

SPEAKER

ROCK YOUR BRAND

HOW TO BUILD TRUST WITH YOUR AUDIENCES

UNDER ATTACK!

WILL YOUR DIGITAL REPUTATION SURVIVE?

10 WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR DIGITAL IMAGE

Don Yaeger, speaker, sports writer and author

ON-THE-GO GADGETS
PAGE 30

IN PURSUIT OF

GREATNESS

Superstars create their own brands, according to noted sports writer Don Yaeger

HOW TO BUILD AND MANAGE A TRUSTWORTHY BRAND

BY SAM RICHTER

In the speaking business, your best-selling books, your work experience and your personal stories are all important. Having a great video, networking with the right people and selling are all keys to business success. Yet the true difference between getting paid to speak and making an exceptional living comes down to one thing: your brand.

A brand is much more than a logo or an advertisement. It is the total experience. It is an unstated promise of what people can expect from doing business with a company. It is synonymous with trust.

Do I trust that an Audi car will keep my family safe? Do I trust that my Apple product is intuitive and innovative? Do I trust that my Nike shoes will make me a better basketball player? (I'm obviously not going to be better, but somehow I trust that I think I will be.)

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BRANDS

As a speaker, you are your brand. You've spent a tremendous amount of time and money perfecting your message via your one-sheet, your videos and your website. You've worked hard gathering testimonials, building a reputation that you're easy to work with, and networking with planners. You've crafted your professional brand. As a speaker, there is another component to your brand: It is your personal brand.

I travel the world teaching executives

how to find information on people in ways most never thought possible—and how to use that information to build meaningful relationships. Trust me, everyone has a personal brand, and some of what I find can be quite embarrassing. As a professional speaker, you can't let that happen; your personal brand is future business.

From any computer or mobile device, you can share what's on your mind. Out with your buddies and heard a great joke? Tell your friends! Receiving poor service at a restaurant? Let the world know! Agree with the latest rant by Rush Limbaugh? Express your opinion!

But what does an event planner see when he or she reads your tweets, blog comments or Facebook posts? The reputation you've worked so hard to create can vanish instantly.

Take the joke, for example, about the Irish priest that wasn't well received by Patty O'Donnell, the association event planner where you are a speaker finalist. Your friends appreciated your restaurant review, but the restaurant's owner chairs his industry's convention, and guess who is not going to be speaking? Some people enjoy your political writings; just know that you probably alienated half of your potential prospects.

What's worse is that what you say online can be archived and searchable by anyone ... forever. Translation: Your online activities can come back to haunt you for the rest of your career.

As a speaker, managing your professional and personal brand is important because it is the sum that makes up your total brand. Or said another way: Can I trust this speaker?

You can use the following techniques and online resources to create, maintain and further your professional and personal brand.

PROFESSIONAL BRAND MANAGEMENT

Own your name online. If your name is "Joe Smith," do you own www.joe-smith.com, www.joe-smith.com and even www.joe-smith-sucks.com (and all of the .org and other variations of the above names)? If you don't own your own name, then you're leaving your online brand in the hands of someone who does.

- **Manage your LinkedIn.com account.** LinkedIn is one of the key places to find professionals. Make sure you complete all of the fields and craft a well-written professional profile. And always be honest—it's fairly easy to verify or refute any information you enter.
- **Leverage your LinkedIn account.** Set up accounts in places similar to LinkedIn such as www.naymz.com, www.zoominfo.com, www.plaxo.com and www.workface.com. These sites are all highly indexed by search engines. Leverage what you wrote in your LinkedIn profile so you don't have to start from scratch.

“70 PERCENT OF COMMUNICATION IS NON-VERBAL, BUT ONLINE, 100 PERCENT IS THE WORDS YOU USE.”

- **Get on Google+.** Go to Google.com and sign in (upper right corner). Then search for “Google Plus.” Set up your account and then populate your account with your writings (articles, blog posts, etc.) related to your speaking topic. This content will help in your Google search rankings.
- **Create a Facebook brand page.** A Facebook brand page is different than your personal page. People “like” your brand page (versus “friend” your personal page). On your brand page, post and link to information related to your topic. Post professional photos and videos (e.g., you speaking). Have fun, but keep it professional.
- **Create a Twitter account (and use it).** Tweet on a regular schedule. Refrain from tweeting about what you had for breakfast, political comments and jokes. The Twitter account associated with your name is your professional account. Tweet educational information that others will find valuable.
- **Get involved.** Participate in LinkedIn Groups. Write articles for industry blogs and websites, making sure you include links back to your website. The more credible places where you can get your name posted and seen, the more credible sites that will appear when someone searches your name in search engines.

PERSONAL BRAND MANAGEMENT

- **Set your Facebook privacy.** Keep your personal life personal by correctly setting your Facebook privacy. In your account, click on the inverted triangle in the main navigation and choose “Privacy Settings.” Facebook’s default settings are “share everything,” so if you don’t want that, you need to change each individually. If you want to share personal information, jokes, etc., set everything to “Friends Only.” Check your settings frequently as clicking on certain Facebook applications can reset settings back to the default.
- **Manage your Facebook account.** If you keep your Facebook site open—because it can influence search rankings and you can even set your account so that it is indexed by search engines—remove any postings that don’t show you in a professional manner. Don’t post anything that you wouldn’t want your grandmother to see. “Unfriend” anyone who posts inappropriate content on his or her Facebook account—remember, it’s not just you, but it’s also people you associate with who can impact your personal brand. If someone posts something about you that is embarrassing (such as a photo), ask them to remove it. Yes, it’s possible that if your name is tagged in someone else’s account that it will show up in a search.



- **Tweet anonymously.** If you must share your political feelings and restaurant complaints, then create a Twitter account that has no association with your name. It's risky as accounts can be traced back to you, but certainly far less risky than using an account that includes your name.
- **Keep your cool.** If someone writes something negative about you (a bad review, for example), don't respond with an angry rebuttal. Instead, recognize that when people criticize, they usually just want to be heard. Respond with an apology. Let the other person know that you appreciate his or her comment and point of view. How you respond to criticism says a lot about you.
- **Think before you post (or send).** Remember, 70 percent of communication is non-verbal, but online, 100 percent is the words you use. What you think is funny others might find

highly inappropriate. Where you might be just slightly angry, your words in an email can be perceived as spiteful and mean. Don't send an email, don't text a friend, don't post a tweet, don't comment on a blog post until you're sure that what you write is calm, logical and professional.

- **Remember the newspaper test.** Before you hit "send," ask yourself this question: If what I'm about to say shows up as a headline in tomorrow's newspaper, would I be embarrassed? If the answer is "yes" or "maybe," don't send it.
- **Send it to yourself first.** Did someone else's message make you angry? Before posting a response, texting or emailing the other person, write down in an email exactly how you wish to respond at that very moment. Get angry. Let it all out. Share your true emotions. Call the other person rotten names. And then—and here's the key—send the

email to yourself. Wait a few hours or even until the next morning and then read what you sent. Once you've had some time to reflect, you'll most likely refrain from sending the message altogether or you'll edit out the emotional parts before you send.

Remember, you are the sum of your professional and personal brands. The speaking business is all about trust. Do you trust that you know what others will find when they search your name?



Sam Richter is the founder of the No. 1 rated Know More! training program and author of the award-winning and best-selling Take the Cold

Out of Cold Calling. In 2011 and 2012, Sam was named one of the Top 25 Most Influential People in Sales. For more information about Richter and his business success programs, visit www.samrichter.com.

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