

A man in a dark suit is walking away from the camera on a high-rise building balcony. He is looking up at the sky, and his hands are on his hips. The building's facade is made of glass and metal, and the sky is bright and clear.

# Define Yourself As A Leader With Your Personal Brand

Define your narrative, share your expertise and document your journey using social media.

**By: Kyle Pearce**



## About The Author:

Kyle Pearce has a decade of experience working with startup founders and business owners to craft brand-driven storytelling strategies.

For the last 7 years, he has run an online learning website called DIY Genius teaching students how to develop the consistent focus, creativity and self-motivation through deep work, meditation and flow psychology practices.

From his experience helping people design their own education and build their own personal brand, he developed Social Creators.

He started his first website in 2003, has worked in digital marketing since 2009. He is a full stack marketer, which means he is skilled in designing websites that convert, SEO, Google and Facebook Ads, designing online curriculum, using web analytics for conversion optimization, and building scalable marketing automation systems.

He is passionate about ecology, regenerative culture and going on long adventures in the wilderness. He leads educational nature retreats around the world through Animist Ecology, an adventure ecotourism organization he founded in 2015.

# 1. Why A Personal Brand Is The New Resume

*It's important to build a personal brand because it's the only thing you're going to have. Your reputation online, and in the new business world is pretty much the game, so you've got to be a good person. You can't hide anything, and more importantly, you've got to be out there at some level.*

– Gary Vaynerchuk

If someone is going to hire you or buy something from you these days, they are probably going to Google you first. Google is new background check so it's important that you are regularly creating and sharing your own content online to show that you take initiative and can get worthwhile things done on your own.

People don't want to deal with faceless and anonymous brands so a personal brand is essential if you want to differentiate yourself and be in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities in the digital economy. A good personal brand demonstrates that you are tech savvy, creative and socially engaged. Building your brand requires a well-designed website that tells your story, regularly updated social media profiles where you share your own interesting content and a digital portfolio that showcases your talents and skills.

To set yourself apart in a highly-competitive world, you need to be an early adopter of new ideas and technologies. In the rapidly changing digital landscape, the only sustainable competitive advantage is adaptability, the ability to learn new things and apply them in your work.

Smart people and innovative companies today want to work with top performers and they are willing to pay a premium for skilled talent and expertise that can get measurable results. It's not enough to tell others that you're good at what you do, you need to prove it through a digital portfolio and case studies that show what you have accomplished in the past and exactly what you have to offer.

Just think, who would you rather hire: Someone who sends a boilerplate cover letter and a resume or someone who when you enter their name and location into Google you are able to read glowing references on LinkedIn, see a professional-looking personal website that is regularly updated and browse their stories on social media to see what they do with their spare time and what they are interested in?

Here are the three key benefits of creating a distinctive personal brand:

1. Have your social media content stand out in crowded social streams by having a consistent visual identity that is easily recognizable.
2. Travel the world and work from anywhere on your laptop and still be able to land remote jobs, attract new clients and sell your products or services online.
3. Build your social influence and your professional network faster with a clear and concise story of the problems you solve for your audience and what makes you different.

## 2. The 3 Elements of Brand Storytelling

*Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.*

— Robert McKee

Human beings are essentially storytelling animals. Our identities are shaped by stories and we think mostly in narrative. You may not think you're a storyteller, but just pay attention to your thoughts mindfully for a few minutes and you'll find that you tell stories to yourself all day long.

You can craft great stories by using a narrative structure that allows you to clearly and concisely share a core message that stimulates your audience emotionally and motivates them to take action.

Human beings have passed along knowledge and cultural values throughout history through storytelling because stories embody information in a way that makes it understandable and memorable.

There are three elements to crafting a brand story that resonates and spreads in the age of social media:

### 1. The Meta-Narrative:

This where you need to get really clear and concise in expressing your values, mission statement, a vision of the future you want to be part of and the key differentiators and personal strengths that make you the person to deliver the goods.

## **2. The Macro-Narrative:**

Next, you need to tell your story of who you are, why you do what you do and what you can offer. This is what a website is for, to lay out your macro-narrative and encourage people to learn more by subscribing to your email list and following your social media accounts so they can benefit from what you are offering.

## **3. The Micro-Narrative:**

These are the daily moments you share on social media networks. You want to share micro-stories that show you are living a meaningful life and demonstrate that you are actively involved in your community. Whenever possible speak directly to your audience's interests so you can motivate them to engage and share.

# 3. How To Craft Your Personal Brand Story

*“The secret of leadership is simple: Do what you believe in. Paint a picture of the future. Go there. People will follow.”*

— Seth Godin

Creating a personal brand starts with identifying your talents and interests, and how you can make a unique contribution.

## 1. What are you passionate about?

Make a list of what you're passionate about and the skills that you have related to those passions. Ask yourself what you really like learning and thinking about and sharing with others. Then research and explore these themes and ideas, furthering your skills until you can offer a unique or unconventional angle on them.

## 2. What purpose drives you?

You can pinpoint your purpose by aligning your passion and skills with a need you can satisfy or a problem you can solve. Your purpose should be backed by a moral conviction that motivates you. This enables you to tell a compelling story of who you are, why you do what you do and what you can offer, which will inspire interested people to want to follow you and learn more.

### **3. How are you different?**

Having a personal brand is about differentiating yourself by expressing your own unique offering and personal style. We all have natural talents and gifts but you need to develop them into tangible skills that provide value for others. A side hustle allows you to test your ideas and interests so you can learn by doing and discover ways to make an income from them.

### **4. What is your core message?**

Write a mission statement that describes exactly what you are offering your audience. Take some time to study other people with similar messages online and try to develop your own unique view on your topic. Then, once you've identified the solution that you want to offer and the message that explains why you care so much about it, you're ready for the next step of crafting your personal brand using social media.



## 4. Building Your Social Media Influence

*The highest-paid person in the first half of this century will be the storyteller. All professionals, including advertisers, teachers, entrepreneurs, politicians, athletes and religious leaders, will be valued for their ability to create stories that will captivate their audiences.*

— Rolf Jensen, former director of the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies

Social media levels the playing field by allowing you to build your own audience. It provides the capability of reaching a global audience that you can influence to spread your ideas and stories.

Using popular social media platforms you can share your blog posts, tell your stories and share the best content that you read each day. If you're not already using these social media platforms, I would recommend trying them all out and sticking with only the ones that you are able to actively update.

Having your own website is also crucial because it gives you full creative control to share your unique story with the world. People don't necessarily buy what you do, they buy why you do it. To influence and sell in the noisy, attention deficit digital world, you need to captivate your audience with your story.

### 1. Register your own domain and create a custom email address.

Getting your own web domain and starting a website is a lot easier than you may think. You can get your own domain name in 10 minutes at [GoDaddy](#) (it costs around \$10 to register one).

Once you've registered your own domain name, I recommend setting up your own email account at your domain. This is something that most people don't do but it's an easy thing to do that gives you a more professional looking email identity.

You can set up your own branded email identity without any technical know-how using [Google Apps for Work](#) (30-day free trial then \$5/month) and you will also get access to Google's full G Suite of Docs, Sheets and other valuable business tools that allow you to manage all your data "in the cloud" from any device.

I also recommend creating a professional email signature that includes your photo, a website link and icons for your social media profiles. I use a template provided by [Wisestamp](#) or you can create your own signature.

## **2. Create your own website on your new domain.**

If you want to look professional and have the flexibility to create an online business, you need a website. The best platform to do this quickly and without any advanced technical skills is with [Wordpress](#) . It is the most popular free content management system, powering over 25% of all websites.

If you're not technical and you don't want to dive into uploading through an open source FTP client like [Filezilla](#) and creating a MySQL database, then get your own Wordpress website set up for you and hosted using [Bluehost Wordpress Hosting](#) (starts around \$4.95 a month).

Once you have Wordpress installed on the web server, you will need a professional-looking theme. You can choose from 100s of professionally designed templates and modules to build your website like LEGO using a drab-and-drop tool like [Divi Builder](#) .

## **3. Start blogging and sharing your stories and ideas.**

When it comes to successful blogging, consistency is important and quality is more important than quantity. If writing regularly isn't your thing, you can also build your online audience through vlogging, photography or podcasting.

The important thing when you're blogging is to speak directly to the reader, break up the content into headings and sections so it is easily scannable and always ask yourself how you are going to stimulate your audience before writing each post.

You should also get comfortable with visual storytelling through images, photography, presentations, infographics and videos. In order to set yourself apart, you should be actively sharing what you are learning and providing commentary on what inspires you or advice related to the problems you want to solve with your talents and skills.

## 4. Optimize your [LinkedIn](#) Profile for search and discovery.

Recent studies have shown that 70% of businesses recruit on LinkedIn. To be recruited for your skills or to build relationships with influential people in your industry you need to make sure your Profile is fully completed, which requires a few hours of your time.

Once your profile is complete, targeted job opportunities will appear on the sidebar of your Profile Page that are matched to your skills and experience, and you can apply for them directly through LinkedIn.

Here's how to use LinkedIn to build your personal brand:

1. Ask teachers, colleagues and people you have worked with to become personal connections and get at least 5 good references from clients you have helped or managers that you have reported to directly.
2. Showcase your digital portfolio with case studies for projects you have worked on and a video resume where you talk about the 3 pillars of your personal brand: who you are, why you do what you do and what you can offer.
3. Thoroughly complete your profile and optimize it for discovery on LinkedIn's search engine by using keywords related to your skills and industry.

## 5. Take photos and share them regularly on [Instagram](#).

The most actively engaged social network today is Instagram. It's the easiest place to share your personal stories through spontaneous images that tell a story of who you are, what you are passionate about and how you spend your time.

The key to using Instagram effectively is actively following people and brands that interest you and making an effort to regularly comment and like their photos to get their attention and build a mutually beneficial relationship.

Here's how to use Instagram to build your personal brand:

1. Get creative with visual storytelling by creating your own unique visual style so your images stand out in your audience's Instagram streams.
2. Use relevant hashtags to have your content discovered by the right people who will be interested enough in your content to follow you.
3. Occasionally promote your lead magnet to get your audience to come to your website and join your email list.

## 6. Create separate [Facebook Pages](#) for your side hustles.

I'm assuming you already have a Facebook account. You will probably want to separate your personal account from your website-related content feed so I recommend making a custom Facebook Page. You can set one up in 10 minutes and then invite all your friends and colleagues that you think will be interested.

A separate Facebook Page is really important if you want to build an online business and sell your own products or services because Facebook gives you lots of inexpensive advertising options to finely target the right people and grow your audience much faster.

Here's how to use a Facebook Page to build your side hustles:

1. Choose a topic or area of interest that is closely associated with your side hustle and the value you can offer to others with your experience and skills.
2. Regularly share your own content from your blog and from other websites that inspire you and make sure you pose questions to your audience to increase comments and interaction, which is essential if you want to appear regularly in their News Feed.
3. Facebook is a visual platform so you will need to share compelling images and videos. Right now, the content that gets the most post reach is video, particularly Facebook Live videos.

## **7. Start vlogging and share your videos on [YouTube](#) or [Snapchat](#).**

If you'd rather create fun video blogs than write content, YouTube and Snapchat offer wide-reaching platforms where you can build your audience. If you're willing to learn the ins-and-outs of creating a professional looking video using your iPhone, Android, or a DSLR camera then I'd recommend creating your own YouTube channel.

Snapchat is another video platform that is good for sharing raw stories that are spontaneous and unedited. If you aren't comfortable talking on video, Snapchat is the best place to practice because the short 10-second videos that disappear in 24 hours mean you can make videos without getting too perfectionistic about it.

Here's how to build your personal brand using video on YouTube and Snapchat:

1. Learn to tell engaging stories that captivate your audience so they don't just click away in 5-10 seconds. It's also important that you make quality videos with good audio, lighting and camera angles.
2. Actively follow other video bloggers on Snapchat and YouTube and interact with them. Build reciprocal relationships with other vloggers - collaboration and partnership are the key to rapid audience growth.
3. Record screencasts, informational videos and behind-the-scenes videos to show off your talent and expertise.

## 8. Interact with social media influencers on [Twitter](#).

If you want to instantly get someone's attention on social media, Twitter is usually the best places to do it. Whereas Twitter isn't what it used to be, it's still the easiest place to open a dialogue with best-selling authors, business experts and other influential people – often with a single tweet.

It's also a great content discovery tool where you can start or join conversations around topics and articles that resonate with you.

Here's how to use Twitter to build your personal brand:

1. Create segmented Twitter lists of interesting people you want to follow and actively retweet these people and let them know that you enjoy their content.
2. When they respond to you, start a conversation about the topics they regularly share to get on their radar and start building a relationship with them so they will remember you.
3. Share the content you are reading on the web and tag the author using their Twitter handle and add your own tweet-sized commentary to provide additional value to your audience.

## 9. Manage how you appear in search with [Google's Dashboard](#).

I recommend you explore how you appear online with their “Me On The Web” service, which is accessible from your [Google Dashboard](#) . Like I said earlier, Google is the new background check so you want to make sure the search results for your name and your location showcase your differentiated talents.

Google also provides amazing market research tools like [Google Keyword Planner](#) and [Google Trends](#) , which can help you identify the right keywords to optimize your website and social media profiles. You should also use [Google Analytics](#) and [Google Alerts](#) to follow important keywords related to your industry or specialty.

## 10. Use a social media sharing tool.

While it's important to focus on one or two social media platforms and tailor your content for each, I also use [Content Studio](#) to simplify the process of updating social networks like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram. They make it easy to share interesting content you read and they have excellent mobile apps that make it easy for you to post from your iOS or Android device.

I also recommend using a RSS reader service that allows you to subscribe to your favorite website's latest updates like [Feedly](#) or [Flipboard](#) . This way you'll never miss important new content and if you really like an article make sure you comment on it to let the author know why you like it.

# Don't Just Build An Audience, Build A Social Media Tribe

The hardest part of building your personal brand and growing your online audience is having to do it alone and without clear direction.

To solve this problem, I create Social Creators, a brand storytelling academy where you can learn, share and collaborate with other entrepreneurs, freelancers and artistic changemakers.

In Social Creators, I take you step-by-step through proven social media blueprints, content frameworks and growth experiments that show you how to:

1. Craft a purpose-driven personal brand that inspires and captures people's attention.
2. Target the right audience online and build your own brand tribe.
3. Develop a distinctive brand identity that makes your content memorable.
4. Tell your brand story clearly and concisely so you inspire action.
5. Make professional-looking videos anytime, anywhere on your iPhone or Android.
6. Grow your audience much faster using social ad strategies, shoutouts and influencer outreach.
7. Build the regular habit of making your own content and sharing it.

[Join Social Creators](#) and start following step-by-step video training modules to build your distinctive personal brand, grow your social media influence and make a higher income doing creative work you enjoy.