Personal Branding Checklist

Introduction To Branding And This Checklist

What is a 'brand'?

Good old Merriam Webster says a brand is:

1) "a class of goods identified by name as the product of a single firm or manufacturer"
2) "a characteristic or distinctive kind"

Branding is: "the promoting of a product or service by identifying it with a particular brand"

Whether you know it or not you have your own personal brand: a set of characteristics, style choices, etc. that represent you. It's in the way you talk, the way you look, your profiles, your business cards, everything! You are your own product and you are selling a service (your skills and expertise) so you need to be promoting *your* brand properly and consistently.

There are many ways you can polish your personal brand which in turn helps you network, find a job, land a client, get a speaking gig, and more. This checklist contains some of the items – there are *way* too many to list - you could have in order to help you direct your career where you want it to go. Some items only need to be completed once while others have to be constantly updated. There may be some items on the list that don't matter to you, but I encourage you to at least consider each one carefully before you decide to cross any of them off the list.

As you add each piece to your branding efforts don't forget to do it in a way that matches your style, tone, and current brand. (Not sure what your current brand is? Use the "5 Words or Phrases" assessment worksheet to find out: http://bit.ly/5wopwkst)

The format for the checklist:

- Item – *A brief description of the item; sometimes it is part of the item listed above it but it 'takes it to another level' – e.g. "Personal, professional email" and then "Personal, professional email with an email signature"*
- Need It? – *This is where you can mark if this is something you need for your brand*
- Not Done? – *If you said you need the item then mark this column if it's not done yet so you can quickly find which items you need to tackle first*
- Due Date – *Set a deadline for yourself of when you're going to have that item finished*
- Check-Up Date – *If this item is something you need to keep updating set a date to check-in and make sure everything is still current – e.g. your resume lists your latest job*
- Who Can Help – *If you don't have the skills to complete something, e.g. graphics for your website, you probably know someone who does; write down here who you can ask for help*

Not sure what something on the list means? Longer descriptions of each item can be found at the end of this document, directly after the checklist.

Personal Branding Checklist – Page One

Item	Need It?	Not Done?	Due Date	Check-Up Date	Who Can Help
Personal professional email					
…on your own domain					
…accessible online or via a mobile device					
…with auto-signature					
Company email					
…with auto-signature					
Personal business card					
…that you can write on					
…with you at all times					
…stored in multiple places					
…and easily reachable					
Company business card					
…that you can write on					
…with you at all times					
…stored in multiple places					
…and easily reachable					
Personal, professional portfolio					
…on your own domain					
Personal, professional website					
…on your own domain					
Personal landing page					
…with custom, professional content					

Personal Branding Checklist – Page Two

Item	Need It?	Not Done?	Due Date	Check-Up Date	Who Can Help
LinkedIn profile					
…with a personalized URL					
…with professional photo					
…with custom headline					
…with recommendations					
Other social media profiles					
…with a personalized URL					
…with professional photo					
…with custom bio/info					
Updated resume (or CV)					
…in pdf or read-only format					
…on mobile device (laptop, tablet, or phone)					
…on mobile device and in editable form					
…mobile, editable, able to make pdf or read-only					
…accessible online					
…accessible online and in editable form					
…online, editable, able to make pdf or read-only					
Unabridged resume					
…on mobile device and in editable form					
…accessible online and in editable form					
Contact info for last three jobs					

Personal Branding Checklist – Page Three

Item	Need It?	Not Done?	Due Date	Check-Up Date	Who Can Help
List of current references					
…with verified, professional contact info					
…with sets tailored for each type of job					
…who are aware they are your current references					
…who have been tested or vetted as a good reference					
Updated bio					
…with multiple versions to fit different needs					
…with multiple versions to fit different sizes					
…accessible online or mobile device					
…with a list of any place your bio is updateable					
Professional headshot					
…in high resolution					
…able to fit a square, circle, or rectangle shape					
…on mobile device and high resolution					
…mobile device and in editable form					
…mobile, editable, and high resolution					
…accessible online and high resolution					
…accessible online and in editable form					
…online, editable, and high resolution					
…on mobile device and in editable form					
…accessible online and in editable form					
…with a list of any place your photo is updateable					

Personal Branding Checklist – Page Four

Item	Need It?	Not Done?	Due Date	Check-Up Date	Who Can Help
Elevator pitch					
…multiple, tailored pitches for different settings/needs					
…you can recite from memory					
…that have been tested with friends and colleagues					
…on mobile devices for reference					
…on mobile devices and in editable form					
…accessible online for reference					
…accessible online and in editable form					
Google alerts for your name					
Google alerts for companies or people you're interested in					
Recurring calendar events for reminders to update the above					

Checklist Item Descriptions

The reason you should strive to have as much of the below done and ready as possible – including the "overachiever" versions is that it reduces your stress and enhances your brand.

When you don't have to scramble to create or find any of the below you will feel less stress (which is helpful when you're job hunting or slammed with work projects) and it makes you appear more organized, prepared, and helpful to the other person. This inevitably makes the entire experience - and your brand - more polished and means others will take you more seriously as a professional.

With that in mind, here are some explanations on the above items:

- Personal professional email

  ★ Even if you are not self-employed/freelance and work for a company you need to have a personal email address you control. This is an email address you can hand out when not doing company business, you can use for external mailing lists or memberships you don't want to lose access to if you change jobs, and for when you need to job hunt.

  ★ Your email alias should be professional - e.g. not sexymama92@domain.com. It should also include some part of your name in it – e.g. jsmith@domain.com, janes@domain.com, janesmith@domain.com, etc.

  ★ The best case scenario for your personal, professional email is that it is coming from your own domain. For example, Jane Smith's email is jane@janesmith.com. This already sets you apart from most people and makes you look more polished but has the added benefit of having another chance to put your name in their mind without being too blatant.

  ★ You also want easy access to your personal, professional email – especially when you need to respond quickly to potential employers or clients! – so setup this email account on your phone or other mobile device or, at a minimum, make sure you have browser access to it via webmail so you can read and respond to your email from anywhere you can get internet access.

  ★ You should always have an email 'signature' that is automatically included at the bottom of every one of your emails and should contain your name, email address, and at least one other piece of contact information which could be the link to your website/portfolio. You include your email address in the signature so that if your email is forwarded the person receiving the email will have some way to see your email address in case they want to reach you.
    - **Tip #1:** Don't forget to setup your email signature on every platform you use – desktop application, mobile apps, webmail, etc.
    - **Tip #2:** Avoid the temptation to use lots of colors and especially images. Most email programs will not display images on default for security reasons, and many people will see emails on their mobile devices in plain text. Keep it simple, readable, and concise.
- Company email

  ★ Work for a company that provides you with an email address? Make sure you have at least one alias that has at least part of your name in it somewhere, e.g. jsmith@somecompany.com. **Note:** If you run your own business or are a freelancer make sure to get a custom domain for your work – this keeps those emails separate from your personal emails and adds an extra level of professionalism to the venture you won't get using a generic Gmail email.

★ Depending on your role, and company policies, you may want easy access to your company email via on your phone or other mobile device or, at a minimum, make sure you have browser access to it via webmail so you can read and respond to your email from anywhere you can get internet access. This is especially critical for anyone with external facing roles, in major support/PR positions, and freelancers who need to be responsive to clients.

★ Just like with personal emails you have an auto-signature in there so that anyone externally can know where this email is coming from. For those in large companies this can help coworkers get a sense of who is emailing them by listing your name, title, etc. You include your email address in the signature so that if your email is forwarded the person receiving the email will have some way to see your email address in case they want to reach you.

- **Tip #1:** Don't forget to setup your email signature on every platform you use – desktop application, mobile apps, webmail, etc.
- **Tip #2:** Avoid the temptation to use lots of colors and especially images. Most email programs will not display images on default for security reasons, and many people will see emails on their mobile devices in plain text. Keep it simple, readable, and concise.

- Personal business card

★ Again, even if you have a company business card (see below) you should have your own set of personal business cards that you've created. The only exception to this might be the self-employed who have total control of the email and branding. Even then, some freelancers, entrepreneurs, etc. carry a separate small stack of personal business cards for when they want to have someone contact them for personal projects or to avoid using their work.

★ You **need** to make sure that someone can write on your card – at least one side of it - with a standard pen or pencil. If you need to convey extra information or they want to write down what they need to follow-up with/where they met you and they can't do it your harming your chances of them contacting you. This means that a) you need to be careful about any glossy/laminated finishes and b) don't create cards that have so dark a background that you no one could see anything they wrote on them with even if they could. **Note:** This also means you should take care to not create extremely busy cards. It won't matter if you can physically write on the card if you left you no room on the card for them to do so.

★ You need to carry your personal business cards with you at all times. You never know where you might meet someone – at the grocery store or at the airport - that could be a great person to connect with later. By having your cards on you at all times, you're increasing your chances of making a good impression and increasing your network.

- **Tip #1:** Don't forget to keep track of how many cards you have left so you can make sure you order more well before you run out. Don't risk losing the opportunity to give your card to that all-important contact simply because you weren't paying attention.
- **Tip #2:** If you attend certain conferences or events every year setup a reminder for at least 3 months ahead of time to check to see if you need to update your card and/or order more – this helps you avoid having to use those last minute, low-quality cards.

★ Preferably, you will also store your business cards in multiple places and all as easily reachable as possible. This way no matter what life throws at you there's always a chance you have at least one card with you to hand to someone. For example, I have some in a business card holder but also some in my wallet, in my laptop bag, etc. I even have one stored between my phone and my phone case – so no excuses!

- Company business card

  ★ Ideally, anyone working in a company as an employee, at least those who have passed the probationary period, will be given company business cards. If this is not standard practice for your company consider at least asking for business cards if you a) have an external facing position or b) are often going to events, conferences, etc. where you are expected to promote your company – especially if your company is sending you to the events on their dime!

  ★ If you do get cards from your company, and especially if you have input in what your cards will look like, try and meet the same recommendations given above with personal business cards: ability to write on at least one side, are with you at all times, stored in multiple places, and easily reachable. **Note:** This also means you should take care to not create extremely busy cards. It won't matter if you can physically write on the card if you left you no room on the card for them to do so.

    - **Tip #1:** Don't forget to keep track of how many cards you have left so you can make sure you order more well before you run out. Don't risk losing the opportunity to give your card to that all-important contact simply because you weren't paying attention.

    - **Tip #2:** If you attend certain conferences or events every year setup a reminder for at least 3 months ahead of time to check to see if you need to update your card and/or order more – this helps you avoid having to use those last minute, low-quality cards.

- Personal, professional portfolio

  ★ Almost everyone, especially those in creative fields, can create some type of personal portfolio showing off their work and the projects they've been a part of both in their jobs and personal efforts. This is a great way to let others know what you can do outside of a resume.

  ★ When designing and structuring the style and content of your portfolio you should do three things: 1) make sure it matches your brand, 2) only show off quality work, and 3) look at industry groups and those in similar roles to you for best practices on content and format. Don't forget: you need to have it setup so that you can easily keep it current and updated!

  ★ When creating your portfolio, just like with your personal email and website, one of the best things you can do is put it on your own personal domain – e.g. janesmith.com. It is very easy and cheap (<$5 USD per month, in many cases) these days to purchase your own domain and host your own website and portfolio. This gives you the greatest flexibility and control to structure, design, and update your portfolio as you wish.

- Personal, professional website

  ★ Everyone can create some type of personal website to use when networking, job searching, etc. Your website could be as simple as a home for information about you and your resume or you may have a more complex site that includes a regularly updated blog, your portfolio, and information on other social networks they can find you on. By having your own website you have a distinct home to send people to where you control the content.

  ★ When designing and structuring the style and content of your website you should do three things: 1) make sure it matches your brand, 2) that it provides the information and types of content you want others to see, and 3) that it is done in such a way that you won't feel it is too cumbersome to keep up to date.

  ★ As mentioned in the portfolio section above, one of the best things you can do is put it on your own personal domain so you have complete control over how it is setup, how it is structured, how it is designed, and how it is updated.

- Personal landing page

  - ★ Personal landing pages are a relatively "new" thing for most people but are quickly growing in popularity. A personal landing page is a single web page, usually done through an online service like https://about.me/, and provides you with a single spot to display basic info about yourself and provides visitors numerous ways to connect with you.

  - ★ Although you can setup a basic landing page in just a few minutes to really make the most of this service you should consider trying to really dig into the settings and personalize your landing page including custom background images, bio photos, fonts, colors, and more. This is a great way to make sure your branding stays consistent and really adds that extra touch making you stand out from everyone who just chooses one of the default backgrounds.

- LinkedIn profile

  - ★ LinkedIn is a 'business-oriented social networking service' that allows users to create a profile detailing their work history and accomplishments, connect with colleagues, join groups, and network with others. Although there are some people that don't feel the need to have a LinkedIn profile the benefits of a properly used LinkedIn account can be tremendous including getting help finding jobs or clients, participating in group discussions in your areas of interest, and having an easy tool to assist you in growing and managing your network. Things you should consider doing to polish up your profile are:
    1. Create a custom LinkedIn URL – e.g. http://linkedin.com/in/janesmith
    2. Add a professional headshot, not a drawing or graphic, so people can recognize you
    3. Customize your headline so it is current, accurate, and highlighting the right job(s)
    4. Given and received recommendations – not endorsements! – in a spaced out timeline, e.g. don't ask for 11 recommendations all at once, ask for them a few at a time.

- Other social media profiles

  - ★ There are other 'business-oriented' services where you might have profiles – e.g. Slideshare. There are some that often blur the lines – e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. It is up to you to decide what networks you want to join or stay on based on your goals and industry.

    However, if you join a social network or online community the things you should consider doing to polish up your profile are:
    1. Create a custom URL – e.g. http://slideshare.net/in/janesmith - where applicable
    2. Add a professional headshot, not a drawing or graphic, so people can recognize you
    3. Customize any bios, descriptions, or information so it is current, accurate, and highlighting the right information you want to get across. This is especially critical for those sites that let you add links back to your websites, blogs, and landing pages.

  - ★ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** It is much better to not be on a network at all than it is to be on a network, never use it, and leave up stale information on there. If you're not using a network regularly consider:
    a) creating a reminder to be active more often,
    b) creating a reminder to at least update your information there regularly,
    c) find out if you can you're your profile private or hidden; or
    d) leave the network altogether and have the account removed so your old information isn't hanging around.

- Updated resume (or CV depending on where you live)

  ★ Everyone needs to have a resume or CV (curriculum vitae) and more importantly everyone needs to have a current, updated resume ready at all times. The concept of 'job security' is a myth to most people and the sudden loss of a job and need to job hunt can happen at any time. Even if you currently have some stability you never know when a new opportunity will present itself for a job or gig you can't pass up. It's a lot easier to handle and succeed in both situations when the stress of rewriting your resume is already 98% done. Here are some tips – beyond the basics of proofreading, readability, etc. - to help you make the most out of always having a constantly updated resume:

    1. Have your resume saved off as a pdf or in a generally accepted read-only format (.doc/.docx, .rtf, etc.) – The pdf, especially, keeps your formatting intact and hides the 'squiggles' when programs like Word labels things like your name as 'misspelled'.
    2. Have the resume saved off on to one or more of your mobile devices – laptop, tablet, phone, etc. - so you can easily show or send it to others when on the go.
    3. Have your resume available on your mobile device but also in an editable form so you can make any tweaks or changes for the particular opportunity at hand. Bonus points if you can then re-turn it into a PDF or read-only document.
    4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 but where it is also accessible online so that even if something happens to your mobile device, or you don't have the device with you, you can still go to the nearest library, friend's house, etc. and grab, tweak, print, etc. as needed.

- Unabridged resume

  ★ For the unabridged resume you should aim for completing all the same items – always current and accessible online and on your mobile devices - as the regular resume except for needing it to be in a PDF or read-only format. The unabridged resume is a not often mentioned item that is actually one of the key tools you can use when it comes to updating and tailoring your resume for each job, project, or client you are trying to get.

  ★ The unabridged resume is where you keep a log of every job, award, project, etc. that you've had or accomplished in the past up through today. This means that a) you never have to try and remember what you did in a job or project and b) gives you easy access to the information you need when changing positions or types of positions.

    Example: You are currently an accounts payable (AP) specialist and so your current resume is edited and tailored to show off your skills and experience specifically for that job - cash flow management, vendor relations/customer service, reconciling statements, monthly and yearly reporting, etc. Now you decide you want to become an accounts payable manager where you not only have to have the knowledge and experience as an AP clerk but also management and leadership experience.

    By having your unabridged resume you no longer have to worry about dealing with a resume that is chiefly good for just an AP clerk/specialist job and trying to remember any past experiences you might have had as a manager. Instead, you can comb your unabridged resume for bullet points and highlights that show off your ability to lead and manage other people and easily use that information to help tailor your new resume for that type of job.

- Contact info for last three jobs

    ★ Ever go to apply for a job and the application form wants you to give them the names and contact info for someone at the last three companies you worked for and you can't remember even the place's phone number? That is why you have this list stored somewhere you'll remember so you can easily produce the info if you need to provide it when you apply, especially if you're filling out the form in person. By having this list up to date and in a place you can easily find you will a) look better prepared and organized to the employer and b) you'll have less stress as you go through the process as a candidate because you didn't have to scramble to try and remember and find the right info.

        • **Tip:** Store this info online, preferably with the ability to copy/paste, for even less stress!

- List of current references

    ★ You keep a current list of references ready for the same reasons you keep an updated list of the contact info for your last three jobs. In addition to the above reasons, there are some special things you should work on when getting your list of references ready:

        1. Make sure you have current verified, professional contact information for each reference, i.e. no references with a sexymama72@domain.com email address.
        2. Have multiple sets of references – which often can use some of the same people – tailored for each type of job or client you are going to try and land. In the example above, if you were going for another AP specialist job you'd want references that are knowledgeable in your AP skills and ability to be detail oriented. If you're also applying for AP manager jobs then you'll want to have some/all of your resources able to speak to your leadership and management skills.
        3. Have references that are *aware they are your current references and have agreed to it.* If a client gets surprised that a stranger is calling them out of the blue to talk about you it'll show in their responses. Now you not only look bad to the potential client, but your current client might be ticked off too. Always get permission from your references first and let them know any time you give out their info.
        4. Vet your references! Just like an employer may call your references to vet your skills and potential fit as an employee you need to do the same with your references. Have someone who doesn't know the reference call them and walk through the standard questions an employer might ask. It's better to find out now that the reference doesn't really know how to handle it then to let an employer find out first and lose the job.
        5. Don't use family members or friends. In 95-99% of all cases using a friend or family member is a bad idea as you risk resentment or guilt if you don't get the job and b) it can look to the employer like you don't have any colleagues or coworkers who are willing to vouch for you. The one main exception to this is for those who work in family owned and run companies and non-profit organizations – or for projects done solely with your friends or family - where there really is no one else who they can speak to.
        6. Just like with other items in this checklist, it is a good idea to store your current references online, in an editable format. This way you can pull from the references you need for each job and update them on the fly as they change.

    ★ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Do not put the outdated "References available upon request." line on your resume. I repeat: ***Do not* *put the "References available upon request." line on your resume.*** If an employer wants to do a reference check they will ask you for them *and* they will already expect you to have them available. All you're doing is wasting space on your resume you could have used to better sell yourself.

- Updated bio

  ★ The bio is something that almost no one wants to write but many have to use at some point in their life. It's the tried and true "So and so has spent the past 20 years in the <name of industry> industry working as a <insert job title> where she < insert award here>…" Whether you go for quirky or serious it is always good to have an updated bio on hand.

  ★ Create multiple versions of your bio, each tailored to fit a specific need. For example, I have one bio I use for my consulting, one for a non-profit I volunteer for, another for articles. In general, it is impractical to try and have a one size fits all bio you can use everywhere.

  ★ Speaking of sizes…it's also a good idea to try to have some bios ready in different sizes or at least some ideas of how you can shorten and lengthen your bio. You may have a bio that's 200 words long but then be told you have to provide your bio for an event program where you're only given 100 words to use. For those who use a lot of social networks it's like the difference between the bio you can create in the Summary section on LinkedIn versus the about you spot on Twitter. Having those different sizes available makes it easier for you to provide the one you need without all the stress of trying to edit your current bio or create one from scratch.

  ★ Create a list of places where your bio resides where you have direct (you can update it) or indirect (someone else can update it) control of getting it updated. Inevitably, things will change (job change, award, email address, etc.) and you'll want to update your bio. Having a list of places where you can go in and directly update your bio or can ask someone to change your bio (the PR/web department for your company) can make it super quick and easy to make sure people are seeing a bio of the current you.

    Extra Credit: In your list write down whom you need to contact to get it changed and any restrictions, e.g. character or word limit, can't list your email address, no hyperlinks, etc.

  ★ Keep all your bios, and the list of places where your bio resides, stored online in easily accessible documents, preferably in an editable format. This helps you grab or update a bio quickly if you get a last minute request or notice something is now obsolete!

- Professional headshot

  ★ Along with any bio there often comes the inevitable request for your headshot to go along with it. You may also need it for places like your LinkedIn profile, landing page, and website.

  ★ Just like with your resume, bio, etc. you'll want to try and have a current one that you also have with you on your mobile device and accessible online. If you can have the ability to also edit it your headshot on your device or on the web that is helpful too – try programs like Skitch for easy ways to crop and adjust your photos online, on your desktop, and on mobile devices with apps for most major OSes.

  ★ In addition to the above, you should also make sure you have a professional headshot that is:
    1. High resolution – preferably you'll have your headshot saved in a vector (or at least compound) format so that it can be used, modified, and resized easily for almost any size or resolution needed, e.g. 72 dpi for the web, 300 dpi for a printed program. Even if you're not very familiar with or have the tools to do so find someone who is who can make sure you get your headshot created in a standard file format for printing (.ai, .eps, etc.) as anyone responsible for using those types of headshots will be able to use it and will thank you for making their life easier.

2. In addition to having a base image in a vector format you should also consider taking your headshots and creating them in the other standard formats used for documents and websites including .jpg, .png, .gif so if they ask you for a specific format you already have it created and can pass along the right one – again it's all about reducing your stress and looking more professional to others!

3. Have different sizes - Whether you have the easily ability to create a true high resolution image at least try and have a base image stored that is of the largest original size possible. For example, if you get a photo taken of yourself and the image's original size is 3872 x 2592 pixels keep that original photo, don't just crop and resize it to 160 x 160 and toss the original away or store it only in an archive. Because then if you need a 200 x 200 size headshot you'll end up giving them a low-res 160 x 160 and when they go to enlarge it the result will look fuzzy and of low quality. However, in order to make sure you present yourself the way you want to be presented do feel free to create a series of headshots that are in the standard sizes (80x80, 100x100, 160x160, 200x200, 400x400, etc.) so that you know it is cropped and created how you like it. This way if someone asks you for a headshot and says to send it as a 200 x 200 jpg you know you already have the 200 x 200 size ready to go.

4. Have it work with different shapes – Unfortunately, not all places require a square headshot. Sometimes the article will want a rectangular image, or the event program will place your headshot in a circle, etc. Try to have a base image that has some space around your head/body and has room to be cropped in different dimensions and shapes. It is really tough for someone who gets a closely cropped rectangle headshot to change it into a square without getting even more of you cut off. If you don't want a headshot that cuts off your chin and hair then give yourself some space to work with.

★ Create a list of places where your photo resides where you have direct (you can update it) or indirect (someone else can update it) control of getting it updated. Inevitably, you'll want to update your headshot or profile photo. Having a list of places where you can go in and directly update your photo or can ask someone to change your photo (the PR/web department for your company) can make it super quick and easy to make sure people are seeing an image of the current you.

Extra Credit: In your list write down which photo it is, who you need to contact to get it changed, and any restrictions, e.g. dimensions, image formats, file size limits, etc.

★ Keep the list of places where your photo is displayed stored online in easily accessible documents, preferably in an editable format. This helps you figure out where to go to make sure all your photos are current or to find one you can grab for those last minute headshot requests!

- Elevator pitch

★ An elevator pitch is where you have a fairly rehearsed spiel that you use to tell someone about you, your company, your project, whatever quickly. It is called an elevator pitch because the concept behind this is the setting of you and someone else got onto an elevator and you need to be able to talk coherently and get someone interested in continuing the conversation with you by the time the elevator stops and lets everyone out. Generally your pitch should be designed to be finished within 30, 60, or 90 (max) seconds. Although some people will have slightly longer pitches rehearsed if they are going into specific settings, e.g. you have 5 minutes to pitch your idea to the investors.

★ You should consider having multiple, tailored pitches prepared for different settings and needs. For example, I have one that just gives a brief description about me and what I do, another one that quickly explains what my consultancy does, one for each of the major organizations I volunteer for, etc.

★ They should be pitches you essentially can recite from memory but not too perfect. Your goal is to rehearse enough so that you can easily call to mind your pitch and adapt as needed. However, you also need to make sure that you don't get to a spot where it sounds the same every time you use it tone, cadence, etc. It shouldn't *sound* rehearsed, but rather confident and comfortable.

★ Test out the pitch! Find trusted friends or colleagues whom you can engage in mock conversations and practice your pitch. This will help you get used to saying it to others and give you a chance to get feedback *before* you use it elsewhere.

★ Have it accessible online and on your mobile device. Obviously you can't just walk around a networking mixer reading your pitch from your phone, but you can use it to refresh your memory as to the pitch you already have drafted for the upcoming occasion. For example, if you are going to a fundraising event for a charity you volunteer for there's a good chance you may not have used that pitch as much recently as the one for you as an individual. This gives you a chance to review that ahead of time and feel more confident going in.

★ If you can, you should also have a way to edit your pitches online or on your mobile device so you can adjust on the fly. For example, if you head off to a week-long conference and in the middle of using your pitch you improve a bit and find out that one of your changes really had some success, if you are able to make notes of that in your pitch docs you can then rehearse later and try it out in the future days of the conference. This also helps for when you are trying out a new pitch and need to keep tweaking it but don't want to have to wait until you get back home to remember what you changed and what worked.

★ **Note:** It is (obviously) not a good idea to use an elevator pitch and then stop whatever conversation you're in to either ask what they thought of your spiel or to make notes on things to change in your pitch right in that moment – the exception being events designed to help you create and practice your pitch and other networking techniques. However, if you do have the pitches available on your mobile device or online it does mean that you don't have to try and remember what went right and what went wrong in your head until you get back to where you store your pitch copy but can do that when you have some alone time or the event is over for the day/evening. At the very least have a way to send yourself some notes as to what you think needs to be changed to deal with it later while the thoughts are still fresh in your mind.

- Google alerts for your name

★ You are, hopefully, already regularly doing a search of your name via Google or your preferred search engine to evaluate what potential colleagues, clients, and employers see when they inevitably do the same. However, you should also work to setup alerts for yourself through your preferred search engine or service or news outlet so you can keep an eye on where you are being mentioned on the web. By having regular alerts setup for your name you can find out fairly quickly where you (or people with your name) are showing up on the internet that's viewable to most major search engines.

★ This is a great way to see if your efforts to get your name out there are working, if your branding is consistent, and to also alert you to any issues or things you need to try and 'deal with' – e.g. if someone starts posting blog posts throwing out horrible accusations about you but it's really about someone else who just happens to also share your name. By having these alerts you can know what's going on, address that where needed, and continue to make sure you handle your branding right so it's a) obvious that stuff like that is not about you and b) so that your efforts and press are pushing all the bad stuff down on to later pages in searches.

★ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** You may also want to do regular searches for your name or handle on major online communities and social networks to catch those items Google just doesn't see!

- Google alerts for companies or people you're interested in

  ★ Looking to apply at a certain company? Leading a new team for a charity project and don't know much about your teammates? Are their contacts in your network you want to make sure you connect with regularly? Don't just google them once, setup news alerts for them! This way you can find out about 'as-it-happens' type news and updates about them regularly. Let me show you just some of the benefits of doing this using the examples from the questions above:

    - *Applying for a job* – Showing you are knowledgeable about a company, their products or services, and your position makes you stand out from the competition. Being able to talk to the interviewer about recent news (product launches, new CEO, etc.) show you are serious about the opportunity and lets you ask intelligent questions – e.g. how might their recent merger affect the department you will be joining.

    - *Leading a new team* – It can be hard to join or lead a team when you don't really know anyone. By doing a quick google search and then setting up alerts you can get a better idea about them and what's going on in their life. This also helps for managers who want to be able to praise their subordinates and show that they care about their whole life, not just their life in the office.

    - *Keeping up with your network* – Setting up an alert for people you want to keep in touch with regularly is one of the easiest ways to make that happen. By getting updates about them sent directly to you it does two things: 1) helps prompt you to reach out to them and keep in touch and 2) automatically gives you an 'icebreaker' or reason to contact them – e.g. just saw the great news about your promotion!

  ★ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** You may also want to do regular searches for these same items on major online communities and social networks to catch those items Google just doesn't see!

- Recurring calendar events for reminders to update the above

  ★ Okay so you've now picked out some (or all) of the above to add to your branding efforts, you've updated your resume, cleaned up your LinkedIn profile, etc. Now comes the hard part: keeping them updated! This is why I recommend you setup appointments in your calendar for each item so you don't have to remember to update them, your calendar does the remembering for you. Don't rely on good intentions, make it automatic, and keep it up!

Now go create an awesome brand and put your best foot forward – you can do it!