



LEVEL-UP:

BUILD YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Instead of just letting the world put labels on you, here are three practical steps you can take to build a strong personal brand that feels authentic and organic and establishes trust with your audience, colleagues, potential prospects and anyone else you come into contact with.

Step 1: Identify your USP (unique selling point)

Here are five questions to help you articulate who you are, what you love and what you stand for:

- 1.** What problem do you or a certain group of people face that you really want to solve or have already solved?

For me, it was the generational cycle of low self-esteem in women and girls. How about you? What's something that makes you so upset you really want to do something about it? Remember the prompts from the level-up exercise in Chapter 1: what do you talk about, cry about and dream about?

- 2.** What do you want to be known for? What characteristics do you want people to associate you with?

I'd recommend aligning your personal brand goals with your Power Circle – your top strengths, passions and values – so your brand is authentic in terms of who you are now. Of course you can always have new areas for growth, but your brand shouldn't feel inauthentic.

- 3.** What sort of projects have you completed and what was it about your specific input that made those projects successful?
- 4.** What sort of projects and tasks do people tend to approach you with and trust you to handle?
- 5.** What industry(ies), field(s), occupation(s) or business(es) do you actually want to be in? How do you ideally want to spend your time?

Look for patterns in your answers to the questions above. Once you've identified some, get intentional about building on them.

Quick caveat: We live in the era of multi-hyphenates and don't have to be known for only one thing! I'm known for confidence, but I'm also known for travel, podcasting, dancing, business and financial empowerment. I suggest picking a core theme and start there. You can add more later. I believe we all have the choice of full creative expression and we don't have to box ourselves up, but at the same time being associated with a million different things dilutes your personal brand. So keep themes complementary rather than random.

For example, if you took a glimpse into my life through what I show and talk about on social media and in person, you'll see my core theme is confidence and my complementary themes are travel and lifestyle, financial empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Another example is Jackie Aina. Judging from how we've seen her show up online, her core theme is make-up, hair and championing diversity and inclusion in the beauty industry, and her complementary themes are luxury fashion and lifestyle, self-care and general life hacks.

Step 2: Communicate your USP

Once you've nailed your themes, it's time to start letting the outside world know about them. There is no limit to personal branding. It can go beyond the digital world. As we've seen, the aim of a personal brand is to help people build a connection with you, and this can be done both online via social media and personal communications, and offline via meetings, networking events, fairs, courses and workshops, and one-to-one conversations. In this section, we're going to look at content and conversation prompts to help you speak about yourself and your brand in a way that connects with people on a deep level.

YOUR STAND	LIFE STORIES	LIFESTYLE
Social controversy	Meet the founder	Behind the scenes
Industry challenge	The wins/ strengths	Interest one e.g. beauty
This matters to me...	The losses/ failures	Interest two e.g. travel
Quotes I connect with	Lessons learnt	Interest three e.g. food

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP	RESULTS	QUESTIONS TO YOUR AUDIENCE
Business related topic one	Case studies	Who they are
Business related topic two	Media mentions	Interests & aspirations
Business related topic three	Partnerships/ collaborations	What are their behaviours
Business related topic four	Testimonials	What are their struggles

<p>YOUR STAND</p>	<p>It's important to show people what you stand for and embody the values you believe in. This is also a great way to start a conversation with your audience, teams, clients and those around you.</p> <p>Talk about an industry challenge or a hot controversial topic that's relevant to you. Share your thoughts on things that matter to you.</p>
<p>LIFE STORIES</p>	<p>No one has been on the same journey as you. Your story is unique, and sharing it allows people to connect with you.</p> <p>Before sharing, ask yourself, 'What's the value in this?' Share your wins, but also share your mistakes. Focus on the lessons you've learned.</p> <p>Only share a challenging story once you have processed the experience and healed from it. If you feel that your story owns you, then it's not the right time to share it.</p>

<p>LIFESTYLE</p>	<p>This is a chance to introduce light-hearted content or conversation and notice who in your environment has the same interests as you.</p> <p>This is also where complementary themes come into play. Humans are multifaceted, so don't be afraid to show other sides of yourself if you feel comfortable with doing so. This is completely optional. Some people never show parts of their private life on social media or at work and that's totally OK. Do what works for you.</p>
<p>THOUGHT LEADERSHIP</p>	<p>This is where you show your expertise and knowledge, so people can build confidence in who you are and trust what you say. Write blogs and how-to guides and share your opinions and comments alongside other people's work.</p> <p>When you're in meetings, speak up and share your thoughts and ideas. Your voice matters, so use it!</p>

RESULTS	Sharing positive results is important. This isn't boasting or showing off. When people know more about what you do and see you deliver results, more opportunities come your way. If you work in a team, find a balance between taking personal ownership for your success and giving credit to your team when it's due. As we've seen already, owning your success is also a great way to improve your confidence.
QUESTIONS TO YOUR AUDIENCE	Keeping in touch with your audience, colleagues or clients is crucial to building a real connection. Get to know them so you can continuously offer value. Check in with people, understand what challenges they are facing and work with them to find solutions.

These pointers will help you take your personal brand from a concept to something you live out day to day. Use your style and uniqueness to attract the jobs, clientèle and friends that you want.

Step 3: Identify key channels and be consistent

Pick a few content and conversation prompts from the table above to use on your chosen online and offline channels. When building your digital presence, you will burn out if you are creating new content on every single social media platform. Instead, do some research on which platforms best suit your goals, lifestyle and audience's habits, then be consistent with it. For example, if you prefer to express yourself through visual mediums, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok and Facebook are best suited for your needs. And if you prefer to express yourself through the written word, platforms like Medium, Reddit, Twitter and LinkedIn may work better for you. There's no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to choosing the right platform to share on, but one golden rule is to repurpose content where you can and use tools to help you manage the planning and scheduling.

Building a personal brand takes time and effort, but it's worth it. And the need for a personal brand will continue to rise. The steps we've just covered are an easy and accessible way for you to get started, so if you haven't taken it seriously in the past, now is the best time to start.