

# Becoming Your Own ONLINE BRAND

By Tekla Szymanski

**N**o longer is a neat collection of past achievements on a two-page résumé remotely enough to make you stand out. You need to cast a wide social-media net and create a virtual billboard that sends a powerful, long-lasting first impression. In short, you need to become “Me Inc.com”—an online brand. Using social media and other web tools, you’ll promote your vision. The goal is to control the narrative and convince others that they can profit from your knowledge.

When your name is Googled, the pages and profiles that you have created, your unique tagline (which you can trademark), and the stories and blog posts that you have written should pop up first. You have to have a massive online presence, relevant connections and publicly shared information to make a mark and be recognizable. Your social media profiles and the content you provide need to feed into one gigantic semantic web search engine. “Social media is not just fun and games,” writes Mike Phillips in *Website Magazine*. “It’s turning into serious business.” Using strategically placed keywords (on your website), tag clouds (on your blog) and hashtags (in your tweets), you will be in control.

## Here are the key elements of building your digital brand:

### Write a blog and build a website

promoting your brand or your portfolio. Use a free blogging platform like WordPress (which has templates that are simple but less customizable than a page you would design yourself), or get your own domain name and build your website from scratch. Launch an e-newsletter (Constant Contact is a standard email marketing site. I like MailChimp). Then promote your website, blog(s) and e-newsletter on all your social media profiles. Add links to your email signature and to any printed materials. Keep your tagline, design, logo, picture and overall color scheme consistent on all platforms to enhance your brand recognition.

### Find blogs in your industry

and comment on posts that interest you, with a link to your own blog, Facebook page, Twitter handle and website. Ask other bloggers to include your blog in their blogroll—and reciprocate. Link extensively to and from your website. The more quality incoming links you have, the higher your Google rating. Build a consistent relationship with your followers, fans, friends and subscribers and create a two-way dialogue. When you market your message to 10 influential people

who spread and share it, you’ve potentially reached thousands.

### Use your LinkedIn profile

to spread awareness of your brand, and network and do research through LinkedIn. Include your professional photo, a headline, a detailed work history and an engaging, continuously updated summary where you introduce your brand and say why people should hire you. Make as many connections as you can, but only connect with people—and ask for connections to people—whom you know. This is different from your Facebook profile, where you can “friend” anyone—the more the merrier. Ask for recommendations! Feed your blog into your profile (WordPress works seamlessly for this, but you can use other RSS feeds as well). Launch polls, participate in the Q&A function and become a known expert in your field. Join professional groups (start with NYWICI’s LinkedIn group: <http://bit.ly/nywici>).

### Create a professional Facebook page

(not a personal profile page!) for your brand, where you share links and offer professional insights with people who have opted to become “fans.” Pages are for organizations, businesses and services offering information in an official, public manner

**CONNECT THE DOTS:**  
Your Twitter and blog feeds, Facebook page, LinkedIn profile, website and newsletter should all seamlessly link to and reinforce one another.



(<http://bit.ly/facepages>) and are fully indexed by Google. Update consistently and add your blog and Twitter feeds ([www.involver.com/pages/gallery.html](http://www.involver.com/pages/gallery.html)). When you have more than 25 fans, you can customize the URL to [Facebook.com/yourbrand-name](http://Facebook.com/yourbrand-name). Provide relevant links and share information. Add other pages that offer similar services (or are your competitors) as favorites on your page. By the way, research has shown that the best time to post content on Facebook is over the weekend, when it tends to be shared the most.

**Open a Twitter account** and claim your full name or brand name as your handle. Add TweetMeme to all of your other platforms. Send out tweets regularly that are relevant to your brand—and nothing else. The ratio in social marketing, according to Social Media Vision, should be 80 percent retweets or tweets of links to content not written by—or about—you, and 20 percent tweets for self-promotion. The more links you provide to your followers, the greater the chance that they will retweet. Follow your competition and people in your industry. According to Webgrrls, the best times of the day to tweet are 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. ET, especially at the beginning of the week.

**Create an account on social bookmarking sites** like Digg.com, StumbleUpon.com and delicious.com, and share info relevant to your brand. Find out what is buzzing within your industry or professional niche and what your competition is talking about. Produce a video and upload it on YouTube or TubeMogul.com, or a

podcast and upload it to BlogTalkRadio.com. Track your social media presence at samepoint.com, socialmention.com or technorati.com; search for online experts on Yahoo's myBlogLog.com and measure your website's/blog's marketing effectiveness with website-grader.com. Share your online content using sharethis.com or addthis.com. Then tie it all together with friendfeed.com. Make it easy for your readers to share/retweet your website content.

### **Make your brand present and consistent** on every channel.

Connect all the dots: Your Twitter and blog feeds, Facebook page, LinkedIn profile, website and newsletter should all seamlessly link to and reinforce one another. Create a hub (website or blog) and redirect your social media content and your followers/friends/fans back to it. Archive and protect your own content. Promote all your social media accounts on every platform—offline and online—that you have created. Be everywhere. “The goal,” says social media marketing consultant **Chris Brogan**, “is threading the social needle. Networks are the lifeblood of this human computer we’re building. A strong [online] personal brand is a mix of reputation, trust, attention and execution.”

Tekla Szymanski is a writer and editor whose insights on media can be found at [www.tekla-szymanski.com](http://www.tekla-szymanski.com), [twitter.com/tszymanski](http://twitter.com/tszymanski) and [facebook.com/OldMediaNewMedia](http://facebook.com/OldMediaNewMedia). She is the managing editor for [nywici.org](http://nywici.org) and a member of the team that recently redesigned the site.

### **READ MORE ON ONLINE BRANDING**

Reach ([www.reachpersonal-branding.com](http://www.reachpersonal-branding.com))

Dan Schwabel's Personal Branding Blog ([www.personalbranding-blog.com](http://www.personalbranding-blog.com)).