

BUILDING YOUR BRAND *via*



Renowned author and business speaker Tom Peters' article "The Brand Called You" for *Fast Company* from 1997 is a seminal piece in building your personal brand, and business schools. Fortune 500 companies pay vast sums of money to Peters to help their students and employees achieve new heights. Almost 14 years later, the basic tenet remains the same: take what major companies have been doing effectively for decades, and replace the company, logo, tagline, etc. with... YOU. With today's social media tools and other cost-effective methods, developing and marketing Brand You has never been easier.

Just hearing the words "personal brand" turns most people off. What does a sports turf manager need a personal brand for anyway? Who actually has time to build a personal brand? With all of the privacy concerns floating about, why would I put myself out there on social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn? I can't answer those questions for any sports turf manager specifically, but I can tell you this: social media is here to stay, and if you don't get started, you're simply delaying the inevitable.

But you need to approach building your brand through social media with a plan. There are some excellent resources online that can be found by simply searching "building your personal brand" online. I have also provided a list of useful websites and links to check out. But here, I will try and give you a basic roadmap to building your brand via social media.

First and foremost, you must get permis-

sion from your employer. Everything I'm about to tell you requires you to be honest with those who take in your content, and if your employer isn't on board with it, do not proceed. However, you can make your employer see that by writing a blog, tweeting about a challenge you're experiencing on the job, or simply passing on pertinent information to an audience relevant to your organization, you are extending the reach of the company brand while doing the same with Brand You.

In order to effectively do this, you must pick the social platforms relevant to your customers, clients or your business. The varied constituencies that you as a sports turf manager must deal with (parents, coaches, athletes, school boards, etc.) mean that you have to create your own audience, and do so proactively. For most sports turf managers, that would be Twitter and Facebook. Commercial companies likely would include

LinkedIn in the discussion. Google+ is a very young platform, but likely will have some relevancy going forward, so keep an eye on it. All of these are very simple sites to join, usually only requiring an email address and name to get started. Being in the right social arena allows you to gather the most followers in your desired area (customers, friends, etc.) and provide them with the most relevant information.

Speaking of relevancy, ALWAYS BE RELEVANT!

Speaking of relevancy, ALWAYS BE RELEVANT! This is how you keep an audience engaged and coming back to you for more information, in essence becoming the expert on a topic. By using Twitter and Facebook to post the field conditions after inclement weather, you're not only relevant to all of the parents trying to schedule their families' lives; you can become a resource for your employer outside of their own website or call-in line.

Posting links to white papers on mowing, fertilizer or water use is pertinent to sports turf managers, but also are of interest to anyone who tends to their own lawn and now extends your brand beyond just your athletic field. Local reporters and other news mediums constantly monitor social media outlets for stories, so if you've got one to tell, share it. I can almost guarantee that your employer will not be unhappy with you garnering positive press for your organization.

This leads to becoming an asset for your organization. As an asset, both to the company and to yourself, you increase your cross functional capabilities and your job stability. As Lisa Barone, Chief Brand Officer for Outspoken Media says, "It's not about being there 9 to 5, it's about figuring out how you can bring the most value to the company you work for and then putting that idea into action."

I'm not telling you to go blog about

Search these terms for more information:

- ⊙ Lisa Barone Get Over Yourself and Start Building Your Personal Brand
- ⊙ Bruce Clay How to Build Your Brand While Working for Someone Else (also a Lisa Barone blog post)
- ⊙ Fast Company Building the Brand Called You (also Tom Peters Building the Brand Called You)

every detail of your workday, or hop on Twitter immediately and start checking in on Foursquare everywhere you go. Simply become a content generator that your company and constituencies can rely on for a steady stream of reliable, useful information.

Building your personal brand through social media doesn't have to take hours outside of your job. A common phrase in social media is, "The art of Twitter is in the re-tweet." Passing on relevant tweets is a quick and easy way to stay in front of your audience with relevant info. Another timesaver is using a program like TweetDeck to manage multiple accounts and post in different places with one click. TweetDeck links your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts all in one, easy-to-use dashboard. However, creating original content is always the best way to keep your audience engaged. Allot a block of time and come up with some short blog posts, tweets or Facebook posts and save them in one place. That way, you have some original content in the can that can be

posted when you're short on time.

My last point is that there can be a dark side to being the face of an organization's online community. At some point, you will invariably come across a very loud complainer about something that you or your organization has done. Always, and I mean ALWAYS, take the high-road when dealing with someone like this. Never get into an argument because everything you post, tweet, or share is recorded for posterity. However, this also presents a unique opportunity for you and your group. If you can, in a timely and effective manner, reduce or eliminate their level of unhappiness, you can create what people in marketing call a "brand evangelist." These are people who, when you and/or your employer are under attack next time, will valiantly come to your defense, without you even asking. They will write letters to the editor about your environmental practices, help you out by chatting with coaches or administrators on your behalf to help get you more resources and

always be in your corner if there is a crisis beyond your control.

Using social media to build your brand, and by extension the brand of your employer, is an exciting and fun way to create a dialogue with your user groups, especially when that dialogue might be one of the only ways you have access to those groups when other marketing options are not available to individuals (ads in magazines, radio, TV, etc.). Being timely, relevant and honest with information allows you to stay ahead of problems, thus becoming an asset to your company and your community. Not only does this provide you with a sense of accomplishment and contribution, but it also gives your employer another positive outlet to their most important stakeholders- the user groups they rely on for organizational security. ■

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