

Creating Your Online Brand Strategy

Step 1: Create Your Edge

A consistent online image is vital to creating a cohesive brand. The first step in this process is to fashion your brand's online foundation based on your genuine personality traits, core values, passions/strengths, and overall vision. Where to start? Answer these questions:

1. Why is creating an online brand important to you?

2. What do you want your business to be known for online?

3. Which characteristics do you want to be associated with?

Step 2: Find the Holes in Your Market

The key to positioning your online brand in a saturated market is finding the people who are underserved and/or the topics that are not being addressed. Trying to get known in an area that everyone else is gunning for will only make you blend in. Find your opportunity to get known for an area that is not being covered. Where to start? Answer these questions:

1. What are the holes in your market?

2. Which group of people being underserved or ignored?

3. What's their biggest challenge?

4. How can you help them?

Step 3: Cut Through the Clutter

Next, you need to make some noise. That is, you need to be different. I'm not saying that you must be freakishly different, but you need to create a reaction in your audience that gets you noticed. It may be a contrarian viewpoint, creating a new technique for solving your audience's dilemma, or simply using a different medium to communicate your method. Where to start? Answer these questions:

1. How will you do things differently?
2. Do you have an opposing perspective from your industry's standard positions?
3. Is there a different method in which you can deliver your message?
4. How will you package your online brand, products, or services in your own way?

Step 4: Expand Your Reach

Once you've set the structure of your online brand, it's time to get strategic in allocating your marketing time. The golden rule is to go where your audience goes – if they read certain blogs or forums go there. If they prefer a certain social media channel, engage there. If they follow authority bloggers in a parallel industry, make friends with them. You get the point. Where to start? Answer these questions:

1. Where does your online audience go to find solutions to their problems?
2. Where do they spend their time online?
3. Who else has a similar audience to yours that you can connect with?

Step 5: Create a System

Whether using structured approaches like David Allen's Get It Done or simply sticking to a time blocking schedule, systematizing your online marketing efforts creates a consistent experience for your online brand and takes away the pressure of finding the time to make it all happen. Remember the old adage: out of sight, out of mind. Creating and maintaining a constant online presence is one step that many people overlook. It takes work that most people won't put the time into maintaining – but when you do, you will differentiate yourself from others who don't follow through while solidifying your credibility with your online audience. Where to start? Answer these questions:

1. What system will I use for time management?

2. What social media marketing activities will I include on my daily, weekly, and monthly marketing schedule?

3. Which tools will help me maximize my time and social engagement?