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## Personal brand vs. Corporate Brand: What can social media do?

The dialogue in a recent IBM commercial starts off “Meet the new boss, your customer.” It shows a woman entering the manufacturing, shipping, and distribution process while shopping for a dress on a retail store rack. The message highlights an existing shift in the way CMOs are marketing their products and services. The use of data and analytics, social networks, rather than traditional market research, is allowing companies to respond to the needs of individuals rather than demographics.

The customer’s say in how their purchase is made, shipped and bought is not only a comment on tailoring items to specific customer needs, but the evolving shift in the personal brand being more prominent than the corporate identity. What does that mean for SMEs?

If a personal brand is strong, people can align their own values with those of the companies they buy from. A personal brand generally portrays personality and relatable substance--opinions, interests, and philosophies. A business can have a philosophy, but it is more believable if the CEO or the owner divulges that philosophy and the ways in which they live by it.

The opportunities to develop personal brand are more prolific with the growth of blogs and social media. A good start to developing your personal brand voice includes:

### 1. Decide who is going to do the talking.

If you engage in social media, first and foremost, the voice or voices have to align with the existing company brand. Let’s take company X. Company X may have a few employees dedicated to monitoring and managing their social media feed, but the CEO might also engage in his or her own feed (blog, Twitter, Facebook page). The CEO is having a different experience during the day than his or her employees and managers. Reflecting on those perspectives and “happenings” of his/her world, are a way to show transparency and build trust with the customer.

### 2. Write your brand story.

Know what is different about your organization and celebrate it. A recent rebrand at the Edmonton International Airport (EIA) reveals a personal brand approach. The business of travel and keeping customers safe is a serious matter; however, EIA also incorporated humour to speak to Edmonton, a city that can be both conservative and quirky, and doesn’t take itself too seriously. The tone is informative, with a touch of humour.

### 3. Leverage your internal resources.

Your HR department is a great resource to help determine the dynamics of your company’s



internal culture and overarching persona. What human traits describe your company? Are you community minded? Light-hearted? When is it obvious you are working hard? What are the shared victories? What do you obsess over? What are you collectively passionate about?

#### 4. Protect your personal brand reputation.

Whether you are writing the company blog, or tweeting on the company's behalf, determine the parameters by which your organization will uphold reputation.

- Who is going to make sure posts are consistent?
- What language will be used? Simplify the complex language of your industry.
- Decide what you can and cannot talk about.
- Decide how you will deal with crises and negative interactions and comments. If you are a high-risk organization, have a sense of your communications plan.

Consumers never want to be placed in a group that is coloured grey: for example, "18-24," or "Baby-boomers," etc.: The individuals within those demographics don't all have the same needs, wants, or interests. Not only do consumers have the tools to achieve clarity in what they want from their marketplace, but also to find the organizations who speak directly to their beliefs through a personal brand.

Resources:

<http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/ibm-u-s-open-debut-tv-ads-targeting-cmos/236845/>

