

DISCOVERING YOUR STORY + USING SOCIAL MEDIA

11 QUESTIONS AND HOW TO APPROACH THEM

Developing your personal brand, and then communicating it, can be a lot like dating.

You have to be your authentic self, and let the relationship unfold.

You can't push it—don't try to get to second base too fast.

If you were looking for a relationship, you'd approach someone you were interested in, start a conversation.

That's how telling your story via social media works, too.

If you went up to everyone at a party, and didn't ask them for a date, but asked them to marry you, what would happen?

Probably a restraining order.

Beware of appearing authentic...and desperate.

If necessity is the mother of invention, desperation is its orphan!

The 11 questions that will help you discover your story:

#1: Why do you do what you do, what drives you?

#2: What was the a-ha moment that led you to what you do?

#3: What is your biggest fear about what you do?

#4: What has that fear taught you, or cost you?

#5: What do you see as your biggest value?

#6: What do you love most about what you do?

#7: What's a good metaphor for what you do?

#8: Who's your dream customer?

#9: Can you imagine a world without what you do?

#10: If you could destroy one myth about what you do, what would it be?

#11: What's at stake for you, and for your potential customers?

These questions aren't a test, and they shouldn't be answered quickly. One of the best ways to get at the real answers is to ask people you've worked with, your mentors, your direct reports, some of these questions with your story in mind.

What do *they* see as your value? How do *they* see what you do, and how you do it?

Another strategy would be to ask your colleagues, customers,

and employers how you made their lives easier, what your name brings to mind, what problems they brought to you and what they thought of the solutions you created.

Here are the questions I use when I'm working on a customer's story:

What issue did you have?

How did the solution make your life easier?

What's the word that springs to mind when I say [your name]?

Work with a coach, mentor, or trusted colleague—have them ask your clients & colleagues to get some real feedback, help get to your authentic value.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO EXPAND YOUR STORY'S REACH

Once you've got a handle on your story, your value, your brand, the best way to expand its reach is through social media. Using social networking tools like:

- LinkedIn
- Facebook

- Twitter
- YouTube
- SlideShare

will help broadcast your personal brand message.

The cardinal rules of social media are:

- Authenticity
- Relevance
- Brevity

Be real—demonstrate your true expertise. Share information and strategies that are relevant to your expertise. And keep it short.

USING LINKEDIN

Think of LinkedIn as an industry conference.

Search for connections from previous jobs and projects.

Have people you've worked with and for recommend you on LinkedIn.

Look for groups in your areas of interest: legal IT, health-care IT, energy, green tech, project management, etc.

Engage with people by asking

and answering questions—this is a great way to demonstrate expertise, and to communicate your value.

Spend at least 3 hours a week managing your LinkedIn connections, Q&A, and groups. If you're actively hunting for an opportunity, spend an hour a day.

If you have a business-related blog, link it to your profile. Use your status up-

dates to spark dialogue—share a link of interest, ask a question that will interest connections in your target industries.

Research companies you're interested in by searching for colleagues and connections who have worked there.

Look for project partners who have allied/related skills that compliment yours—form a team and start pitching projects.



Is an industry conference.



Is an alumni mixer.



Is a cocktail party.

FACEBOOK TIPS

Approach Facebook the same way you would an alumni association mixer—be friendly, yet maintain a professional profile.

Facebook is more socially-focused than LinkedIn—which can be tricky to navigate.

Be very careful about what pictures you post, and allow to be posted by others “tagged” with your name. Remove the tag, and there-

fore the photo's link to your profile, if it's inappropriate. No beer-bong pictures. Take my word for it.

Look for groups that might be helpful in your search, connect with the group's members.

Reach out to people in other regions if you're willing to relocate—find out what the opportunity landscape is in their area.

Post links that would interest your target audience.

Start conversations with people by writing on their Wall, and on the Walls of groups that you're part of.

Attend local group events that are relevant to your search.

Spend about 2-3 hours per week on Facebook in support of your search.

The three rules of social media

- Be authentic
- Be relevant
- Be brief

GET ATTENTION USING TWITTER

Twitter is like a giant cocktail party. Find people to talk to by looking for people you know, or who you want to know.

Use search.twitter.com to find conversations about topics you're interested in—follow the people who have the most interesting things to say.

Share links and commentary on your area(s) of expertise.

When someone follows you, look at their profile page and follow them back if their follower/following ratio is balanced, if they're saying things that are interesting and relevant.

Find industry leaders in your

area(s) of interest and follow them.

Let your following- and follower-gathering be organic—don't follow more than 20-30 people per week when you get started. Let your community develop naturally—don't force it!

Humor is a great tool—use it!

TIME MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

I recommend spending at least an hour a day managing your social media presence.

It can become a time-sink if you don't schedule it, though, so try to allocate your social-media time the same way you budget your business-related reading, phone follow-up, and research time.

Spend 20 minutes on LinkedIn mid-morning, answering a question or two

and looking for connections.

Look at your Facebook home page a couple of times a day, for about 10 minutes each time. Respond to any conversations and comments that can move your search strategy forward, can build a deeper connection with someone who can help.

Twitter can be a great way to take a quick break without leaving your desk. If you're

feeling stuck, if you're looking for some quick input on a question, if you want to spark a dialogue with someone, taking a Twitter-break for 10 minutes every two to three hours can be a great way to get a new idea, see a fresh approach, learn something new.

You don't really *manage* time, you decide where you'll *spend* time. Decide based on what your goals are.



Tell your story on camera, share your approach to a business issue. Include some slides. Share it on YouTube.

Broadcast yourself.

SHOULD YOU USE YOUTUBE AND SLIDESHARE?

Everyone has to give presentations sometime. Some of us have to do it regularly, others only occasionally.

What better way to communicate your value than with a great slide presentation, outlining your approach to a business issue in your industry, your philosophy of project management, your design for new regional infrastructure?

Use SlideShare for presenta-

tions you've done in the past that are still relevant. Create new presentations that will clearly demonstrate your expertise. Link them to your LinkedIn profile, share them on Facebook and Twitter.

YouTube can be a great way for prospective employers to literally see you in action. Shoot some video of you making a presentation, then edit it together with your

presentation slides.

Both of these sharing tools will help you establish credibility before you even get an interview.

Employers who are looking for people with good communication skills (and what employer isn't?) will be more interested in talking to you if you show them exactly how good you are at sharing your ideas.

One of the best ways to get attention, and to drive interest, is with humor. Be funny, get noticed! (Keep it appropriate, though.)

ONLY CONNECT

Think of social media as a way to expend your brand's market share.

Connect with people who you'd like to know, who you can learn something from.

Connect with people who can learn from you, share your knowledge and experience.

Investigate other geographi-

cal areas, discover new careers, learn how to start your own business, from people you connect with on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites.

Look for groups of like-minded people.

Have a global, not just a local, network.

Discover new partnerships.

Form strategic alliances.

Make new friends.

Re-connect with old friends and former colleagues.

Connect and communicate.

Share your value.

Live your brand.



Show how you'd approach a business issue with a slide presentation on SlideShare.

Some great reading:

Now, Discover Your Strengths (Marcus Buckingham, Donald O. Clifton/Free Press)

Strengths Finder 2.0 (Tom Rath/Gallup Press)

Book Yourself Solid (Michael Port/Wiley & Sons)

The Dip (Seth Godin/Portfolio Press)

Tribes (Seth Godin/Portfolio Press—Seth Godin is one of my storytelling gurus)

The Brand You 50: Fifty Ways to Transform Yourself From “Employee” into a Brand that Shouts Distinction, Commitment, and Passion (Tom Peters/Knopf)

Remember: you’re branding and selling an important product: **YOU**.

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ARE YOU TELLING A GREAT STORY?

THE SCHOOL OF HARD “OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS”

“Looking for my next opportunity” is a phrase on many people’s lips these days.

Our current economic landscape has some scary-looking shadows. It’s hard to see the road ahead.

The most important thing you can do—for yourself, for your community, and for the world at large—is to communicate *and deliver* your true value. What you do best.

The scary part, that bend in the road you didn’t see until you were there, can have you questioning your value.

It can feel like the flip-side of “opportunity knocks” - you might not see much opportunity, and you might feel like you’ve been knocked on the head.

Unplanned and unanticipated change can be hard to handle.

I think the best approach is “one step at a time” - evaluate your skills. Think about your interests, your passion, why you do what you do.

If you’ve been doing the same thing for so long you don’t remember why you

started doing it, look hard at that question.

If it’s time for a career change, work with a coach to discover your strengths, your true passion.

If your inquiry re-ignites your passion for what you’ve been doing for years, work on putting that passion and experience into your story, your value statements, your personal brand.

The world needs what you’re offering.

What’s your *best* offer?

The most important questions you can answer:

Who am I?

Why do I matter?

What value do I bring?

How can I communicate my value?

The answers to those questions form your “personal brand” - that gut feeling that you inspire in friends, colleagues, employers, employees, partners, everyone you engage with in business.

Branding is about inspiring people to buy the product—your product is YOU.

Authentically communicate your value.

Who knows? You might just change the world.



Use social media to spread the word about your powerful personal brand.

If you don’t blow your own horn, who will?