Shaping a professional personal brand

Individuals looking for an edge in today's connected and fast-paced working environment can use personal branding strategies to market themselves more effectively to prospective employers and clients.

Image via 123RF

Red & Yellow is offering a new course that shows individuals how to take charge of their personal brands, so they can promote and position themselves in a manner that distinguishes them in a crowded job market. "Personal branding is about promoting yourself and your career in much the same way as companies market their brands," says Carla Potgieter, knowledge officer at Red & Yellow.

The concept of a personal brand, however, is not applicable only to marketing consultants or self-anointed social media gurus. Every working professional today has a personal brand - a professional image that reflects perceptions and understandings of his or her career and professional personality - whether he or she decides to shape it consciously or not.

"The term Google CV refers to the image that your online footprint creates of your character, work and career. Most people will do a Google search to see what social media, your personal web sites and other online spaces reveal about you, before they will hire you or engage you as a consultant."

Four-week course

The Personal Branding course, which runs for four weeks, will give students the tools to take charge of how they present themselves online - and off. The first step is to understand what sets your 'product' (your skills, personality, qualifications, experience and so on) apart in the market.

From there, you can consider how to position yourself in the market in a manner that will create a positive, unique impression on prospective employers or clients. It might be worth 'auditing' your brand by looking critically at the image your online presence projects and considering how it aligns with the brand you would like to build for yourself.

The next step is to think about how you will portray your brand effectively and appropriately in the relevant spaces, for example on social media platforms, in interviews, on your personal web site, or even just in the CV you present and the emails that you write.

You should think especially carefully about how you project yourself in social media. An off-the-cuff remark made in anger or jest can deal massive, instant damage to your career, as Justine Sacco can attest, or haunt you years later, as Trevor Noah recently found out.

Portraying your true value

It is important to note that personal branding should be authentic. You should sell yourself on your unique positive attributes, experience and qualifications, but you should not stray away from your core personal or professional values or make promises you cannot keep.

Personal branding is not about creating a false appearance, but rather about bringing your true value to the fore. It can help you achieve your career goals, but it cannot make you into something you are not. However, applied wisely, personal branding can help you chart a course for your career and further your career goals.

Digital skills are essential for anyone who wants to build a strong personal brand because social media and the Web today

play such an important role in shaping our professional reputations and personal brands. You need to know how to build and monitor your brand using the many platforms and tools the digital world has to offer, she adds. What is more, with digital skills in such short supply, a great mastery of digital tools and practices can be a valuable attribute to add to your own personal brand.

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