



*The Digital Learning Professional's*

# GUIDE TO BUILDING A PERSONAL BRAND

Do the words personal branding make you cringe? Or are you thinking: *Oh no, that's not for me. Only celebrities and businesses need brands.* Think again. Personal branding is for everyone, especially if you're looking for your next career opportunity.



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The good news is that personal branding isn't as complicated as you might think. At its core, branding is how you express your unique values, mission and world view. It lets people know why they might want to work with you and whether you'll be a good fit for their team. In short, it's an effective way to advance your career as a digital learning professional.

In this guide, we'll walk you through how to identify your personal brand then show you where and how to express it. So get your note taking app ready, here we go...



# ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A PERSONAL BRAND

Your personal brand is about more than colors and taglines. Those things can be useful, but they're not the core of your brand. Your personal brand will only come across as authentic if it's based on a mission, vision, and values you feel passionate about. To establish your personal brand, you need to consider these three essential elements.

## MISSION

Your overall goal for your career (and maybe even your life)

This is your Why. The reason you get up in the morning. The thing that makes you proud to do the work you do and keeps you going when the going gets tough.

Examples:

- My mission is to make courses more accessible for all students.
- I love connecting learners with the training and development solutions they need to achieve their personal and professional goals.
- Nothing makes me happier than breaking down complex topics in ways that every learner can understand.

## VISION

What you hope to accomplish with the work you do

Your vision is the idealized version of the world you hope to create. It answers the question: what would the world look like if you achieved your mission?

Examples:

- A world where every learner had equal access to courses and learning tools.
- A professional environment where everyone has the knowledge and skills to advance their career in a job they can get excited about.
- Courses in which every learner is able to quickly grasp new skills and move confidently in the direction of their dreams.



## VALUES

Your beliefs or philosophy about learning and professional work traits

These are the principles or ideas you believe in. Your values should go beyond buzzwords to get to the heart of what guides your personal and professional conduct.

Examples:

- Equal opportunity
- Honesty and integrity
- Innovation
- Creativity
- Communication

You can also reach beyond descriptive words to core concepts:

- Everyone deserves to be in a job that excites them
- Education is the key to self actualization
- Employers and employees share equal responsibility for development



## UNCOVERING YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

By now it should be clear that a personal brand isn't something you create from scratch. It's something inherent to you. Your mission, vision, and values come from within. They're not a persona you put on to find a job. They're part of the core of who you are.

- Recall an experience that made you feel like your work was worth the effort. What happened? What did you do to bring this situation about?
- What was your most satisfying job? What did you like about it?
- What do you read or learn about in your spare time?
- Finish this sentence. At work, I get excited when...
- Of what work achievement, project, or contribution are you most proud?
- Imagine you're retiring, and a long-time coworker is giving a speech about your impact on the organization. What do they say?
- What do you believe about digital learning, training and development, or education?
- What would have to change in order to fix common problems in the industry?
- Who inspires you at work or in digital learning in general? Why?
- Whose writing, presentations, or insight into digital learning do you agree with? Disagree with?
- Without doing any research, write down a list of character traits or values you think are important. Which ones resonate most?

Working through these prompts should give you a fuller understanding of your mission, vision, and values by uncovering your authentic beliefs and goals around digital learning. If you get stuck, you might want to work with a career coach or trusted friend.





## BETTER TOGETHER

When you combine your mission, vision and values, you don't just discover your personal brand. You also make a powerful statement about who you are and how you can contribute to a team. Here's an example of how you can combine mission, vision, and values to craft a personal statement:

“ Because I believe that education is the key to self actualization,<sup>3</sup> I love connecting learners with the training and development solutions they need to achieve their personal and professional goals.<sup>1</sup> Every day I work to build a professional environment where everyone has the knowledge and skills to advance their career in a job they can get excited about.<sup>2</sup> ”

*(1) mission (2) vision (3) values*



## ESTABLISHING YOUR VISUAL IDENTITY

This is one area of personal branding that's easy to overlook if you're not a graphic designer. But having a consistent visual identity can help you stick in the minds of hiring managers. If they consistently see you using the same fonts or wearing the same colors, they begin to associate those things with you. Consider these four visual design elements:

### 1 SIGNATURE FONTS

Wherever possible, use the same font on anything related to you and your job search. You can apply this to your website, portfolio, job search documents and even in emails to hiring managers. It's a good idea to pick both a serif and a sans serif font so you have options for different kinds of texts.

**Serif fonts** have a decorative stroke that finishes off each letter.

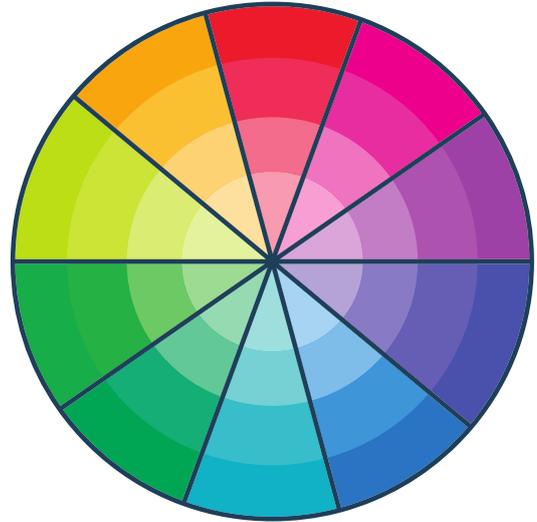
**Sans Serif fonts** do not have a decorative stroke

Make sure the fonts you pick are easy to read and will display on the web. Be careful with ornate and handwriting fonts since these can sometimes be hard to read.

## 2 COLORS

What colors do you wear most often or gravitate toward? Choose one or two that say something about you. The color wheel might help you decide.

- Red - fiery, passionate, sometimes aggressive, powerful, can be overwhelming
- Yellow - happy, sunny, cheerful, energizing
- Orange - vibrant, energetic, commands attention, friendly, may be associated with health
- Green - calm, harmonious, associated with earth and money
- Pink - youth, femininity, wonder, some shades may seem childish or inexperienced
- Purple - creative, imaginative, light purples might seem romantic, darker purples might evoke wealth or power
- Blue - responsible, calm, reliable, peaceful, light blues are more relaxed, dark blues are more formal



Each color has many shades and even more associations. Picking colors you feel comfortable with is more important than getting hung up on potential symbolism.

## 3 GRAPHIC DESIGN

You don't necessarily need a logo, but think about the symbols and shapes you surround yourself with. Do you use round bullets or squares? Maybe you prefer checkmarks. You can't really go wrong here as long as you're consistent across all of the places you express your personal brand.

## 4 HEADSHOTS

You don't have to use the same headshot everywhere. But make sure that each one is recognizably you and fits your signature style. Wear your signature colors or put them in your background. You might also think about a signature look. Do you always wear bright lipstick, a tie, glasses with pink frames? Keep it professional, but don't be afraid to show some personality.



- ✓ Head and shoulders in the frame
- ✓ Signature color = turquoise (sweater)
- ✓ Signature look = light makeup, hair pulled back
- ✓ Looking at the camera and smiling
- ✓ No sunglasses, hats or other eye obstruction
- ✓ Dressed for a job interview



## WHERE TO EXPRESS YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Once you establish your personal brand it's time to share it with the world. Or at least, with that portion of the world that is looking for digital learning professionals to hire. You'll want to infuse your brand into all of your job search documents and interactions with potential employers. Here's a breakdown of where and how to use your branding.

### RESUME AND COVER LETTER

Remember the old "objective statement" that used to appear at the top of a resume? We don't use those anymore, but your intro paragraph can include the personal statement you crafted from your mission, vision, and values. When describing the work you've done in the past, think about how it connects to your brand elements. Look for opportunities to highlight those connections in your resume and cover letter.

Of course, you should also use your signature colors and fonts. But remember that your resume might not always get printed in color, so make sure that it displays well in black and white. (And download our [Guide to Resume Writing!](#))

## PORTFOLIO OR WEBSITE

Your portfolio is not just a place to showcase your work. It's also an opportunity to show how that work connects to your mission, vision, and values. You might include your personal statement in your introductory paragraph.

If you include descriptions of the work you've done, make sure you talk about how each one connects to your values or works toward your vision.

Once again, stick to your signature colors and fonts. When a potential employer visits your portfolio or website, you want them to immediately see how it fits with the resume they just reviewed.



## LINKEDIN PROFILE

Similar to your resume, the About section of your LinkedIn profile should also include references to your mission and vision statements. You don't have much control over fonts, but you can make sure your signature colors appear in your banner and photo.



## DURING THE INTERVIEW

Personal branding isn't just for documents. You want to carry the same ideas through to your interview. This is your opportunity to show how the work you've done in the past aligns with your vision, mission, and goals. Most importantly, it's your chance to show how those elements will influence what you'll do if you are hired.



You probably won't have to make any heroic effort to work your mission, vision, and values into the conversation. Now that you've given them some thought, they'll spring easily to mind, especially when the interviewer asks questions like:

- Why did you apply to this position?
- What interests you about working here?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- Why should we hire you?
- Can you explain why you changed career paths?
- What brought you to digital learning/course creation/training and development?

Even the dreaded “Why are you leaving your current job?” can be answered with your mission in mind. Talk about how the job you have now fits in with your mission, but explain how this new opportunity will help bring your vision into reality. Of course, it's not all about you. Remember to connect your mission, vision, and values to those of the organization. A best-fit employer is one whose goals and expectations align with yours.



## EVOLVING YOUR BRAND

Hopefully, you're feeling a little more comfortable with the idea of creating a personal brand for yourself. If you haven't already, grab a notebook and start drafting mission, vision, and value statements. These can take some time to refine, but they're well worth the effort. In the end, you'll have a better idea of what drives you and which jobs might be a good fit. You'll be more prepared to answer interview questions, and more likely to get a job offer.



But remember, your brand isn't set in stone. It's more like a plant that grows and changes over time. Just like a plant can send out shoots or turn its flowers to face the sun, don't be afraid to strike out in new directions as you grow in your career.

Revisit your mission, vision, and values anytime you're starting to feel burned out or need to make a career decision. Your personal brand is more than a statement about your professional goals. It's a compass that can guide your path.



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