

How to Build Your Brand Using LinkedIn and Social Media Tools

- Speaker: **Patti Wilson**, Career Coach and Employment Consultant

Overview

In the age of Web 2.0, we are all commodities. Therefore, just as products and services strive to create differentiated brands, so too must individuals. Today, creating and managing one's personal brand entails harnessing Google, understanding and leveraging LinkedIn, and using other social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter.

In addition to these tools, Harvard Business School's Alumni Career Services has a wealth of tools and information to assist alumni.

Context

Patti Wilson made the case for thinking about oneself as a marketer would. Individuals must create and manage their own "personal brand" using social media tools to do so.

Key Takeaways

- **Talent has become commoditized; you are a commodity now. Better to manage your brand than not.**

Superior skills, creativity, and drive once gave those who had those attributes a competitive advantage. This is no longer the case. Now these traits are prerequisites, and career advancement depends on self-packaging. As author Geoffrey Moore has said, "We're all just commodities now." Even being best-in-class implies one is in a class—competing with others for market share, mind share, visibility, eyeballs, and revenues.

The solution is leaving the class by differentiating oneself. The way out is "personal branding." The term, coined in 1997 by Tom Peters, means the marketing of people and their careers like brands.

Until recent years, the only personal branding tool that job-seekers had was their resume. The late 1990s brought more efficient ways to get resumes seen than mailing or faxing them (job boards, career-oriented sites, online forums, etc.). Now Web 2.0 has put into employers' hands more tools for finding suitable candidates than awaiting the receipt of resumes.

- **Managing your personal brand begins with maximizing your "Google juice."**

The gateway to sources of people information has become Google. Employers Google prospective job candidates and use the search engine to ferret out the people who embody their ideal. Potential clients do the same for service providers. Rarely do searchers read beyond the first page of links.

Managing your personal brand depends on controlling what is on Google's first page. Buying your name as a URL is the first step—and is easier than most assume (as .com is just one of many possible endings). This allows you to direct a searcher to a site where you control the

content. You want a searcher to find the best possible brand you can present.

"The goal is to own the first screen with your brand."

— Patti Wilson

Gaining "Google juice"—a more advantageous search result—is a function of understanding how Google's algorithms prioritize content. Content with photos and images appear before text, and blogs trump websites. Google presents the major social networking sites in the order of: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter.

"If you think you are going to go fancy and build yourself a website, don't bother. Get yourself on a whole bunch of social networking sites, because you'll get a higher Google ranking."

— Patti Wilson

Today, the key social media tools for personal branding purposes (besides Google) are blogs, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks. Today's methods, however, may be quite different than tomorrow's. A bellwether of the future may be www.Visualcv.com, which allows one to build a website-like resume layered with podcasts, photos, videos, and documents that search engines find.

- **The best way to build your brand is by leveraging LinkedIn tools.**

Some 80% of LinkedIn's 40 million users are there only because they were invited by someone, and do little with the tool; only 20% are active users. But LinkedIn is the fastest and easiest way to create a search engine-optimized personal brand image.

How one uses the site makes a big difference in how effective a branding tool it is. Use a marketer's discretion in deciding how to present yourself in ways that define your brand versus blur it. Do's and don'ts include:

- **Do complete the profile.** Populate the professional fields (use discretion on revealing personal information like marital status and contact information; whether to do so depends on your branding objectives).
- **Don't necessarily follow the site's rules when designing your profile.** Be creative; keep in mind your branding objectives.
- **Don't necessarily present a resume-like chronology of past positions.** Leave out what doesn't contribute to the brand you're promoting.

"LinkedIn is a branding tool; you don't have to put your entire history on there. . . . Make it your own."

— Patti Wilson

- **Do use all of the tools provided.** Join groups, start polls, and advertise industry events. Provocative poll questions get you noticed. Events give the impression you are at the hub of industry activity and ideas.

- **Don't go crazy with hundreds of connections.** Quantity of connections doesn't brand you. It's not how many groups you join but what you say on those groups that piques curiosity about you.
- **Do include your photo**—professionally taken, “photo-shopped up,” and the same one on all sites, to promote brand recognition.
- **Do write a memorable headline that captures the value-add you bring (not your title).** An example: “I'm in the talent business. I help companies, executives, and recruiters become all they can be.”

“A headline is not for your job title and company. It is about your unique personal brand.”

— Patti Wilson

- **Do write a summary that showcases your specialties and succinctly nails how you help.** Think of the summary as your online elevator pitch. Tips:
 - Use the first person, as social networking is all about creating intimacy.
 - List 5 relevant accomplishments in short sound bites.
 - Focus on current work.
 - Repeat key concepts or words (like “expert”) to subliminally reinforce impressions.
 - Populate the specialties section with lots of keywords that executive recruiters use.

“You keep saying ‘expert’ in all of your online profiles, and you’re considered an expert. . . . This is what imprints people’s perspective of you.”

— Patti Wilson

- **Do use the same summary** on all social network sites, just as you use the same picture.
- **Do solicit and post recommendations on LinkedIn.** In recommendations, numbers matter—you need 15-20. Reject any that don't advance your branding objectives.
- **Do link your LinkedIn profile to other social media tools to extend your brand visibility.** Add links to your blog, website, slide-share sites, Amazon reading list, etc. (Reading list titles should be in the subject area of your expertise; what you say about the book is as important as the book itself.)

You can purchase your site-traffic statistics from LinkedIn, but the measure of successful branding is not traffic; it is the kind of connections and offers you get. If they are the kind you target, your branding is a success.

▪ **Other core social media tools can enhance your brand and extend its reach.**

LinkedIn is your “giant yellow page in the sky,” but use other social networking sites to extend your brand's reach:

- **Facebook.** It is mostly used for social purposes, but these days the personal and professional are blurring, especially among younger generations. Jobs are often found among personal contacts, less so from immediate circles than friends of friends; Facebook expands your

access to those opportunities. Segregate Facebook friends into professional and personal groups, so that you can target the content you share to the audience.

- **ZoomInfo.** If you have any Internet presence at all, then you are on ZoomInfo, a biographical content aggregator. Find yourself and correct any incorrect information.
- **Twitter.** This is the new “elephant in the room.” Twitter helps reinforce your brand when you tweet. One way to build credibility through tweets is to provide links that highlight your expertise (links to articles, your blog, etc.; shorten URLs at www.Tinyurl.com).
- **Naymz.** This helps sanitize your online reputation by pushing less desirable information lower on Google.
- **Google.** Google is becoming a social network. Create a profile on Google with the same photo and information as on LinkedIn.

To-Do List

To enhance your brand image, in the next six months:

1. Buy your name in a URL.
2. Write a branded headline for your LinkedIn profile.
3. Write an elevator pitch for your LinkedIn summary.
4. Use keywords in your LinkedIn specialty.
5. Get 15 LinkedIn recommendations.
6. Invite at least 200 people to connect on LinkedIn.
7. Add a book list—give opinions on relevant books.
8. Add slides or documents that showcase your expertise.
9. Start blogging—be brave and go for it!

Harvard Business School Alumni Career Services

Chris Sullivan, the director of HBS's Alumni Career Services (ACS), gave a brief overview of the many services that ACS offers to HBS's 70,000 alumni. These services provide lifelong career management support through:

- **ACS's website.** This website is a clearinghouse of information and has a complete listing of all of ACS's services and resources. Available are access to job postings, research tools, resume templates and samples, common interviewing questions, information about negotiating and decision making, and other specialized resources. This site can be accessed at: www.alumni.hbs.edu/careers.
- **Workshops and webinars.** A series of workshops has been held for alumni in transition. Videos and executive summaries from these workshops are available. A series of webinars will be offered in the fall.
- **Career coaching.** Individual coaching is provided by professional career counselors. Also, Career Leader, a cutting-edge self-assessment tool, is available.
- **Other resources.** Access to several databases is available, as is research support, access to HBS's alumni job bank and job banks from other leading schools, use of Working Knowledge, and a subscription to the online *Harvard Business Review*. Also, an HBS LinkedIn community has been formed.

Speaker Profile

Patti Wilson

Career Coach and Employment Consultant

Patti has a 360-degree perspective on career. Her experience encompasses organizational structure and cultural nuance for companies of all sizes and the successful functioning of the high value talent within them. This informs her strategic consulting and prescient advice to her clients.

Experienced

- Prior to founding the Career Company, she was an Employment Manager at Sun Microsystems
- A recruiter at Advanced Micro Devices, and Apple Computer
- Assistant Director of Career Services Santa Clara University for the School of Engineering and Business

Established

- MA, Career Development, emphasis in Clinical Psychology
- Certified Trainer in Behavioral Interviewing, the Myers-Briggs, and the Predictive Index.
- Featured in the best seller, *What Color is Your Parachute?* since 1988.

Networked

- Founded and moderates the WednesdayNetwork, an 1800+ member e-group of the Silicon Valley professional community.
- Online newsletter, *Careerzine*, reaches 5500+ subscribers.
- Owns and moderates 25+ e-groups.
- Over 5000 LinkedIn.com connections.
- Member of 25+ Social Media and Social Networking sites