

Personal Branding - Students and Graduates

If you're an university student or a recent graduate, implementing a personal branding strategy can give you a significant edge (i.e. make you stand out from the crowd) in the competitive job market place.

What is personal branding?

It can be defined as a practice of people marketing themselves and careers as brands.

Why is it beneficial?

There are a few reasons why creating a personal branding can be beneficial for students and recent graduates:

1. Personal branding makes you stand out

It's without doubts that every students and recent graduate compete for limited amount of jobs out there. In order to stay ahead of the pack and keep yourself stand out, personal branding helps you to make relevant impression. When you use your personal branding to construct your CV etc., you're putting your best foot forward because most students don't have any personal branding. It becomes obvious to recruiters whom they will take interest in when they compare your resume to others.

2. Personal branding shows your passion

"What are you passionate about?" That is actually one of the questions that is always asked in any interviews across the board. Having a personal brand that is searchable online can immediately allow potential employers and recruiters answer that question. It's no secret that many employers are very thrilled to know job seekers who are excited about their industry and niche. This also helps when it comes to finding a job that aligns with your passion as you can easily show recruiters how you have been advocating for the relevant industry.

3. Personal branding establishes your expertise

All you have learned through your university courses, internships, job placements and extracurricular activities can be shared through personal branding. When you enter the job market, you'll without any doubts be competing with others who may be more experienced than you. Personal branding will come in handy in this situation as it may help you compensate for your lack of experience because it showcases what you have learned through your university and extracurriculars.

4. Personal branding keeps your social media and online profiles recruiter-friendly

These days, an impressive CV might get you noticed, but it won't necessarily land you a job interview on its own. You need a well-rounded presence on social and other online media. It's no surprise that the first thing an employer going to do is to google you out. Imagine having something negative pop up ... Yes, you know how it feels. In the absence of negative things, having nothing come up doesn't really say much about your level of seriousness in terms of being out there and professional.

How to build an impressive and relevant personal branding?

Now that you have already understood the benefits of having a personal brand, here are a few ways to create yourself a personal branding:

1. Remember who you are and what you have to offer

Personal branding starts with some soul-searching to ensure your brand is authentic and personally yours. You need to ask questions: what drives you? What are you passionate about? What kind of activities give you meaning? What are you great at? What would you do all-day long without getting bored? These questions help articulate the 'why' and 'what' parts of your personal brand. It reveals your intentions genuinely and clearly and why employers will pay you for.

2. Build a professional online presence with personal touch

Once you have established your personal brand, it's time to set up a professional online presence with your very own touch. Online media like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and others. Having a presence on these online media helps recruiters and potential employers get a feel about who you are before getting invited in for an interview. However, not all publicity is good publicity as students and recent graduates need to be careful with what they share on social and online media.

3. Use social and professional media to market your new personal brand

Once you have created an effective, personal and attractive brand for your desired audience, share your new self with your network. One of the best online media to highlight your skills, knowledge, abilities, experiences, accomplishments, and successes is through LinkedIn. It has become the standard bearer with regard to your online reputation and it is often the first Google search result that shows up when an employer searches for you. It's important to note that a strong online profile (such as one on LinkedIn) can project your brand very effectively, and since LinkedIn is a professional networking site, you're sure to hit your targeted audience.

4. Network in-person to understand the expectations of your industry

Social and online media presence doesn't necessarily replace networking - they simply make it easier to find the right people with whom to network. While it can be a great tool in the job search process, these online profiles don't replace the power of building relationships. It's extremely important to present yourself well in person as you don't want your personal brand to tell employers that you are passive. The right professional brand will continue online and offline networking.

5. Grow yourself to grow your personal brand

As a student or recent graduate, your personal brand will eventually grow as you gain more experience through extra curricular activities or a job. It should not be static, but instead develops organically with you. The best personal brand will be relevant, sustainable, and adaptable to current trend in your industry of choice throughout your career.

In a nutshell, personal branding gives students and recent graduates the power to define themselves and make a long-lasting impression that will be even more memorable than a cover letter.