



Spaghetti on the Wall

Branding & Networking Methods that Stick

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To my parents for planting my roots deep and supporting my adventure

To my brother Steve for his never-ending prayerful guidance

To my children for keeping it light and keeping my feet on the ground



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I look forward to what the next steps will be and who I will make them alongside. Life is truly about doing the right thing, helping others succeed and paying forward. Branding and networking can help you and others get to where you want to be. Pass the Spaghetti.



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Better yet, what if you are ready for a career change? How can you make the leap and establish yourself as a subject matter expert in a new area? Branding is your key.

Networking, on the other hand, operates on the concept of “who you know.” It’s easier to get a job if you know someone in your field who can get you a position. Why does networking get you that job so much more easily? Because the person you know already has a concept of who you are, and he or she thinks well of you. In essence, this person already understands what you are about—your personal brand—even if you don’t consciously have one in place. We all have our personal brands, whether we consciously create our brand or not, and networking allows you to position yourself based on who you know—the “who” that already understands your personal brand.

You may not realize it, but you have a personal brand. The key to personal branding is consciously being able to control that brand, use it to your advantage, and actually make yourself stand out above all others in ways that rely less on knowing someone and more on the validity of yourself as a person and as the best candidate for any job you have your sights set on.

So does this mean that you don’t need a network if you’ve got your personal branding in line? Certainly not! Your network and your personal brand should go hand in hand. Just remember that your personal brand is significantly weaker if it only stands on the shoulders of your network.

Networking

So networking is about who you know, but today's networks are significantly more complicated than networks of the past.

The term networking was brought into popular use when Amway coined the phrase "network marketing." In its simplest terms, the concept meant "people telling people," as opposed to people learning about a product or service from a vast advertising campaign.

Networking caught on famously, mainly because it gave individuals a sense of empowerment. The thinking became: We can do this without mega advertising budgets. We'll just tell our friends and neighbors and coworkers and do the job ourselves.

The more you network, the more people you have the opportunity to contact. But as you're networking, what are people telling others about you? Is that message consistent? This is where personal branding comes into the equation. If you have successfully branded yourself, then your network will deliver that message about you with ease to others.

In the corporate world, the connotation of networking leaned more toward who you knew. It equated to a thick stack of business cards and a bulging Rolodex. It was who invited you to lunch, and who you invited to lunch, and who you hung out with at the company party or after the company trade show.

This latter type of networking wasn't always the choice of the individual, but rather what was best for the company.

This is because few thought in terms of individuality, but each person was attempting to be the perfect company man or woman.

You come into contact with so many people each day that it's simply impossible to remember everyone. Even if someone else has made an impression on you, it doesn't mean that you've made an impression in return. The only way to truly build those network connections is to put some time and effort into them. This is the new way to network. You can really only count someone in your network if you actually know the person. Having someone's business card in your Rolodex doesn't count anymore.

The Evolution of Networking

After the dawn of the new millennium, after the dot.com bust, after the onslaught of the popularity of blogging and the rise of social media marketing and Web 2.0, the networking landscape changed greatly.

Networking has now evolved into a full-blown science (or perhaps an art form, whichever perspective you may take). The scope of networking with the use of modern technology is nothing less than mind boggling—for many reasons, not the least of which is instant access via tools such as Facebook and LinkedIn to other individuals around the globe. Add to that the endless variety of online tools and techniques such

as Twitter and blogging also available to achieve quality and effective connections and communication.

The new networking is an exciting concept for many. And those who have embraced it are benefitting in ways that colleagues just one generation before could never have imagined. Not in their wildest dreams.

The biggest issue with networking today in the environment of Web 2.0 is the transition from the Rolodex to the Facebook or LinkedIn page. Just because you have somebody's business card in your virtual or physical "Rolodex" doesn't mean he or she is in your network. Just "friending" someone on Facebook doesn't put the new contact in your network.

Sorry, folks. The Rolodex rule applies. If you don't actually know the person, then he or she is not in your network.

Unfortunately you may not be as far along in your network building efforts than you think you are. Having 983 "friends" or 1,233 "connections" does not a network make. Nonetheless, it is easy to get excited by all the connections you're able to make through social networking. And the good news is that once you have these connections online, it just takes a little more effort on your part to take those connections to the next level and start bringing them into your real network.

Terrifying

Just as this new form of networking is exciting for some, it is also terrifying for others—namely, the Baby Boomer generation. Suddenly the game has changed. The rules you followed years ago when you first stepped into corporate America are completely different. Instead of just trying to be a dedicated company man or company woman, you're looking for more personal connections, and instead of just doling out as many business cards as you can, suddenly you've got to make more of an effort to interact with those you want to connect with. But what may be most terrifying of all for some Baby Boomers, and even some Gen Xers, is dealing with all this new technology as part of your networking strategy.

A recent study out of the Pew Research Center tracked Baby Boomers' use of social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook in 2009 and showed that the generation moving toward retirement is the fastest growing group on these sites, which makes sense because younger generations were already using them. But how many Baby Boomers know how to use these social networking sites to actually network in a way that benefits them and their career? Not many. Yet.

Of course, Baby Boomers shouldn't feel alone in this respect. Even the younger generations seem to be just as confused about how to use these social networking sites to their benefit. Sites like Facebook and especially LinkedIn are

more than just a way to get back in touch with old high school friends or stay in contact with new ones.

These sites can either make or break your career—depending on how you use them. Like it or not, everything you do online is seen and can be monitored by others, including potential employers. If you're worried about your past coming back to haunt you, this is one way that “Me after the Prom” party pics or you with a Sharpie-made mustache passed out in the back seat of your questionable best buddy's car certainly can. However, you can avoid some major pitfalls by following the tips in this book.

Overwhelming

Through social media and the Internet, you have the opportunity to touch just about anyone—even people who are halfway around the world! This thought alone can seem overwhelming, and the realization that you haven't been using every aspect of social networking to your full advantage doesn't help either.

So where do you start building your network? What are you supposed to do? It's no wonder most of us get so overwhelmed just by the mere thought of networking.

But anyone has the ability to use these tools to their full advantage. You just have to know where to begin, and this book will point you in the right direction. You'll get a clear path showing how to network in the way that will work best for you, for your particular needs and your particular

situation. You'll also learn how personal branding is one of the keys that can help unlock the power of your personal network.

PERSONAL BRANDING

What exactly is personal branding? When thinking of brands and branding, former generations conjured up such images as the red Coca Cola logo, the Golden Arches of McDonald's, Lacoste's crocodile, and the three-point Mercedes logo. These brands are recognizable anywhere. And immediately in your mind you can add dozens of others—many of which you've known from earliest childhood.

With regard to individuals, those in the media (entertainment and the arts) learned to hire professional public relations experts who could create their persona. The goal was to make that individual stand out in the crowd and be recognized and noticed. It was seldom referred to as branding, but the image-making amounted to the same thing. It was a sales job in the purest sense, and it came with an exorbitant price tag.

Branding, in today's vocabulary, is different, and it is vital that you learn what it means and how it affects you and your future

In days past, if you had in hand a well-put-together resume with a personalized and targeted cover letter, you

were well equipped to launch your career. You were even more equipped if you actually had connections in some way to someone within the company to which you were applying.

Time to wake up and smell the double-shot espresso hold the sugar, because those days are over. There are almost 7 billion people in the world today, and if you're in a large city, you're up against hundreds of thousands of other individuals. How do you stand out from the crowd? The only way you can is through personal branding, a concept that hasn't been in the forefront of the corporate world for very long.

In August 1997, leadership guru and visionary named Tom Peters wrote an article entitled "The Brand Called You," which appeared in the magazine *Fast Company*. This article thrust the idea of personal, individualized branding onto center stage (consider yourself the CEO of Me, Inc.).

Peters said, "Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You."

Since the birth of this idea, tools have evolved to support this theory and the concept has snowballed.

THE POWER OF ME

It concerns me that so many newcomers into the workforce are not grasping the full meaning of personal branding and the power with which it can propel them into the top of their chosen field. And what is even more problematic is that many actually see the need to change the way they manage their career, but for various reasons they fail to accomplish that task. In this case, ignorance is not bliss. Failing to tap into this power can have devastating career results.

In a nutshell, personal branding means that even individuals employed within large companies are able to customize their own image, showcase their talents and abilities, and manage their own careers via personal branding.

Realize that in today's job market millions of resumes are stacking up on sites such as Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, and HotJobs.com. Even if your resume is the best of the best, how will you ever get the attention you deserve? Your resume may show your achievements and education, but can it shine light on your personality?

And if you are stuck in a going-nowhere job, how can you begin to create your own persona that will give you a leg up to the job you really want?

Make success happen through personal and professional branding.

Why do you think headhunters pick and choose certain people for a particular job, even if that person has not applied for the position? It is possible to be tapped for a

major position without even putting yourself out there with the aim of getting that position. Granted, this may be the exception rather than the norm, but what makes these people stand out is their personal branding. If you want to be sought after, you've got to stand out from the crowd and be memorable. Personal branding is the answer.

Keep in mind that recruiters now rely more and more on social media and networks. This practice will only increase in coming years. When it does, where will you be? What can you do today to ensure that you take full advantage of the seismic changes taking place? The answer is simple. Figure out your brand and then just put it out there so that it will be found.

COMBINING NETWORKING AND PERSONAL BRANDING

The two concepts could be worlds apart, but networking and branding have more in common than you think. Both are important techniques to get your name out front in the business world, but the similarity does not stop there. Being successful at both of these techniques requires that you learn how to blend the two together and make them play off each other. You can start by thinking of your network as

a vehicle through which your personal brand can and should be expressed.

Both networking and personal branding can only take you so far before each begins to need the other. Some people may consider themselves to be excellent networkers but not so good at this branding stuff. On the other hand, maybe you'll find out that branding is your strong suit, while networking is difficult. Whichever the case, the way to be successful is to combine the two. Make them both part of your personal marketing campaign.

Think for a moment about how companies create their advertising and marketing campaigns. Their advertisements must deliver their marketing and branding messages consistently. Those advertisements then create a network of customers who know and trust their product. Brand consistency leads to a larger network because more people recognize the product and where it came from.

Put the same principle to work for you. You'll use your personal branding message to establish who you are, and your network will help to circulate that message. Who better to promote your brand than the people who already know you?

Spaghetti on the Wall is designed to be your guide through the maze of how to effectively use online networking (and other methods) to enhance and define your personal brand. I trust that once you follow through the steps outlined here, you will be well on your way to discovering for yourself the amazing benefits of professional, personal branding. And in the process it will change your future for the better.