Personal Branding Trends for 2013
By William Arruda, Founder, Reach Personal Branding

Each December, I predict what personal branding trends will be valuable to career-minded professionals in the coming year. In writing this article, I continue the series with much enthusiasm as there are many exciting changes afoot that will simplify building your brand in 2013. You’ll see some common threads linking many of these trends, as well as interconnections among them. For example, LinkedIn features prominently in many of the entries because of the significant changes they have been making to their functionality. The importance using of multi-media, and using it well, is also a notable theme. As you review these brand-building opportunities, consider how you will incorporate them into your strategies for increasing your influence, achievement, and personal brand value!

1. Curation

Since social media turned the internet on its ear, it seems that everyone on the planet has become their own media outlet, creating, posting and distributing original content. The resulting upload overload has left many looking for less-demanding alternatives. Career-minded professionals understand that personal branding does not require constant content creation, and that the new key to expressing your point of view is content curation. Potent curation tools like Tumbler and Pinterest, plus newbie’s that will pop up in 2013, provide the opportunity to express your brand with the help of the ideas, images and information from the vast library we know as the internet, with limited original writing required. Phew!

2. Customization

It used to be that if you wanted a truly customized brand identity on the web you needed to build your own web site. That requirement is so last year. A host of services now allow you to build and customize a profile that uniquely reflects your brand. Some social networking sites have always allowed limited customization; YouTube for example, lets you pick the color palette for your channel, while other social networking sites provide a structured template for their members’ to create a personalized profile. More and more sites are making real customization a key feature of their offerings. Even LinkedIn, one of the most structured social media sites, now allows you to change the order of the content and to easily personalize your profile with videos, images, documents, and presentations. I predict they will eventually allow you to choose color and other design elements - making your LinkedIn profile a good substitute for having your own website. In 2013, look for more.
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Platforms like About.me, flavors.me and Zerply, which provide a one-of-a-kind home on the web—without the cost or effort required to build your own site.

3. Mobile

According to JIBE, over 80% of Smartphone users would use their phone to search for jobs. Beyond.com says 77% of job seekers use mobile job search apps, and of those who use them, nearly half would apply to a job right from a Smartphone. There are thousands of job search apps: some to find jobs, others to manage the process, and yet others to help you make the connections that are critical to finding a job. Most of the apps have some type of personal branding component. Here are a few of the coolest ones I’ve found to help you build your brand:

- Lunchmeet helps you find geographically appropriate contacts so you can expand your network over lunch.
- Pocketresume allows you to get the most updated information from your LinkedIn profile and export your resume to a PDF. It also lets you tailor your resume for specific positions.
- Sparkhire is a video interviewing platform. Job seekers create video responses to employers’ text-based questions, letting them showcase their brand. (See Trend 10: Video,)

As job searching and personal branding, become increasingly mobile, those who are evaluating candidates will be using mobile devices as well. This means you need to optimize whatever you develop on the web to express your brand for mobile review.

4. People

When I started my personal branding business 11 years ago, HR execs would tell me that companies would never want their employees to build their brands. In fact, one HR leader laughed me out of her office, saying “We don’t want our people to be known outside the company.”

Personal branding is now integrated into many companies’ talent and leadership development programs. Savvy, people-centric organizations understand that they need to get the best from their people, not the most, and they realize that each employee is an authentic part of the face of the
company. Well before Mitt Romney’s much maligned "Corporations are people" comment, organizations began promoting the human aspect of their businesses: Chevron’s ‘Human Energy’, Cisco’s ‘The Human Network Effect’. Increasingly, external communications campaigns are featuring actual employees (GE’s ‘Pass the Wrench’ and IBM’s ‘I’m an IBMer’ for example).

Expressing the corporate brand is not just for the CEO anymore. Individual employees will be the spokespeople for their companies. Businesses once reluctant to allow social media sites to be available inside the company firewall, now build programs to help their employees post stellar LinkedIn profiles and timely tweets to communicate their brand. This trend will continue, erasing the line between the company and its people.

5. Pictures

The expression “A picture is worth a thousand words,” dates back to a 1911 newspaper editor, and Wikipedia nicely describes it as “The notion that a complex idea can be conveyed with just a single still image.” Graphic designers, architects and artists have always used portfolios of images to showcase their work. Now, career-minded professionals will increasingly use infographics to show the value they added to their workplace.

Kinzaa is a site that allows you to build an infographic resume. Pinterest pinboards enable you to express your brand and your passions through images. Prezi lets you use pictures on an interactive whiteboard to convey your point of view and share thought-leadership with others. The traditional word-based resume or CV will be quickly replaced with pictures. In the ‘About Us’ section of visualize.me’s website they say: “We believe that the traditional text resume is boring, lengthy and long overdue for a makeover.” I agree.

The movement away from words toward pictures is not just forward thinking careerists; social medial sites are recognizing the power of Mr. Brisbane’s wisdom. For example, LinkedIn is using images to make your profile more visually interesting. They’re inserting the logos of the companies you work for into your experience. Have you noticed? Additionally they now support integrating images and presentations into your profile so you can take the infographic you create and share your thousand words with your network contacts.
6. QR Codes

I was in a neighborhood of Buenos Aires called Palermo SoHo recently and noticed that every storefront had a QR code on it. QR codes are popping up all over, and it’s not just in the hip neighborhoods of major cities. You can see them on billboards, print ads, coffee mugs, and most recently making appearances on resumes, business cards, and in all kinds of correspondence (see the back of my business card to the left). You can even get a custom QR code printed on a T-shirt or wristband to help direct people you meet to your personal website. According James Alexander and the cool folks at Vizibility.com, personal QR codes and Microsoft Tag barcodes are essential. These codes let you instantly share your mobile business card, and they send real-time text or email alerts whenever someone scans your code, including the organization name, type and location. Soon there will be QR codes on our name badges at networking functions, allowing people we meet to instantly add us to their contact list, or link to our online profiles to learn more about who we are. If you start now, you can be ahead of the curve and use your QR code as a conversation starter and a way to stand out from the crowd at that next AMA meeting.

7. Timelines

When Facebook launched Timeline about a year ago, it sparked a fury. There were those who loved it, and those who thought it would mark the end Facebook’s rule over the realm of social networking. Facebook Timeline changed the default profile from a list of your most recent updates to a complete summary of your entire life since birth. Now it seems that we have grown accustomed to Timeline because there are a number of resources that use a similar technique to help you express your brand. ResumUp for example, takes your education and work experience, puts them in a timeline format, and adds other relevant information to create a compelling visual history of your work. Re.Vu allows you to import your LinkedIn profile and create an attractive timeline by incorporating images and infographics, augmenting the text-based content. Thinking of your career in this way allows you to better communicate the value you delivered and growth you achieved. To build the ideal timeline, maintain a job journal so you have the content, images and presentations that will best showcase your brand.
8. Teams

Personal branding has come a long way from when there were only five of us working in this field - but team branding is relatively new. And it’s hot. I am working with a number of leaders who are interested in knowing how their team is perceived among their constituencies, and how each team member contributes to the overall perception. These leaders are using branding tools to find out where their organizations stand.

Thanks to advertising genius David Ogilvy, companies have been using branding to stand out and attract the attention of their ideal clients since the 1940s. Over the past decade, companies have been applying similar branding principles to their people, helping them unearth what makes them exceptional, and applying the knowledge to the company strategy. In the world of branding, the team has been the missing link; it is the connective tissue between the personal brand and the company brand. Many of the Reach-certified Personal Branding Strategists are implementing team branding programs with their corporate clients, and they’re sharing the results with me. Right now, the teams that seem most interested in understanding their brands are sales and consulting groups. In the future, team leaders in everything from accounting to IT to marketing will want to understand and manage their brand. Are you aware of your marketing team’s brand?

9. Validation

Unless you have completely gone off the grid, you have likely noticed a new feature of Linked In: Endorsements. In fact, you may have received or been asked to provide them. LinkedIn augmented their recommendations feature to allow others to identify the skills at which we excel. LinkedIn knows that external feedback comes with credibility that is hard to build when you are talking about yourself. This recent change is part of a larger trend that helps us validate and reinforce what we say about ourselves supported by the feedback from others.

If you have used Yelp or TripAdvisor or other similar services, you understand the power of crowdsourcing, and likely make decisions based on the collective feedback of others. Crowdsourcing, once the domain of products, hotels and restaurants, is quickly coming to careerists. Delivering
on your brand promise every day helps others understand who you are and what makes you exceptional. It makes it easier for them to provide consistent, accurate feedback about you.

10. Video

I have been touting the importance of video as a personal branding tool non-stop for the last three years, and its time has come. Creating, posting, sharing, and promoting your videos has become extremely easy. For example, until just a few weeks ago, it was a challenge getting video into your LinkedIn profile using SlideShare (owned by LinkedIn) or Behance. Now, you can just click on the video symbol while editing your profile, provide the web address of your video and presto: embedded video. Every aspect of creating and using video has become much easier! Whether real-time, ad-hoc, or studio produced, there was always some roadblock to using video. That’s no longer the case. Virtually every computer and tablet comes with a video camera. Google+ Hangouts make real-time group video conferences a snap. Services from videoBIO allow you to quickly create, edit and post professional videos from your home or office. They also offer a service that enables you to produce videos and embed them into email, allowing you to deliver a branded and differentiated message. Video provides the opportunity to deliver a complete communication and is therefore among the most powerful tools you have to build your brand.

About William Arruda

Dubbed the Personal Branding Guru by Entrepreneur, William Arruda is credited with turning the concept of personal branding into a global industry. He is the Founder of Reach Personal Branding and author of *Ditch. Dare. Do! 3D Personal Branding for Executives*. You can learn more about him at [www.williamarruda.com](http://www.williamarruda.com) or [http://www.ditchdaredo.com](http://www.ditchdaredo.com).