Personal Branding online

by Dawn Winder, personal brand & communication expert, coach and speaker

Branding online can be confusing. It is often hard to know where to start, but having a successful online Personal Brand is key for small business owners, self-employed professionals, freelancers and anyone who wants to promote what they do.

Many of us find products or services through search engines, only to click and find that the website is a complete turn off to the company. The two main reasons for this are: they are faceless - another corporate website filled with business jargon - or it is a handmade website which does not conform to the company's brand guidelines and fails to fulfil business objectives...

Lets face it, people today have less time to sit and wait to be sold to. The Internet has made things instant and accessible; everybody can know who your competitors are at the touch of a button. With so much choice it's essential to have not only a competitive edge, but also a Personal Brand Identity (PBI), which you can use to be individual and to create a presence online and offline. Your PBI should form the foundation of your company brand guidelines: a set of rules that ensure your brand remains consistent throughout every type of communication.

After all, if you want to be known as an expert in your marketplace or want to grow your network you will need to develop a brand that will create impact when they meet you and ensure your website is not only a reflection of the real you, but is also easy-to-use and appealing to your target market.

Below are a few basic principles of successful websites that have carried through their Personal Brand. They have...

• connected emotionally with their target market

• been consistent with the message they are sending out

• added value to their users, i.e. an e-newsletter or article

• established themselves and their business as experts in their field

• provided some form of evidence of their credibility i.e. testimonials or case studies

• a well designed website that makes you feel good

• a human feel with a face or a story behind the product or service

• their values communicated through the content and design

People who are successfully branding themselves online choose carefully what they want to say and how they want to be perceived. They build a foundation from knowing who they are and who they want to attract. They then make an emotional connection and present this brand package to their clients/customers.
7 key benefits of using your personal brand within your website:

1. Making it easier for your clients to buy

2. Differentiates you from your competitors as it is unique to you

3. Brings consistency and focus

4. Creates strong user loyalty and credibility

5. Establish an emotional connection with your clients and prospective clients

6. Develop a personal style that reflects your skills, expertise and characteristics

7. Create a brand identity that is compelling, enticing and draws people to you

'supporting young people with enterprising ambitions'