

5 EASY STEPS TO CREATE A POWERFUL ONLINE BRAND

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To thrive in today's working world, you need a strong, unique and authentic personal brand that is clearly reflected in your online identity. When people Google your name, what do they find? What message do you want to convey? A personal brand is more than simply marketing speak or a carefully crafted script – it's a dynamic interaction between you and those you want to influence and impact. This ebook will help you lead that interaction as a strong, confident partner.

Introduction

Who are you, really?

You may have a winning sense of humor, great taste in shoes, and a penchant for rescuing stray animals. At work, you are known as the go-to person when clients are rushed and stressed out, because you have excellent communication skills and a calm demeanor.

Your co-workers, parents and friends know how amazing you are, but for everyone else – hiring managers, potential clients, funders or sponsors – their impression of you is formed after typing your name in a search bar.

What story does Google tell about you?

It showcases your body of work – the things you have created, contributed, affected and impacted throughout the course of your life – *that you have expressly shared online*. If you (or someone else) has not shared these things, the only information that will come up about you is that out of date blog that you started in October of 2004 and stopped in November of 2004, or that unfortunate picture of you in your Goth stage in high school, right before you decided to change



your life and go to school to become a bond trader (for the record, I have nothing against Goth dress – some of my best friends wore black lipstick and spikey hair. Some still do).

If the story Google is telling about you is not the one you want people to hear, it is time to get to work on spiffing up your personal brand so that it reflects your true skills, strengths and abilities, and attracts your favorite kind of work.

What is a personal brand?

My friend [Colleen Wainwright](#) gives my favorite definition of personal branding. She says, “Personal branding is **you, amplified.**”

By “amplified,” of course she is not recommending you shout about yourself, but rather that your public face reflects your true personality. The best compliment you can receive when an online friend meets you in person for the first time is “Wow, you are just like you appear online!” A great personal brand amplifies your natural strengths, and tells a cohesive story that leads you to desired work opportunities.

In this ebook, I will cover five steps to creating a strong personal brand. «



Step 1: Define your personal brand flavor and focus

If your personal brand is based on your true personality, skills and strengths, the first step in the process is to assess the ingredients you are working with.

Inventory your strengths

Each of us has a specific and unique set of strengths. Donald Clifton, co-author of *Now, Discover Your Strengths* says, “Each person’s greatest room for growth is in the areas of his or her greatest strength.”

There are many wonderful assessments to help you identify strengths, like [Clifton StrengthsFinder](#), Sally Hogshead’s [Fascinate Assessment](#) and the [Kolbe Index](#). If you have taken these or other assessments before, review your findings and list your top strengths.



If you feel fuzzy about your strengths, reach out to people you have loved working with before (and who have loved working with you) and ask them this one question: “In your experience working with me, what would you consider my top strengths?”

If you are like most people, you may be surprised and delighted with the answers you receive. Sometimes your biggest strengths are skills that seem insignificant to you because they are so natural that it feels effortless to use them. Do not be fooled! That which comes easy to you is a clue to your natural strengths.

Name your unique ingredients

Your ingredients are all your skills, strengths and experiences that you can access in different work situations. This includes both things that you view as favorable (a degree from Harvard, working at a top design firm in New York) and things that you view as unfavorable (growing up as a child of an alcoholic, getting injured in a car accident). These experiences are all important, because they all helped bring out your unique strengths. To assess your ingredients, review your significant life experiences, your resume, LinkedIn profile, and/or client portfolio and answer the following questions:



What are your top skills for your next professional challenge?

(example: design thinking, written communication, facilitation skills)

What three experiences have most shaped who you are at work?

(example: working for a horrible boss right out of college, competing in the state finals in track in high school, being mentored by the top attorney in the city)

What problems are you most driven to solve?

(example: decreasing the gap between the rich and poor, eradicating ugly fonts, promoting healthy eating among young children)

What do you believe?

(example: I believe that people will do the right thing, when given the right support. I believe simplicity drives well-being. I believe accountability drives performance.)

Describe your vibe

Your “vibe” is a simple way to describe the *feeling* your personal brand evokes. It is a direct reflection of your true personality that you will convey in both your words and images.



Which adjectives accurately describe your personal brand? For example, are you sophisticated, quirky, polished, ironic, earthy, funny or edgy? Are you a cool combination of adjectives like “polished quirky,” “edgy sophisticated” or “earthy ironic?”

Choose some words that best describe your vibe. If you don’t know, ask those closest to you.

Identify your audience segments

Your personal brand story should be directed to the audience that you want to influence for your next work challenge (like potential customers if you work for yourself, hiring managers if you work for an organization, sponsors or funders if you are raising money for a project). Audience segmentation expert Susan Baier of AudienceAxis.com says “first describe your audience in terms of the *problems they have*, not their demographics, like age, race, gender or location.” An easy way to think about that is to fill in the blanks for this statement:

“I am the perfect solution for _____ type of customer looking to solve _____ kind of problem”

For example:



"I am the perfect solution for online companies looking to improve their sales conversion with people who join their mailing list."

"I am the perfect solution for people who are looking to reduce the amount of water they use in their household by at least 30%"

"I am the perfect solution for service professionals who want to build a mobile app to compliment their in-person training and consulting offerings."

"I am the perfect solution for successful authors who want to self-publish a book that looks and feels just as professional as a traditionally published book."

Once you describe the core problem of your audiences, feel free to add in demographics, if they are important to you and your mission. «



Step 2: Select your look/feel

Your personal brand should have a cohesive look and feel that reflects your core strengths, skills and vibe.

You want the brand to feel like you, while also reflecting the appropriate professional image that will really connect with your desired audience. The look/feel of your personal brand is made up of a few key elements: colors, photographs and fonts.

Colors

You want to choose a few colors that you can use consistently in your personal brand assets (website, business card, logo, etc).

Your color scheme should reflect your personality and vibe. So if you are dynamic and edgy, you can get away with hot pink and black. If you are relaxed and informal, you may do better with green.



There is a **fun tool** you can check out from Grasshopper that indicates a good core color to use in your branding, based on a few key questions (no sign up required).

Photographs

The photographs you choose for your website and social media profiles should be high quality. This means no quick shot of yourself in dim bar lighting from your mobile phone (unless, of course, that is a core reflection of your personal brand).

I highly recommend you contract a professional photographer to take a set of headshots that you can consistently across all your social media profiles.

A great photo brings out your natural personality, while creating connection between you and your audience.

Here are two different examples of professional photographs that convey a clear personality and vibe that matches the personal brand of the business owners.



Life coach Jenny Blake (<http://jennyblake.me>) uses a fun and casual photo for her home page that reflects her audience (young, creative professionals in need of business and career advice) and her vibe (fun, smart, grounded).

Tech entrepreneur Zee M Kane (<http://zee.me>) uses a more sparse, clean design and photo for his home page, which reflects a straightforward communication style and lack of pretense.

Fonts

There are countless fonts to choose from for your website and business cards, which can be problematic when you are not a professional designer.



For starter websites, it is a great idea to use some pre-designed themes or templates that reflect the feeling of your personal brand. Professional designers have already created them, so you don't have to worry about choosing the right combination of fonts.

Design expert [Dan Mayer](#) wrote an excellent, [detailed blog post](#) about choosing fonts on SmashingMagazine.com. Here are a few highlights:

1. Dress for the occasion:

choose a font that is good for everyday use

2. Know your font families:

choose a group of fonts that go well together

3. Use decisive contrast:

fonts should either correspond or contrast

4. A little can go a long way:

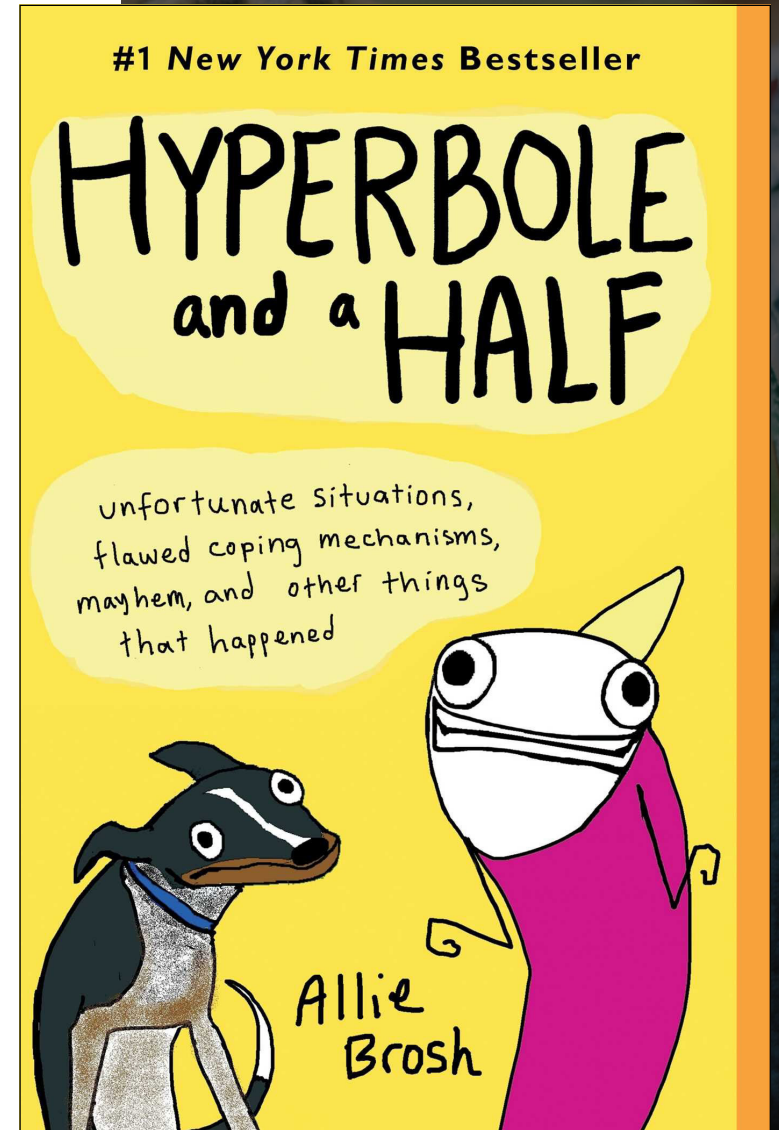
if you choose to use an extremely unique font, use it sparingly

5. There are no rules:

listen to the experts, then do what you feel is right



The most important thing in choosing the look and feel of your personal brand is to reflect your true personality. New York Times bestselling author Allie Brosh of *Hyperbole and a Half* has a quirky, warm and whimsical use of fonts and images on her blog and book that is perfectly suited to her personality and audience. «



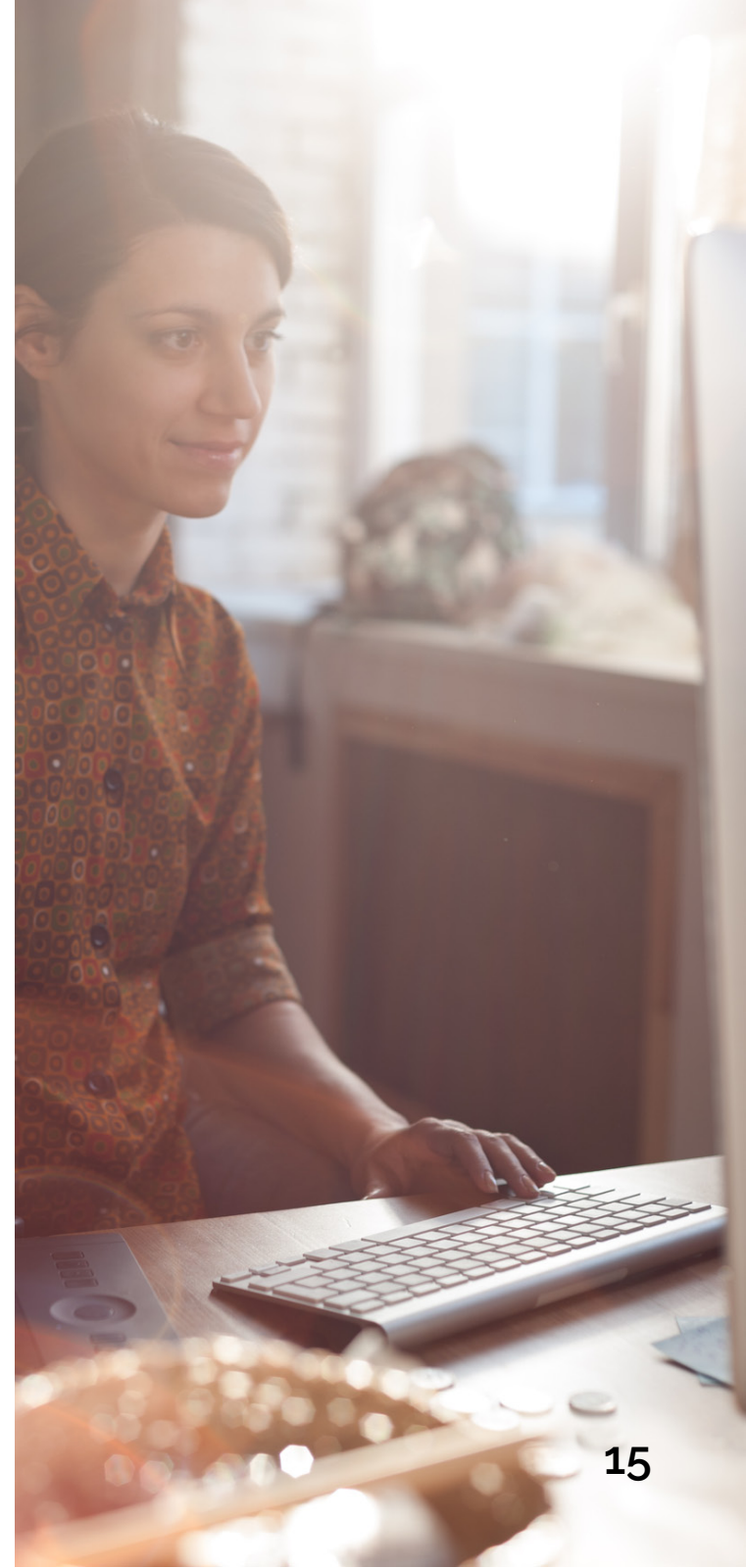
Step 3: Anchor your brand

Now that you have gathered core information about your skills and strengths, and have a good sense of your design aesthetic, it is time to commit to creating a web presence that anchors your personal brand.

Research Now on behalf of Domain.ME conducted a study between June 11 and July 9, 2015. They surveyed 300 Human Resource (HR) Professionals with a departmental or functional role as HR in their organization. According to the research findings, the most valuable content that a candidate could feature on his or her site includes:

- Traditional resume (78%)
- An interactive resume with links to work samples/case studies (58%)
- Work-related published articles or blogs (56%)
- Volunteer and nonprofit activities (49%)
- Portfolio samples (48%)
- Awards and honors (48%)

Given this information, there are a few key things that you want to do to create a powerful online personal brand:



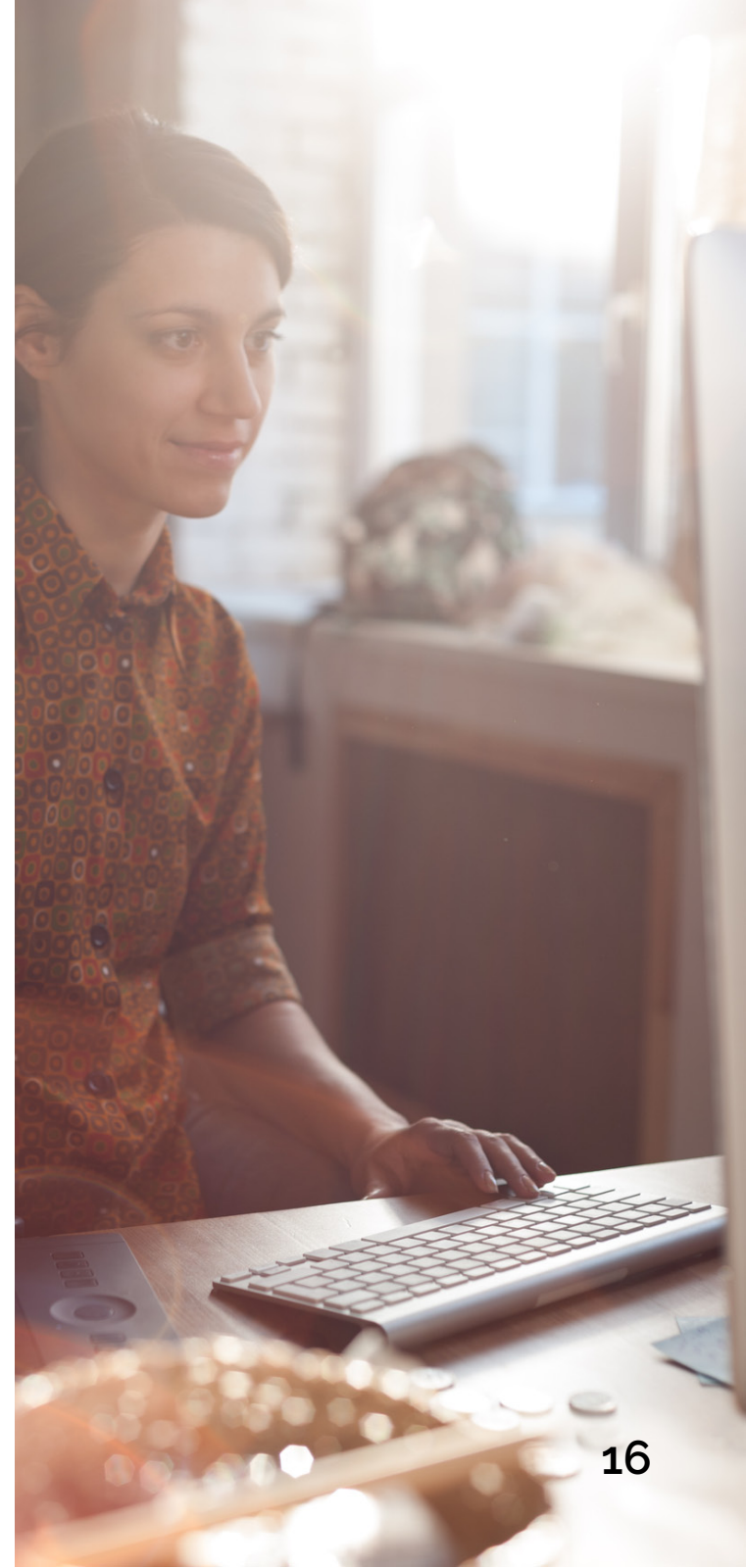
Create a personal, unique website/domain

Having your own domain is a great way to anchor your brand. If you can find an available URL with your name in it, reserve it right away. If it is already taken, you can add a few words to it like “yournamework.me” or “yournameportfolio.me”. Search if your name is available here: <http://domain.me>.

Create the Big 4 Pages

You can choose to have a lot of pages and categories on your website, but to start, there are four must-have components:

- 1. Home Page:** An inviting page that conveys in few words and images who you are and what problems you solve.
- 2. About Page:** A clear, engaging description of who you are and why you are qualified to solve the problems your audience cares about.
- 3. Services/Portfolio/Projects:** Depending on your work mode, this may be either a description of your services for hire, or if you work for someone else, it can be a place to showcase the work you are most proud of creating in organizations.



4. Contact Page: Give people a variety of ways to get a hold of you, including phone, email, and your favorite social channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn. Always have a picture on this page, since it connects you more personally with your ideal audience.

Write a great About page

Your About page tells a clear, powerful story about who you are and what you offer. When one of your ideal audience members arrives at your About page, they need four critical questions answered:

- Does this person have the right skills or experience to solve my problem?
- Can I trust this person?
- Has this person worked with people like me?
- Will this person be enjoyable to work with?

Here are some examples of a variety of styles of About pages that demonstrate clear and engaging personal brands:

Software engineer: <http://www.davidhuerta.me/index.php>

Computer scientist: <http://lea.verou.me/about/>

Writer and startup founder: http://sarahadler.me/Adler_resume.pdf

Life coach: <http://jennyblake.me/about>

Product designer: <http://joerichardson.me/> «

A Note to Perfectionists:

As a coach who has worked with thousands of people who want to establish a new or updated online presence, I will tell you that this process can bring up a lot of perfectionist tendencies. So I want to remind you of the greatest thing about creating a website: you can update it! I know it seems obvious, but many people get obsessed at the thought of creating the perfect online presence, which will delay your launch and thwart opportunities more than they will help them. Anyone you currently admire that has a beautiful site has probably gone through multiple iterations and redesigns. So relax and enjoy the process!

Step 4: Craft powerful stories and content

Once your online home is established, now you want to create and share useful information that will help your ideal audience. This will increase your value in their eyes, as you are seen as someone who solves the problems that they care about.

Identify the core problems you solve for your audience(s)

In Step 1, you identified some core problems that you solve for your audience. Now that you are ready to develop content, you can dig deeper into these problems, and brainstorm a number of useful pieces of content that would serve their needs.

For example:

- If you are an accountant with an audience of entrepreneurs, you can share tax saving tips for business owners.
- If you are a business coach with an audience of restaurant owners,



you could share strategies for holiday promotions that drive sales.

- If you are a software developer with an audience of other software developers, you could share tips for writing bug-free code.

Craft your story arc

There are many ways to deliver value to your audience through your content. You may deliver live talks at a meeting, create a tip sheet or job aid, write a blog post or create a useful video.

The core elements of content that solves problems contain these three things:

Description of problem: this creates a connection with your audience, where they say “yes, I have that problem!”

Example: this brings this problem to life with a real person (it could be you) who resolved this problem using your solution.

Solution: this gives a step-by-step approach to solving the problem.

You do not have to structure this content in this exact order, or use all of these elements every time. But keep these in mind as you craft your stories and content.



Select your communication mediums

There are many ways you can share your stories: blog posts, videos, audio, infographics, Slideshare presentations, and live talks. Your best choice will be the intersection between the medium you love to create with and the medium your ideal audience likes the best.

Award-winning training company, Allen Communication shares a [useful infographic](#) on why the use of the right rich media for the right audience can vastly improve the impact of your content. «



Step 5: Share your stories

Once you have created great content, now you want to share it online. This is how you will begin to build a strong body of work that is indexed and ranked by Google, which will bring the right people and opportunities to your site.

Select your ideal social media channels

There are so many social media channels that you will spread yourself too thin if you try to be everywhere. Choose the channels that:

- Allow you to create the most powerful content that matches your skills, strengths and available resources
- Connects with your audience in their preferred medium

If you want to attract great job opportunities or clients in a corporate setting, you may want to use LinkedIn.

If you want to connect with stay at home moms, you may want to use Facebook.



If you want to connect with artists and photographers, you may want to use Instagram.

Select ideal in-person speaking or meeting events

While having an online presence is an extremely effective way to build your personal brand, it is still a critical part of your professional development to attend in-person meetings or events. Your time is precious, so you want to choose events that are filled with ideal clients or job prospects.

To find ideal events and conferences, you can use sites like [Meetup.com](#), [allconferences.com](#) or Google “[insert your area of interest] + associations” to begin to build a list.

Before committing to joining an organization, attend a couple of meetings to see if it is a good fit and good use of your time.

Create your annual communication plan

It can feel overwhelming to pull all these parts of your personal brand together. The good news is you can work on it one small piece at a



time. Follow the steps laid out in this ebook to create a clear and compelling personal brand. Then make a plan for how to share your great problem solving content with the audience who will bring you the best work opportunities. Your content plan is made up of 5 steps:

1. Zero in on the audience you most want to reach in the next 12 months. This can be a hiring company, a set of clients, or ideal peers or partners.

2. Choose the ways you want to share your content. You have many options, including:

- Blog posts
- Newsletter articles
- Infographics
- Videos
- Audio content like podcasts
- In-person talks

3. Choose your publishing frequency. For example, you may choose to write a newsletter once a month, a blog post once every two weeks, a video once a month and a talk at a professional association or conference once every two months.



4. Plot your publishing dates on your calendar. Nothing gets done without a deadline! By breaking your content production into doable chunks, you will feel real progress and accomplishment.

5. Confirm your social media sharing plan, and publish according to your schedule. For example, decide where you will share your blog post (on your own site, or on LinkedIn's Pulse feature), then the additional ways you will share the content (cross post on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram).

By creating and sharing content on a regular basis, you will build a strong personal brand based on being a helpful and useful resource to people you care about serving. «



Summary

Nothing feels better than having confidence in yourself and attracting ideal work opportunities. Spending some time to strategically position your personal brand to attract these opportunities is the best thing you can do for your career.

A year from now, when we type your name in Google, a very important story will appear: the story you want the world to hear. Have fun getting started!



About Pamela Slim

Pamela Slim is an award-winning author, speaker and business consultant who has been an entrepreneur for nineteen years. Her passion for career and organizational development spans many different work modes and client engagements.

A former Director of Training and Development at Barclays Global Investors in San Francisco, she spent the first 10 years of her business as a consultant to large companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Charles Schwab and Cisco Systems, where she worked with thousands of executives, managers and employees.

In the last eight years, she helped hundreds of people start successful businesses. She built a powerful online presence at *Escape from Cubicle Nation*, a site designed for corporate employees who wanted to make the shift to entrepreneur. At Escape, Pam developed and taught business building courses for thousands of entrepreneurs. She has worked with companies serving the small business market such as Infusionsoft, LeadPages and Citrix. She has published two books with Penguin/Portfolio: *Escape from Cubicle Nation* (2009) and *Body of Work* (2014) Pam lives in Mesa, Arizona, with her husband Darryl, kids Joshua and Rosie, and her two dogs Rocky and DC.



Connect with Pam at
<http://pamelaslim.com>

About Domain.ME

.ME is a top level domain name that is all about YOU – giving you an original destination to build and personalize your corporate or personal blog or brand. As a leading personal online domain, .ME is uniquely positioned to cater to professional and personal needs of its users by providing them with an easy way to express their uniqueness to the world. It can be registered on over 190 registrars and offers the same Internet protection and SEO benefits that older domains have. Whether you're looking for a hub to house all of your blogs, a new blog, personal branding website, entrepreneurial endeavor, or a site that incorporates "me" into the name (like [About.Me](#) or [Despicable.Me](#) did when they bought their dot.ME's), [Domain.ME](#) is here to help!



Other Notable .ME's:

(used as a site's main domain or shortening tool)

PayPal.Me (PayPal's new easy payment endeavor)

Rooms.Me (Facebook's latest endeavor)

Ti.Me (Time Magazine)

Fb.Me (Facebook)

Wp.Me (WordPress)