



Personal Branding: How Do I Get Started on Social Media?

Skills and Professional Development



When I started writing on LinkedIn, I had given no thought to the idea that people outside of my immediate “known” network would be reading my content. For me, writing on LinkedIn was a form of journaling – something to replace the water-cooler chats that could no longer take place in a pandemic-affected, virtual environment.

However, as it dawned on me that my network was starting to grow and that my writing was resonating with people, it was both exhilarating and anxiety-inducing! Suddenly, that little voice in my head started questioning the value of my stories. I began to have doubts about writing on the platform and what it all meant.

And so began my deep-dive into the question: “Who am I?”

If you’re reading my article and thinking to yourself, “I would love to build a personal brand on social media, but I have no idea how,” I would start with some reflective work on your identity.

Start by understanding who you are...

Our identity is a complex intersection of our life experiences, the people who have influenced us (both positively and negatively), our strengths and weaknesses, personality traits, and values.

When asked to introduce ourselves, we often revert to our job titles, however our job title and professional accolades are just one part of who we are. In order to really build a personal brand, you need to ask yourself the question: “What do I want other people to say about me when I leave the room?”

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You want people to feel that they know you; that they have connected with you on a personal level

even if you're only connecting through social media.

Values

When I started questioning the *why* behind my writing, I started thinking about my values. I was surprised to find that I couldn't really articulate what they were. We talk about "values" all the time, but how often do we sit down and consciously define what they are?

You might be asking yourself, where do I begin in working out what my values are. Here's what I recommend:

- Look up examples of values. There are plenty of lists out there to choose from.
- Review the list and circle the ones that resonate with you. You may think of values that don't appear on the list as you go – add them to the list.
- Think through your life experiences – the ups and downs; trauma; challenges; moments of joy. What do these moments tell you about yourself? As an example, some of the worst managers and workplace experiences I have had in my career have made me understand just how important values such as authenticity and empathy are to me.
- Go back over your shortlist of values and see if there are common themes in the list. Perhaps some of the values can be summarized by one word rather than two or three?
- Consider which of the values are most important to you; perhaps even non-negotiable.
- Create a shorter list of five to six values that represent your core principles.

Passions

Determining what our passions are is far easier than identifying our values. Start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What are the topics or issues that motivate you or result in a visceral reaction?
- When you read articles on social media or in the news, what are you drawn to and what do you want to learn more about?
- What issues do you love to discuss with others, whether in your personal life or at work?
- What excites you about the legal profession and your role as an in-house counsel or the company for which you work?
- What causes do you support?

Purpose

Lastly, *why* do you wish to create a personal brand? Start by asking yourself the following questions:

- Are you hoping to build your profile within your company?
- Do you want to be seen as a subject matter expert in your field of legal expertise, either within or outside your company?
- Are you keen to explore speaking opportunities to talk about your area of expertise or the issues that matter to you?
- Do you want to position yourself as a forerunner for future job opportunities or perhaps set yourself up for a side-hustle?
- Are you simply looking to build community?
- Is building your personal brand about giving back to others by discussing causes that you

support or issues that you feel need to be discussed?

Perhaps your purpose is a combination of a few things. It may also evolve and become clearer as you start creating your personal brand.

Then focus on the how...

Engage with others

One of the easiest ways to get started is to engage with the content of others on LinkedIn. Follow and connect with people whose content inspires you and talks to your own values, passions, and purpose. Write thoughtful comments on their content that reflect your personal beliefs or showcase your expertise. Resist writing comments such as “great post” or “thank you for sharing” as these comments tell others nothing about you.

The more you engage with other people’s content in a meaningful manner, the faster your network will grow and with it your personal brand.

Tell stories and encourage conversation

If you have built up the courage to write your own content, use your personal and professional stories to illustrate your point or to discuss issues that you are passionate about. Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to connect with other people as it elicits an emotional response from the other person, whether of sadness, joy, wonder, or something else. It may also have the other person reflecting on their own experiences and journey.

When I first started posting on LinkedIn, I would post my thoughts or stories without any idea of encouraging conversation in my network. I quickly noticed that the magic of the platform lies in the conversations you have with others. Encourage the conversation by asking questions and seeking the thoughts and ideas of those in your network and respond in kind.

Be consistent

While you don’t need to create content on a daily basis to build a personal brand, you should think about how often you wish to show up. Consider what is sustainable for you and will work with your working hours and lifestyle. When you’re not posting your own content, think about engaging with the content of others.

Don't worry about perfection

When the little voice in my head started getting in my way, I began to overthink my posts. Instead of taking 10-15 minutes to write a post, it would take me three times as long.

What I now know is that my personal brand is the *sum* of my posts and not defined by any *one* post. The more I tried to “perfect” my content, the more forced it became and the more disappointed I was when it didn’t do as well. There is no benefit to overthinking your content. In fact, some of my best performing content has been that which I have written quickly in the spur of the moment.

Let go of your perfectionist tendencies.

Don't let fear get in the way

You'll have content that does well and other content that doesn't. Don't let the latter get in your head and make you doubt what you're doing and *why*. We all have doubts. We all have fears. What is important is that you continue to show up and live your purpose.

It's time to get started...

Social media allows us to create personal brands faster and more effectively than ever before. More and more lawyers, including those in-house, are starting to do exactly that. What's holding you back?

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Coaching by Niti

After serving as the head of the legal team for Philip Morris in Australia and the Pacific Islands and member of the local management team where she advised on a variety of legal issues in a heavily regulated environment, she has transitioned to coaching and acting as a freelance GC.

She is an advocate for a range of issues at work, from mental health to flexibility, gender equity and authentic and inclusive leadership. She has also advocated for other issues such as pregnancy loss,

DEI in all its forms, and changing the old-school culture of the legal profession on LinkedIn and Clubhouse, in the hope that her voice, and her stories, might just make a difference.