

Building Your Personal Brand Online

(adapted from Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand)

by William Arruda

It's no secret to career-minded professionals that you must stand out and make a name for yourself to ensure the highest level of success. As a marketing or branding executive, you are well aware of the power of branding and the role it plays in corporate - as well as individual - success. You have probably mastered personal branding in the real world through regular speaking gigs, writing articles and taking a leadership role in professional marketing/branding associations; but how are you doing with your online branding? In a world that is becoming more and more virtual, you *are* your Google results.

Build Your Brand in Bits and Bytes

Being googled is the new millennium version of the reference check. It provides your colleagues, employees, managers, clients, hiring managers and executive recruiters with critical information about you. Consider:

- A Harris Interactive poll revealed that 40% of respondents google people to learn about them.
- According to Business Week, 87% of headhunters use Google and social networks to make decisions about candidates and 35% of recruiters have eliminated candidates based on what Google revealed
- Accenture included the total number of relevant Google results as one of three measures they used to develop their list of the Top 50 Business Gurus.

Clearly, people are making decisions about you based on what they find online. Your Google results may be the determining factor in whether an executive recruiter calls you in for an interview, your manager decides to promote you or a prospective client chooses to work with you. It's no longer a luxury, it's a requirement for you to build and continuously manage your on-line identity.

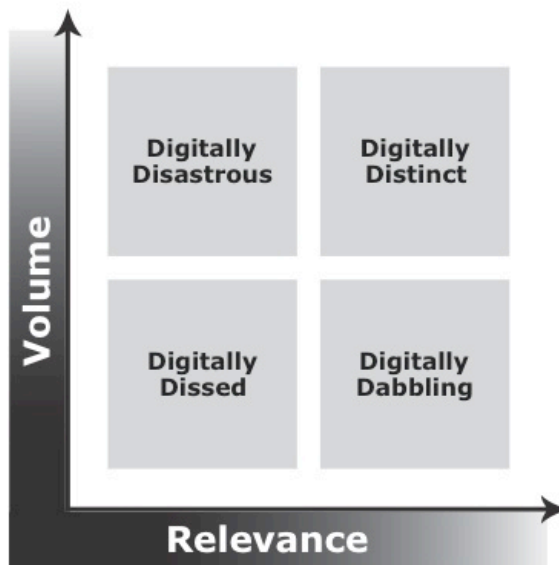
Determine Your GQ (Google Quotient)

Google yourself right now (type your name in quotes: "First name Last name" to ensure the purest results) to learn where you stand on the digital scale. You can go

to www.careerdistinction.com/onlineID and use a complimentary Online ID Calculator™ to learn your Google Quotient.

From the Online Calculator results, determine which of the five scenarios outlined below best describes your online profile.

The Digital Scale



Digitally disguised: There is absolutely nothing about you on the Web. Your search did not match any documents.

Digitally dissed: There is little on the Web about you, and what is there is either negative or inconsistent with how you want to be known.

Digitally disastrous: There is much information about you on the Web, but it has little relevance to what you want to express about yourself. Results may also include entries about someone who shares your name.

Digitally dabbling: There is some on-brand information on the Web about you. Although the volume is not high, what is

there is relevant to your personal brand.

Digitally distinct: There are lots of results about you and most, if not all, reinforce your unique promise of value.

Start with Your Brand Foundation

Of course, you can't build an online reputation unless you first articulate your unique promise of value -- your personal brand. Invest in a solid understanding of your strengths, goals and compelling personal brand attributes. Create your personal brand statement and put it somewhere visible so you can refer to it regularly. Revealing the way you think and the things about which you are passionate will help you establish virtual rapport and attract the right kind of opportunities.

Be Virtually Visible

With clarity about your unique promise of value and your baseline virtual identity, you can pro-actively expand your online visibility. To craft the right Web identity for

your brand, you have numerous options. You can maintain a blog, create a professional website, use online networking sites, and develop on-brand content by publishing online articles and participating in web-based communities. When you use these vehicles wisely, you cultivate a Web presence that ensures you'll show up in search results the way you intend.

One of the best tools at your disposal is a blog. With your personal blog, you provide tangible evidence of your expertise and achievements. A blog allows you to exude your personal brand attributes, because it's written in your voice. Blogging also enables you to connect your real-world activities with on-line posts. People want to see that you are on top of the happenings in your industry, that you are well connected and have solved problems or challenges in the past that are similar to theirs. Think of your blog as a long-term career management vehicle. Over time, it enables you to establish your thought-leadership and bolster your brand.

Be Virtually Vigilant

Even when you've reached digital distinction, nirvana in the world of online identity, remember that your Google results can change as fast as the weather in New England. So regularly monitor your online ID and continue to augment your online content to remain relevant and one step ahead of your peers.

The very nature of making the effort to market yourself in an integrated, differentiating way demonstrates that you are a savvy marketer or branding executive. By steadily expanding your online presence, connecting it with your real-world visibility, you put yourself directly on the path to true career distinction.

Put it into Action

Building your personal brand on-line is as easy as it is essential. It starts with just one post, one article or a one-page web site. Here are five ways to get started:

1. Write articles for on-line portals that relate to your area of expertise or industry.
2. Submit content to article banks. They will make your articles (along with proper attribution) available to others who are seeking content for their newsletters or web sites.
3. Use Ziggs or zoominfo as an online bio or resume with links to other relevant web content.

4. Participate in on-line forums and information exchanges. Share your expertise or passion and increase your visibility at the same time.
5. Review relevant books at amazon.com and other on-line bookstores and link back to your web site or blog.

This article was adapted from *Career Distinction: Stand Out by Building Your Brand* by William Arruda and Kirsten Dixson, published by John Wiley & Sons.

William Arruda is a personal branding expert, public speaker and executive coach. He is the founder of Reach (www.reachcc.com), the global leader in personal branding and developer of 360Reach, the first and leading personal branding assessment (www.reachcc.com/360reach).