeavor what you put in. Only you know your timeline, amount of available time to devote to these activities, current financial and/or career situation and future aspirations. Personal Branding and social networking are activities that you can chip away at. Putting in the time, upfront, to slowly develop the mindset and thought pattern that you need for Personal Branding and social networking is engaging in Sales Aerobics so you can reposition yourself with new skills in this economy.

1. Develop an accurate, updated compilation of my achievements (on social business, networking and IT venues). This Plan can be an end in itself. Often this information stagnates and is out of date. This strategy has low ROI for career building and Personal Branding.
2. Connect the achievements in Plan 1 with my Value Proposition and what I bring to the table / my company brings to the table time and time again. This Plan also can be an end to itself. It has modest ROI and this information **MUST** be kept up to date. At the very least, you can begin to manage your digital footprint that HR can find.
3. Demonstrate how you've provided value to your employers and organizations. Talk ROI for every position and project you document on your resume. Provide case studies, ask for recommendations, begin to understand, articulate and tell your story and build a compelling reason to do business with you. This Plan has a high return on investment.

This Plan means you are taking yourself seriously. It takes a lot of work, personal inventory and once articulated, resonates to your target audiences, which can include your current as well as future employer. Never assume that your current employer understands the value that you bring to his organization! Keep in mind that your current customers see you as the physical embodiment of the company you work for. Reward them for their confidence and faith in doing business with you by providing a Personal Brand and Value Proposition that underscores what you bring to the table. This is the stage where you start building your network.

4. Establish yourself as a thought leader or expert in your field based on the legitimacy of your (own) Body of Work, your referral network and your collaborative ability. This Plan incorporates a fully-developed Personal Brand, a digital footprint with strong Value Propositions and the desire to reach out to the online community to network.

5. If it is your goal, generate a secondary income stream (hobby related, perhaps you are a musician or artist?) or a primary income stream (displaced, retiring, moving in a new direction) based on your creating a strong Personal Brand which has resulted in a loyal following who wants to invest in your products and services. This Plan has high return on investment for the time taken to create, develop, implement and manage your Personal Brand.

CHAPTER 6: Social Networking: Concept, Strategies and Venues

“The cool thing is that now, everyone has ten times as many friends as they used to. The social graph online is a fascinating exponential factor in growing the list of people who might be willing to hear what you have to say (once).”

Seth Godin's Blog, May 7, 2009

Social networking involves:

- a) Online communities of people sharing/exploring interests, activities, products and services for the purpose of communicating and sharing information over a broad group of users
- b) Utilizing various Internet sites to get your Personal Brand and message out to a series of audiences who might be interested in your Personal Brand
- c) THE way of landing a new job because you are creating demand for your Personal Brand rather than participating in a flood of resumes sent in response to some posting on Monster.com (where you are a commodity)
- d) Influencing the adoption and communication of your information, Personal Brand and Value Propositions throughout the Internet (viral marketing)
- e) Getting as much out of social networking as you are willing to put in to social networking.

Just as you had a PLAN for your Personal Brand strategy and Value Propositions, now you must create a plan for how you intend to use social networking to achieve your Personal Brand strategy. What is your goal?

Remember the composite Personal Branding objective: I want to expand my network, obtain references, build an online brand, find jobs, establish myself as a thought leader, demonstrate I'm on the leading edge / on top of trends and latest news, improve my skill set, learn from others, write better.....?

Well, which social networking venues are best to achieve whatever your goals are? You can leap right into social networking venues and thrash away. However, the Internet is unforgiving. It's like that tattoo you got during Spring Break in Panama City in high school. You know the one you thought your Mother would never see?

Once you write on some social networking sites, your comments are immediately available on the Internet if, for example, HR is Googling you. So think before you write and learn in this e-book about these venues before you decide which social networking sites are best for you participate in.

Strategies for entering into the social networking arena:

1. I want to read what others have to say about various subjects. This is a great start! Go to www.alltop.com which is a blog site that has a search box that allows you to search by topic about blogs that may be of interest to you. Start reading these blogs, sign up to receive the blogs via blog feed, and get a sense of style, who is commenting, whether the subject matter is of interest to you, whether you have expertise in this area and whether you want to remain an active or passive participant. This strategy has low ROI, and really is nothing more than dabbling with social networking for passive readers. However, it can yield a high ROI if you “find your voice” within your Personal Brand and start to comment. Maybe even blog, too!

2. I want to seek out various Internet and non-Internet groups. Alltop is a great place to find out about groups related to blogs. Most of these groups tend to organize themselves on professional networking sites like LinkedIn www.linkedin.com, which I will discuss specifically in the next section of this e-book. Again, you can join a group (permission-based entry) and elect to be active or passive in terms of your participation and comfort level. You can also drop out of a group, too.

Some of these groups, if local, have monthly meetings to further develop your level of participation. In addition, if you become involved with these groups, you may also want to take on a leadership role. This strategy has moderate to high ROI potential depending on your level of interest and participation. It takes you from a spectator role to that of a participant, as a result of initially engaging in social networking.

3. I want to publish a blog for my Personal Brand. This strategy is high risk, with a well-developed Personal Brand, managed digital footprint on social networking sites and strong value propositions. Again, if you wish to write a blog, you’d better have a Plan. There is a high rate of blog abandonment. You don’t want to drop out just when you are developing a loyal following that you may not be aware of.

4. I want to create a website for my products and services, which clearly communicates the Value Propositions of my Personal Brand strategy. Like folks who own their own companies, this high risk fully-integrated social marketing Personal Branding strategy is for entrepreneurs who intend to make a living from social marketing on social networking sites.

5. I want to write a book (hard copy or e-book) for greater communication and maintenance of my Personal Brand. These books often are downloaded off your website. These books are offered free to people who attend your seminars or webinars. Often these books are published hard copy. As you can guess, this strategy is high risk, high involvement, high ROI.

Even if your activities only involve having a strong, updated, current LinkedIn profile, and interact on the blogs of thought leaders, the larger your Internet footprint, the greater your online brand potential. The greater your online brand potential, the greater the opportunity for dissemination of information and adoption of your ideas and Personal Brand (viral marketing).

Sales Aerobics for Engineers

If the Internet is the new Word of Mouth, what are you and your technical team doing to increase knowledge of your brand, capabilities, services and deliverables?

LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is the #1 Internet site for professional and personal brand-building, job-hunting, and business development. Corporate brand-building is a rapidly growing feature of that site. As of this writing, LinkedIn touts that “over 40 million professionals use this site to exchange information, ideas and opportunities.”

LinkedIn has a basic service – which is more than enough for the majority of users – that is FREE. **I strongly recommend LinkedIn as the starting point, if not the fulcrum, of any Personal Branding strategy.** If you are a business professional, LinkedIn has the target population of users that you want to, well, become “linked into.”

LinkedIn consists of two key elements which should be fully utilized to build your Personal Brand.

1. Your Profile, which focuses on your Personal Brand and Value Propositions. It also serves as a resume. However, that information appears later on in your profile. Clearly, creating a LinkedIn Profile develops your Personal Brand statement.
2. Your Network, which allows you to reach out and contact individuals (“Connections”) who may be important to you in moving to your next career. These Connections, in turn, have their own Connections. So your networking reach on the Internet is expanded through participation in LinkedIn and the creation of a completed profile.

Because of the sheer size of LinkedIn, and the number of websites and blogs that are “linked in” to the site through a process called inbound link creation, and the number of people using the site and constantly updating information, LinkedIn gets a lot of attention from search engines. In fact, your LinkedIn profile will rapidly become your #1 footprint on a Google name search, which is what you want to achieve when managing your online information.

Who uses LinkedIn? Your current employer, HR, prospective employers, current business partners, prospective business partners, your colleagues and just about everyone else.

When’s the last time you Googled yourself? I suggest you do this. Now. Any and everything that was posted about you on the Internet will be captured, including: donor lists, hazmat violations, court dates, tennis championships, church bulletins....Do you get the picture? If any entities with whom you are affiliated post their information online, it’s fair game. So why not find out what’s out there about you and manage this information?

LinkedIn is where folks go to check you out. If there is no information about you on LinkedIn, or only partial or incomplete information, you are missing out on a great opportunity for Personal Branding. YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE BECOMES YOUR PERSONAL WEB PAGE.

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Getting started on LinkedIn

Your LinkedIn Profile, and frankly your profile on any other type of social media site, becomes your webpage and the fulcrum for Personal Branding. Your Profile becomes the platform for your Body of Work and your resume, site of references and recommendations, list of groups you belong to, a snapshot of Who You Are professionally.

LinkedIn actually monitors your progress when creating your profile. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither is a complete LinkedIn profile. I recommend chipping away at it. Get started, establish your account, see what type of information is needed, complete the basic information and add information after you have assembled and edited. Editing your resume is essential. Eventually it will all flow together, around your Personal Brand, because all statements will support your personal brand – even your past career choices.

LinkedIn has some nice features, too. You can convert your completed Profile into a pdf and download it. You can send it out with resumes or include it as part of your corporate deliverables when making a presentation. At the very least, incorporate your LinkedIn profile into your digital signature on all emails. That's Personal Branding, too.

Anyone looking you up on LinkedIn – who is not one of your Contacts – is taken to a general profile page for basic information. However, to have access to the full information, these people have to be Contacts. They can request that you become a Contact ONLY if they have your email address.

Your Contact and Network list is PERMISSION-BASED. These elements are very important and contribute to why this site is so heavily preferred by business professionals over other social media sites. The way in which your information is accessed and your network is established means LinkedIn currently is NOT as vulnerable a target for spammers as are other social networking sites.

I strongly recommend you go to Patrick O'Malley's site: www.patrickomalley.com. He is a LinkedIn expert on how to compose and optimize your LinkedIn profile. He also knows a lot of ins-and-outs that can make all the difference in having various elements of your LinkedIn profile stand out in Google searches. And hey, Patrick is an Engineer!!

The basic elements of a LinkedIn Profile are:

1. Avatar: your picture. Use the same avatar regardless of the social media site. It's your Personal Branding logo.
2. Left Hand Margin: includes Profile navigation function
3. Right Hand Margin: includes suggestions for folks you may want to network with (based on common names, common companies, common groups shared with your current Contact list), events, open network discussions, etc.

4. Center Page: prime real estate on LinkedIn – your Profile where you will establish, reinforce and maintain your Personal Brand.
5. Summary: statement of what you bring to the table, your capabilities, your Value Proposition
6. Services you provide
7. Keywords related to your capabilities and value proposition
8. Common misspellings of your name (people can only find you on LinkedIn if they spell your name correctly so if you have a difficult name....)
9. Specialties
10. Work-related experience
11. Honors, Awards
12. Latest projects
13. Books you recommend
14. Recommendations: ALL IMPORTANT, reinforces the compelling reason for doing business with you
15. Group Affiliations

Establishing your Criteria for your Connections on LinkedIn

Social networking sites “work” because each Profile consists of a network of Connections – or who people know. These Connections, in turn, have their Connections and so on. LinkedIn identifies areas of overlap in your Connections list and the list of your Connections’ Connections. So if you need a reference or to meet someone and that person is part of another Connection’s list, you can ask your Connection for an introduction. That’s how LinkedIn works.

Social networking sites are great to locate individuals with whom you have had a business relationship. Perhaps they moved on and you lost touch. Perhaps they married and changed their last name and you didn’t know this information. LinkedIn provides this type of granularity when seeing who is LinkedIn to whom.

LinkedIn allows you to search by individual name and by company name. Again, you can see whether your Connections and network (Connections of Connections) is connected to a particular company or individual to whom you wish to be introduced.

There are four basic “strategies” for creating your Connections list. Yes, even a Connections list needs a Plan, too. And your Connections strategy needs to reinforce your Personal Brand.

1. **“I have more Connections than you do” strategy** creates a big, bulky Connections list of sometimes unrelated individuals who in turn have their own big, bulky lists. If you are into collecting people and feel the more connections you have, the more important you are, well, this is your strategy. I’ve seen folks request and collect the entire PTO list from their kid’s school, using this strategy. That’s a lot of folks.....

2. **“I have more Work Connections than you do”** strategy creates another big bulky Connections list composed entirely of people from work and their affiliated networks of LinkedIn Connections. If you feel that having all these folks in your network makes you look important to your company, that is fine. If you actually interact with all these people, that makes sense. However, how does this relate to your Personal Brand?

If your network only encompasses who you work with, how can your ideas expand if you still are thinking inside that box?

3. **“Personal Brand Building 101”** strategy includes close friends, colleagues, known thought leaders (only invite those with whom you have established a relationship and whose email you have), people (including selected corporate contacts) who you want to keep in the loop as you build your personal brand. For example, I use my Connections list as my intellectual Posse. I post questions to them as a Group of Connections or individually depending on their areas of expertise. Again, I stress that I use my Connections professionally. I personally do not see LinkedIn as a venue for casual social commentary.

4. **“Advanced Brand Building”** involves networking with Connections to thought leaders with whom you’ve established a relationship. These Connections are identified by the value of their online material and how it aligns with your values and personal brand and expertise. Ask your Connections for an Introduction, comment on their blogs, become a known entity to them as someone who is willing to contribute vs. someone who simply wants a status Connection. These folks are very territorial about who they directly connect with. Earn the right for them to be your Connection and potentially endorse and refer you.

Joining Groups on LinkedIn

There are hundreds of thousands of LinkedIn groups. No kidding. Use the search box at the top right of the page to indicate you are searching for Groups (rather than Individuals or Companies) and enter keywords related to the type of groups you are interested joining. You have to request permission to join and your request needs to be approved (after the Group Manager checks out your profile in LinkedIn to make sure it is consistent with what the group is all about). Once approved, the Group Logo is displayed on your LinkedIn profile. Connections searching your profile can understand more about who you are, what your values are, and what your Personal Brand is all about, by the Groups you are affiliated with. Joining groups on LinkedIn is how you continue to tell your story.

Remember, Groups can include alumni organizations, professional organizations, religious organizations, recreational or sports-related organizations, etc. Can’t find a group around an area of interest? Start your own!

I recommend joining groups that reinforce your Personal Brand. Like my philosophy about Connections: be discriminating.

The neat thing about joining a group is that you can start to monitor and even participate in their online discussions. You can receive an alert that someone has posted another comment pertinent to a particular discussion. You can get a sense of what this group is all about, whether it makes sense for you to become a more active participant, and even post a comment yourself or start a discussion.

REFERENCES

References are critical to Personal Brand Building. References talk about how you deliver on your Value Proposition and reinforce the value of working with you. They underscore the compelling reason to do business with you.

References are a tremendous way of demonstrating the value of your Body of Work to: yourself, your customers and your organization. References are important for impacting decision making for current and future customers, including your employers.

A Reference, in my opinion, is a reinforcement of your Value Proposition. The individual providing the Reference is underscoring the type of services you provided to his/her company, the value of working with you and how this value was translated into that individual's / company's bottom line. **These types of references are EARNED. You have earned them and you deserve to ask for and receive them. Don't shy away from this valuable real estate on your LinkedIn profile.**

Earlier in this e-book I discussed how you are the physical embodiment of your corporation. When I am prospecting for new business, I want to distinguish myself from other individuals who my prospective customer has lumped into the "pesky salespeople" bucket. Not only do my voicemails or emails include my Value Proposition, they also direct that prospect to my LinkedIn profile. They have an opportunity to "check me out" and see what I am about, as well as see what I look like. I feel my profile and value proposition are a differentiator. This strategy can open doors and create receptivity to what you are about.

Keep in mind that every time you post a new Reference, it is announced to your LinkedIn network. In fact, every time you change an element of your Profile, it's announced. Being an active participant, rather than creating a one-time stagnant profile and hoping someone finds it, brands you as being someone worth keeping tabs on.

Of course, you have to have a Plan for References, too. My rule of thumb: I only ask for Earned References. References assist me in my Personal Brand Building. I ask the individual for the reference and then suggest the body of work or areas of expertise in which I feel they are best qualified to be a referral for. There is nothing wrong with guiding these folks through the reference writing process. They appreciate your help.

I am not a big advocate of “references for references sake.” Otherwise you amass a large number of nondescript, uncontrolled references that sound like “I have more references than you do.” And all these references may say is that you are a nice person. Put yourself in the shoes of your current or prospective employer or customer? What is the nature of the information you want to communicate about you?

Keep in mind that Social Marketing and Branding Building on Social Networking sites – and participation in online Group discussions – is a way of communicating your Personal Brand to a larger audience than you otherwise would be able to reach outside of the Internet. Appropriate and focused social networking is targeted marketing: social marketing if you will.

So what are you waiting for?

Get started on your LinkedIn profile!!

If you have questions, the Help function on the LinkedIn site is very good.

Also, I recommend Patrick O’Malley’s site: www.patrickomalley.com. He’s got a great blog and is very accessible to questions.

FACEBOOK, www.facebook.com

Facebook describes itself as a “social utility” and is a free social networking service that originally was a Harvard University “intra social utility network” according to Wikipedia. It was offered to the Internet and immediately was adapted by high school students in 2005 and continued to be more widely capitalized due to its growing rate of adoption. Most parents know this site, as well as MySpace and YouTube, as the sites that keep their kids from doing homework.

In spite of the initial stigma of being a high school social networking site, Facebook was formally launched in August 2007, acquiring 1 million new users per week. Hundreds of millions of subscribers are projected by the end of 2009. Corporations and individuals with LinkedIn Profiles are starting to list themselves on Facebook as a means of building inbound links (a link from one huge well-optimized site to another) to their LinkedIn profiles and gain search engine optimization and ranking for their profiles and blogs.

Due to the highly variable nature of membership and content, Facebook is not as porous to the search engines as LinkedIn. Your LinkedIn profile will immediately become your #1 reference for a name search for yourself on Google. However, your Facebook profile – unless you have a personalized title tag- essentially resides in a black hole.

Facebook is intended to show the fun side of who you are. Most thought leaders do not have corporate or branded Facebook pages. Jill Konrath is only found under Jill Konrath and is extremely selective about who she lets into her network. Same for Dan Schawbel and so on.

Corporations can have Fan Pages. Corporations with well-thought-out Personal Branding strategies can use Facebook as an additional venue for sales and marketing. Some corporations use Facebook as a site for hiring, if their target employment population uses Facebook more readily than job boards. If you know who your target population is, and it’s on Facebook, then you need to have a strategy to communicate with them. Use your LinkedIn avatar (picture) which is your logo, to co-brand.

Typically, Facebook remains an individual to individual or B2C venue. **I recommend establishing a Facebook profile as a secondary type of Personal Branding, ONLY if it is consistent with your Personal Brand.**

I will tell you from personal experience that I received a lot of spam sent to my email address associated with Facebook immediately upon setting up my account, which still continues. Unlike LinkedIn, Facebook IS a vulnerable spammer’s target. There’s nothing wrong with having a Facebook page for friends and family. However, if you want to keep that aspect of your life private, then don’t let your online social marketing network into your Facebook network. As with all aspects of the Internet, you have to have a Plan and stick to it, consistently.

TWITTER, www.twitter.com/yourname

Twitter was created in 2006 as a free social networking and micro-blogging service. The site had 14 million unique visitors in March 2009 (MarketingProfs blog, 7/7/2009). Twitter allows users to post and read each other's updates, known as "tweets." Tweets are limited to text posts of up to 140 characters. As a result, tweets are succinct and, like text messaging, there is a whole Twitter language that has developed to pack the most into one tweet.

Tweets are posted on the author's profile for their entire network to see. Like LinkedIn, you can develop your own set of Followers based on your LinkedIn or Facebook connections, your Connections strategy and Personal Brand. You can use the Twitter Search function to find people or identify groups by subject ("aerospace engineers"). You can elect to Follow people and they, in turn can elect to follow you. You can restrict or block individuals from seeing your tweets. You can delete folks or un-follow them. Use the same LinkedIn avatar (your picture / your logo) to cross-brand across social media venues.

Twitter conversations, even among technical professionals, may involve showing another side of their personality, a hobby or interest or a political or special cause they support.

If you are planning on Twittering for whatever reason (we did during the NFL draft, Go Packers!) you can delete your account after a specific event, like the NFL draft.

Whatever you do, keep tabs on who is following you. Interesting folks tend to sneak in as Followers. Twitter WILL ALERT YOU to most of these folks (e.g., "so-and-so is now following you on Twitter"). However, some of these folks fly in under the radar. And they can be very interesting.....

Also, just as folks can elect to become one of your LinkedIn Connections based on their perceived quality of your Connections, having a refined Twitter Portfolio is becoming an important selection criterion for Followers. It's nice to know that users of this site are becoming more discriminating.

Before people elect to follow you, they can review who your list of Followers. So if you are one of those Twitter members who has a "I have more Followers than you do" which is mainly composed out of a desire to collect people rather than filter people, you may not be attracting the group of Followers that make sense for your Personal Brand. This "promiscuous tweeting" philosophy can be a barrier to credibility for your Personal Brand among the thought leaders who also post tweets multiple times each day.

One of the hallmarks of Twitter is to post frequent tweets. This strategy can be an all-consuming one for personal branding. There is an extremely high rate of abandonment of Twitter accounts. Some folks sign up, create a few tweets, and just aren't interested in participating any more. Other folks will stop following you if you don't tweet them back or aren't tweeting enough.

Consider these Twitter statistics, courtesy of Rohit Bhargava, <http://rohitbhargava.typepad.com> from 7/10/2009

:

1. 21% (one-fifth) of all Twitter accounts are empty placeholders
2. Nearly 94% OF ALL Twitter accounts have less than 100 followers
3. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday are the most popular days for tweeting
4. 150 is the magic number. This is the number of Followers that shifts your tweets from being a “personal” connection to being a brand building or “life casting” connection.
5. A small minority creates most of the activity on Twitter. 5% of users account for 75% of all activity. 10% of users account for 86%.
6. More than 55% of Twitter users use other API’s (applications) to post their tweet other than directly from the Twitter site. The Twitter site tends to crash or fall frequently.
7. English still dominates Twitter.
8. Twitter is being led by social media geeks. 15% of Twitter users who follow more than 2000 people (yes you read this correctly) identify themselves as social media marketers.

My advice: A Twitter strategy takes a lot of time and a true Plan. It is extremely sensitive to frequency of posting tweets and the quality of the tweets. Like all social networking strategies, you need to post your own tweets. Be authentic. The same rules apply as for other social media. Posting a tweet once a week, in conjunction with an event or update or blog post, etc., may be all you have time for right now.

Think before you tweet.

CHAPTER 7: BLOGS

A **blog** is a contraction of the words “web” and “log.” A blog is a type of website maintained by an individual (the “blogger”) who ideally regularly posts commentaries on specific niche topics, descriptions of events, videos, on accessible, scalable technology platforms.

If you are building your Personal or Corporate brand (or both) and your PLAN includes establishing yourself as a thought leader, you should consider developing your own Blog. Your blog should ALWAYS have a focused subject. Do not stray from that focus, which is your Personal Brand. Each blog post should be a reflection on your Personal Branding perspective of specific topics relevant to your area of expertise.

Establishing a blog means you are not trying to be all things to all people. You have arrived at being consistent with your Personal Brand and all methods of delivery of your Value Propositions.

Blogs can be based on your own thoughts, which may include - and give credit for - the work of others that you cite within your blog. Your own thoughts can represent a niche or particular focus around your passion, expertise, value system, etc. Above all, write your own blogs. You will be found out immediately if you have guest writers due to inconsistency with your Personal Brand.

You can comment on other people’s blogs as the subject of your blog (or at least as a means of getting started). Again, keep your blog comments focused on a particular niche area of interest. Your aim should be to gain readership and become a thought leader – or at least a respected individual – in one area.

You can get started simply by Googling “how to write blogs”. A number of “how to” sites exist. Even thought leaders have written essays on the essentials of blogging. Having a Plan, of course, is essential.

You can easily design your own blog using Typepad or WordPress software. Blogs are built on different platforms than are websites. They are housed on different servers. If you move forward with blogging, the monthly hosting fee runs around \$8.95.

Find your voice first. Your posts, 500 word minimum for a legitimate post, should always “sound like you.” Again, this is why guest posters or ghost writers for blogs are so quickly found out. Ask a small group of friends, thought leaders, or folks you trust to provide feedback on the quality of your blog posts. **See if blogging makes sense for you.** .

Sales Aerobics for Engineers

If the Internet is the new Word of Mouth, what are you and your technical team doing to increase knowledge of your brand, capabilities, services and deliverables?

Index your posts via keywords on Technorati and other blog aggregator sites. It's important that the search engines start to pick up your posts and index them based on keywords which are consistent with your Personal Brand.

Start reading blogs. Sign up for RSS or iGoogle blog feeds on blogs that are relevant to your areas of Personal Branding, business developing, industrial trending and other topics of interest.

Get a sense of what the voice of thought leaders sounds like. The high level thought-leaders do not rant and rave. They are consistent and lucid. They practice proper blog etiquette and credit the thoughts of others. They are top bloggers for very good reasons. They have earned that rank.

Find your initial voice by posting comments on relevant and appropriate blogs of others. Many times, you will have to have your own website or blog to do this. That is the price of entry for entering into the social media world of blogging.

Recommended blogs for business development and technical topics include:

- a. **Alltop**, www.alltop.com , source of subject-specific top Internet blogs
- b. **Selling to Big Companies**, www.sellingtobigcompanies.com , Jill Konrath's website and blog based on her award-winning book *Selling to Big Companies* which talks about account entry strategies for sales professionals
- c. **Personal Branding Blog**, www.personalbrandingblog.com , Dan Schawbel's blog focusing on his *Me 2.0* Personal Brand
- d. **Patrick O'Malley**, www.patrickomalley.com, tools and tips for building powerful LinkedIn profiles as Personal Branding venues
- e. **Seth Godin's Blog**, <http://sethgodin.typepad.com> : the guru of Internet marketing. Daily posts, shooting from the hip, always insightful.
- f. **Copyblogger**, www.copyblogger.com, Brian Clark's guide to what it takes to make a successful blog, in terms of emphasis on strong and consistent content
- g. **Sales Aerobics for Engineers**, <http://blog.salesaerobicsforengineers.com>, Babette Burdick's blog about helping engineers, IT professionals and technically-oriented industrial manufacturers, distributors and service companies cross the proverbial chasm from techno-speak to business development language.

In Conclusion

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this e-book. In today's challenging economy, we cannot have enough information to make decisions that affect our personal and professional life.

I encourage you to establish a LinkedIn profile immediately. It is a fulcrum for personal and professional development.

For those of you who are currently looking for a job, I am directing you to Jill Konrath's e-book called **Get Back to Work Faster**. This book, which will be published this fall, is available for download at www.getbactoworkfaster.com. This book emphasizes the fundamentals of developing your Value Proposition and using it to effectively market yourself to prospective employers.

I also recommend the following reading for further professional development. These books are available at Amazon.com:

Selling To Big Companies, Jill Konrath

Me 2.0, Dan Schawbel

Selling the Invisible, Harry Beckwith

Crossing the Chasm, Geoffrey A. Moore