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# PERSONAL BRANDING

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Pathway to a  
Successful  
Career



*By George Neba*

## AUTHOR



**George Neba** , is a personal branding strategist, coach, mentor and consultant, specialised in personal brand clarity, identity, awareness, visibility, monetisation and impact. Leveraging the power of personal branding, he builds thought-leadership in impact-driven organisations, socially-conscious game-changers and corporate professionals, through Brandway Academy Emerging Thought Leadership Programme(BRAC ETLP)—a robust, transformational and impact-fashioned, online school for teaching unique brandivating techniques. Volunteering is his modus-vivendi, with over 50 missions to his credit. He is Volunteer Ambassador for Noela Lyonga Foundation-Buea(2019); and fellow of ACEA(2021), OMA(2021), CUBLEF(2020), REPAIR(2020), AGLA(2020), AYUC(2019), UCYE(2018), ECI(2017), YALI-WA(2016), CLA(2015), NCSAPD(2014).... He has featured on Cameroon Feeling, Inside-The-Presidency, Cameroon Calling(on CRTV); National Post, Le Gideon, Advocate, Municipal Updates(journals); and [afrorealinitiative.org](http://afrorealinitiative.org).

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### Editorial Team

Jimm Chick Fomunjong - Head, Knowledge Management Unit, WACSI

Nancy kankam Kusi - Programme Officer, Knowledge Management Unit, WACSI

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### About WACSeries

WACSeries are analytical periodic write-ups on topical themes and issues relevant to West Africa. These write-ups provide experts, researchers and practitioners a space to reflect, analyse and posit views and recommendations on emerging issues and debates.

The WACSeries Op-Eds are thought provoking and intellectually engaging write-ups that provide critical reflections and analysis of issues relevant to civil society and development in West Africa.

### Objectives of WACSeries

- To raise awareness on key issues in West Africa;
- To generate debates and discussions on these issues;
- To proffer recommendations on civil society involvement in advocacy;
- To provide recommendations to policy makers.



# **Personal Branding: Pathway to a Successful Career**

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## **For more information, write to:**

**West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) No. 9 Bamboo Street, East Legon P.O. Box AT 1956, Achimota Accra, Ghana**

**Email: [research@wacsi.org](mailto:research@wacsi.org) Tel: +233 (0) 302 550 224**

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To contribute to this publication,  
contact : [research@wacsi.org](mailto:research@wacsi.org)  
+233(0)501440545



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## I Introduction

Before consciousness about the essence of personal branding was raised by Tom Peters (1) some two decades ago, the power and potential of branding was mostly utilised by corporate organs, evidently-expressed in the way organisations told their stories in a manner that positively-influenced people to perceive them in a desired way. That was reflected in how companies acted and served people, the values they shared and how they projected those values (2). Without gainsaying, a strong corporate brand stands out from the competition — and earns more awareness, better customer experiences and increased sales as a result. However, branding is not (or should not be) the reserve of companies.

According to Tom Peters, “Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding.... To be in business today, our most important job is to be a head marketer for the brand called, ‘You.’” (3) This is because every professional has their own stories to tell and their unique values, goals, knowledge, skills and expertise to share, through personal branding. It is an ongoing process which communicates your unique identity —

portraying who you are, what you stand for, the values you embrace and the ways in which you express those values — thus establishing a professional image which distinguishes you from competitors and gives your potential employers or clients reason(s) to associate with you (4). This is very significant in establishing a new career or in boosting an existing one. Thus,



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in today's increasingly digital world, understanding and developing your personal brand is of incredible necessity to gain greater professional visibility and boost your career.

## II Benefits of Building a Robust Personal Brand

### 1. Provides clarity of purpose

The pursuit for personal branding will influence you to figure out who you truly are. This is because, to develop an authentic personal brand you need an introspection of yourself — an assessment of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to your career or industry of interest — to decide what you want from your career and what you can offer (5). By so doing, you will uncover some skills and aspects that make you distinct and discover areas where you need improvement or

new knowledge and skills to enhance your career (6). This will permit you to better understand the unique features of your personality and to decide how best to brand yourself. Supports career decision making. Once you are clear about these, deciding which job to apply for or which offer to accept should become easier.

### 2. Enhances your visionary power

In addition to improving understanding on your existing attributes, skills and competencies, personal branding can assist you to forecast your future — by defining what you want and carefully-crafting the roadmap to your desired career destination. Knowing where you want your career to be in five years, for example, will help you to communicate about it more deliberately and effectively. If, for instance, you prefer to work for a new employer than to have an internal promotion, you will need to communicate your brand more to a wider audience (7).

### 3. Eases communication and networking

A clear personal brand will make it easier for you to;

- a) Identify the people you want to network with, or the precise area to focus on, such as: industry thought leaders, peers, recruiters, etc., and
- b) Have concise and effective points to make while in conversation with them (8).

With a well-defined audience, you will better appreciate the type of story to craft and direct to your specific segment. For instance, if you desire to reach hiring managers and recruiters, you may start by creating or updating your LinkedIn profile. Because around 92 percent of recruiters leverage social media to find high-quality candidates and, of those, 87 percent use LinkedIn (9). However, if you aim to either attract new customers, entertain and or build loyalty in existing ones, you may need a personal website or blog — to better express your potentials. Thus, if you fail to identify the correct target audience, you risk attracting the wrong audience, wasting time and money, or communicating in a very generic and ineffective manner (10).

#### 4. Enables you to develop a catchy elevator pitch

The desire to effectively brand yourself will encourage you to craft an elevator pitch — that is, a 30-to-60-second statement about who you are, what you do, who you serve (target niche), what makes you stand out (your unique attributes, expertise, strengths and values) and what your career ambitions are. Cultivated well, such a catchy statement highlights key points about you, builds trust, draws irresistible attention and signals to potential employers whether or not you will be the right fit for them. Besides, your authority will gain momentum in your field.

#### 5. Helps you to stand out

A strong personal brand can permit you to clearly communicate to your customers, colleagues, peers and employers in a manner that can enable them better understand who you are and what they can expect from you. If employers can easily see that the skills and values that you have are aligned with what they need, they will more likely engage with you. Having a clear brand to promote and knowing how to promote it, can make a major difference to your success rate (11)



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#### 6. Reputation management

Personal branding enables you to influence, assess and control the way people think about you, by responding to them in such a way that ensures that the thoughts and actions of your audience are aligned with your brand personality. It raises your consciousness about the importance of strategically, creatively and skillfully presenting yourself in the best way possible, both online and offline. Attracting the attention of like-minded colleagues, peers, etc., will ensure that your reputation spreads in the right way.

Hence, personal branding instills a sense of professionalism in you — making you more cautious about managing your reputation on and off social media with regards to the things you say or the information you put out there, whatever you do, wherever and however you appear — given that these aspects partly make up your personal brand. Such awareness places you in a better position than others, given that about 80 per cent of employers “Google” job seekers or search for their social media profiles before inviting them for interview (12), while 85 per cent of hiring managers indicate that a candidate’s personal brand influences their hiring decisions (13).

#### 7. Exposes one to relevant opportunities

Statistics indicates that around 85 per cent of all jobs are filled through networking (14). And personal branding is one of the best ways to build quality networks and partnerships, and ultimately grow your net worth. It raises your visibility, thus predisposing you to a higher-quality of like-minds who could support your efforts, and advocates who are more likely to cherish your offer(s). A strong personal brand upgrades your market value and offers you a tangible leverage to negotiate better and charge more for your services (and or products).

#### 8. Builds respect, credibility and loyalty

Once you know your exact audience, it is expected of you to consistently, coherently and continuously deliver quality content and articulate your values in a way that resonates with them. That way, you will grow your visibility, expand your influence, and gain trust and loyalty. A properly nurtured personal brand will also increase the respect others have for you and your company. According to Nick Brogden of Earned Media,

a well-sculpted personal brand makes your advice more authentic, respectable and possibly influential. As a result, more people will invest in you, and your brand equity and impact will surge.

### **9. Builds thought leadership**

Personal branding stimulates you to display your unique potentials on a specific subject or in a given field. As such, you will draw attention to yourself and build a community of like-minds who value your skills and see you as an expert. Before long, they will solicit you for interviews, speaking gigs, presentations at

seminars/workshops/conferences, media outings, etc. This will help you solidify your niche, thus making you a go-to expert or authority — that is, many heads will preferably turn to you for reliable responses to thought-provoking question.

### **10. A chance to rebrand**

If your priorities have changed and your current personal brand no longer reflects what you want from your career, you could rebrand to assist you progress in a more fulfilling direction (15). When changing career fields, the lack of hands-on experience in your new domain may make it difficult to convince employers



Source: charlie solorzano/pexels



Image by jopwell/pexels

that your skills can speak for your lack of experience, and that the transition will be smooth and effective (16). Nevertheless, one of the major challenges of seeking out a new career path is to present yourself as a qualified and credible professional in your new field (17). That is, if you are about getting into a new career field, then personal branding is one of the strongest tools to reinvent yourself (18). It will allow you to clearly communicate the unique skills, values and experiences you have or intend to bring to the table, and how they will benefit your potential employers and your new career or industry (19). Thanks to personal branding, you will highlight your strengths, and clearly and concisely communicate the skills and experiences of yours that match up with the values and interests of your types of companies (20). Thus, you must demonstrate your value by calling upon your transferable skills — the areas of knowledge and expertise that you built up in your previous career — and how you want to apply such skills to your new role (21).

## 11. Creates leadership consciousness

Personal branding influences you to deliberately portray your best self in persuading public perception, and creates self-mindfulness in improving your actions and interactions with your followers. For instance, if you aspire to gain a leadership role at your job side, you can't afford to

drink yourself into oblivion during social outings. You will rather behave respectfully as expected of a leader. Besides, you can't just join social media forums and be idle — or pepper the platform with negativity (accusations, blames, complaints). You will rather contribute knowledgeably and resourcefully. If you aspire to be a leading business entrepreneur, it is not enough to work quietly in your office — because you can't be a leader of just one person. You have to attend more industry events to network extensively with people in your space.

## 12. Boosts self-confidence

Personal branding stems from a purposeful, genuine, skilful and value-driven mind. It legitimises and lends credence to your work and builds more self-assurance through constant practice. As such, you get more comfortable with it, feeling less anxious about sharing personal details with your audience, getting in front of the camera, and more. Besides, you can extend that confidence and courage to other areas of your life, leading to exponential ripple effects.

## III Conclusion

Branding spans across your personal and career life (22). Therefore, you are not just a brand, you are the owner of your career. Through constant practice, a well-crafted and focused personal branding strategy will set the stage for success in your personal life, career and earning potentials. By taking control of your personal development, identifying new abilities and opportunities and learning skills, personal branding provides a clear pathway for you to stand out and move up (23). It is also very crucial in understanding individuals and their roles in the job market (24). Moreover, building your personal brand online is as important to your career, as your résumé (25). Having a clear and consistent message to share with your networks, both off and online — can make networking easier and more effective, leading to interesting connections and opportunities (26). Personal branding also indicates confidence, credibility and ability to prioritise what works best for you (27). It is easier to leave a positive impression when you know how to showcase your strengths and capabilities (28). Personal branding can convince potential employers that there is more to you than just your qualifications and work experience (29). Go out there with confidence, conviction and pride in what you have to offer. Be yourself, position yourself in the best possible way and get your voice heard! (30)

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