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## Context to the nugget

These days, personal branding is something that gets talked about a lot. But what is it and why is it important? More significantly, how do you go about creating a personal brand? In this nugget, Abhijit shares four vital aspects of personal branding that you should think about.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): You briefly spoke about leaders being onstage, 24x7. And in a lot of ways, we are leaving digital fingerprints all over the world, whether its social media handles, whether it's our surfing behaviours, whatever those might be. So, what are some of the lessons to be learnt in personal branding? Specifically, in the digital world, what do you see some of the good leaders do?

Abhijit Bhaduri (AB): As compared to the analogue world, the digital world places a colossal amount of premium on authenticity and transparency. We are in a connected world, so its way harder to sham and fake what you are not. So, for example, I have no clue about sports, but if I were to say 'This person scored a goal and I am just so excited, I am a fan of this guy,' it will look extremely fake. Because the whole world knows, at least all my friends know, that I have no such capability. So, it's hard to fake things.

On the other hand, when you are online, then you are responding in real time. There is a possibility you'll make errors, you'll make typos. Today, I put a doodle out and said, today actually happens to be Einstein's birthday and March for whatever reason, fat fingers I typed it as May and somebody said, 'So why are you wishing him two months in advance?' and I said, 'Oh my God, I made that mistake'. So, first of all, to be able to acknowledge and immediately put it out and say I made a mistake, instead of trying to explain and say, 'Actually you know what, it was a typo but then what happened was because I think sometimes when you are trying to type this autocorrect will change this'. Never do that! You just have to acknowledge it was a bad move: 'I was careless, I should have looked at it before I pressed post, and I didn't, so I made an error'. The moment you acknowledge it, actually, that's the other amazing thing. For all that you hear about people getting hammered online, actually, the audience is extremely generous if you acknowledge your mistake and say it was really a judgement error. People are fairly forgiving. They stop doing that. What people don't like is somebody trying to justify and then trying to act clever and wriggle out of the scenario. Then, people will gang up and ensure that they hammer you. So, I think it's a different set of norms.

DJ: I think it goes back to the same point about authenticity, in the sense if you are sincere in your apology...

AB: It is like really big, being authentic and just doing what you really are. So, personal brand... Well, a lot of people could get fame, but fame and personal brand are two different things. You want to be able to craft the personal brand. Fame or lack of it is not necessarily something that... Fame can come from multiple things. If you make a really big boo boo, it could give you that 15 seconds of fame. For example, there's this BBC video of somebody who is an expert in Korean affairs. He was actually giving an interview and his kid walked in. That video was seen 84 million times in that one day. So then, you know, just to be able to acknowledge that. And their life has been affected by what happened at that moment.

DJ: It's hard to figure out what makes something viral! Back to personal brand. How do you think about it? There are different channels, there are different platforms. In your head, how do you think about leveraging some of these platforms, whether it's LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or whatever else you might be on? Is there a certain method to the madness here?

AB: There are three or four sections to this. One, I think, personal brand is really about self-awareness. You know, the more you are able to get awareness about yourself, I mean whether through your own reflections, looking at your digital footprints, or behaviour footprints, I would say, seeking feedback, you know talking to people and getting that kind of a feedback. All of that actually helps you understand 'what am I really?' So, what are those two or three signature strengths which I can put out there, which is going to be useful to people. This latter half of the sentence is extremely important. You could be really great but if you are out there to toot your horn, people very quickly learn to ignore you. So, you have to do something which is going to value add to people. Attention is precious, even for 140 characters, people want you to say something which is meaningful. So, therefore, to say, 'Great weather today in Bangalore', I mean, well for you, but it doesn't excite anyone to know that. So, I think it's a lot of that which you have to keep in mind; there is self-awareness.

Second thing that you need to look at is, what is the content that I am going to write about, which I care about enough so that I should be able to write about it incessantly for a while. By incessantly, I don't necessarily mean 400 tweets a day, but even if you're putting out, let's say, one or two things that you're posting on Facebook or whichever social media platform, something that builds an association, that 'OK, here is a person who will write about, let's say, sport'. Are you going to write about sports, are you going to talk about tennis, are you going to specifically talk about how to become a good tennis player, or are you going to talk about how to build a great forehand? What is that niche that you're looking for? So, it's about that.

The third element is platform. Very rarely do you find someone who is extremely popular on, let's say, Facebook is equally popular on YouTube or is equally popular on LinkedIn or whatever. I think because each of these platforms actually has a different grammar, and until you're able to figure out that grammar, it's very hard to connect to people.

DJ: It's a nuanced point you make here. Double click on the word 'grammar' for me; what do you mean here?

AB: For example, the world is actually going extremely visual and that visual means different things in Instagram with all its filters. There is a certain language to it. Snapchat has its own filters and there is immediacy to it, and then it's gone and it's all of that. So, there is a certain grammar to posting that, there are certain set of rules, dos and don'ts. There is no place where you can learn, but you can observe other people, who are really doing it very well and then actually learn from that. So, that's another piece. On LinkedIn, when you are writing a blog post, a certain length works well, a certain set of words works well, a certain way in which you structure your statements works well,

the way you write the title of your article actually has a bearing on how many people read it. So, the more you are able to experiment, the more you are able to figure out the nuances and say, 'OK, I think I have some kind of an idea about what works and what doesn't'.

**DJ: I think you were talking about four things and you've done one, two, and three. Was there a fourth?**

**AB:** Yeah. So, there is self-awareness, there is content, there is the platform, and the fourth one would be frequency. You have to be consistent and this frequency is really around what is going to be feasible for you, whether you are travelling, and by and large, unless you are in your deathbed, what is the kind of frequency that you can manage without feeling overwhelmed. Because a lot of times people will start to post things with great enthusiasm and they are posting like 10 things every day and after three days, they sort of give up, and then for like one month you've disappeared. It doesn't work very well in social media. So, you have to start only when you are mentally prepared that even if it is twice a day, I am going to do that consistently. I've been posting pretty much once a week on an average for the past 11 years on my blog. Sometimes, it is hard, because you are traveling, but what I do is, if I know that I am going to be travelling I will schedule it because you can do all that today. If I know that I am going to be partying somewhere on, let's say, new year's, I could always, 10 days before, write a new year post and put it there, program it, so it will appear sharp at midnight. Sometimes people say, oh, how crazy is this that instead of celebrating somewhere, you're blogging. Actually I'm not, it's actually posted there. So, those are simple things that people who blog will tell you. There are millions of articles which will tell you how to do it.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

**DJ:** The key takeaway for me was the point around whether you are contributing stuff that is useful to people and making a difference to people's lives; Given the explosion in the world of content, the phrase "speak only if you can beat silence" is probably more relevant today than ever before. Thank you for listening. For more please visit [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com).

## End of nugget transcription

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### About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive’s / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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Podcast Transcript [07.03 Abhijit Bhaduri - Personal branding](#)

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