



The Writer's Guide To Personal Branding

BY TOM WARD

Writers usually think they're a lot bigger than they actually are.

They forget that people almost never know (or care) who wrote the article they're reading.

Think about it.

I read *The Huffington Post*, *Fast Company*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, *Daily Mail* and *Vice* and can't name a single writer for any of them.

You don't know who I am and probably don't care. You just want to find out how to build your brand. Hopefully by the end of the article (if you get that far) you'll know who I am and want to follow me.

Now, most people think they're doing fine if their articles get a lot of views but that's not true at all.

Any *Forbes* list gets a ton of views, usually in the millions: *The Celebrity Top 100*, *The Highest Paid Athletes*, etc.

But let's dig a little bit. How do those millions of views help the author?

The readers probably don't know the author's name, the author doesn't have any of the readers' email addresses so they can't contact them, and *Forbes* doesn't even tag the author when they share the article on social (kind of a jerk move *Forbes*) so people can't easily follow them.

1. Get On The Biggest Platform You Can

You need a platform, otherwise you're just talking to yourself. Now, these big blogs/magazines don't pay much because there are a million people who will do the job for nothing. But if you're serious about this, you've got to write for the biggest outlet you can find, even if it's unpaid. But stop your complaining because this benefits both you and the publication. They get free content, and you get access to their audience.

2. Use The Platform To Promote Yourself

No one else is going to do this for you, certainly not the publication you're writing for. So how do you promote yourself? You almost need to yell at the reader. You need to tell them what you've got going on and why they should care. You need to be promoting your blog, your social accounts, your YouTube channel, your podcast, whatever. You need to separate yourself from the competition. Build value. Give them a reason to follow you.

3. If They Won't Let You Promote Yourself, Go Somewhere That Will

Since I interview a lot of influencers, I thought that it would be a good idea to film the interviews. *Forbes* agreed and offered to film some. Now, they don't let the interviewers appear on camera. If I'm not on camera, how the heck am I going to promote myself? So, I cut a deal with them. I'd let them film my interview if they filmed me too and gave me the footage. So we both won.

Forbes got the video in the format they liked and I got professionally shot video that I could put on YouTube. If I didn't push, I would've never appeared on camera. You need to work with someone that's going to let you shine. If they don't, move on. Since *Forbes* won't allow me to appear in my videos, I do them for other publications now. It's OK to say no. Know your value or no one else will.

4. Shoot Video

Shoot video! Lots of it. This will separate you from the faceless writers out there. You could do video interviews. You could have a weekly rant, like Andy Rooney used to do on *60 Minutes*. You could even take a boring list and comment on it. Anything to showcase your personality and add to your article.

5. Have A Blog

I can't stress the importance of this. I've written for *Forbes* for almost two years and have had about one million people read my articles. It sounds pretty impressive but it's not because they're not my customers. They're *Forbes'* customers. If I decided to write for another magazine how would I let those million readers know about it? What if I wanted to send them a note about a speaking appearance I was doing, or a book that I just wrote? I can't.

That's why it's so necessary to have a blog or another site that people can subscribe to! I'd rather have a blog with 10,000 email subscribers than have a million readers read my articles at a major publication. Why? Because those 10,000 people are my customers. They liked what I was doing and decided to give me their email address. It takes trust to give a blogger your email address. You're telling them it's OK to send them articles, updates, eBooks, etc. That is way more valuable than a random reader who clicked on your article because they liked your headline.

6. Get Email Addresses

I read [Dorie Clark's](#) new book *Entrepreneurial You* (which is awesome!) and she made a great point: You should take some of the time that you're spending on social media promoting yourself, and instead spend it trying to build your email address list. She is 100% right! Think about it. What are ten more Twitter followers going to get you? Nothing. But ten people subscribing to your blog or your newsletter can make a big difference. You're building your brand and, as you get bigger, you're going to want to promote more things you're doing and the most effective way is still email. The percentage of people who actually see and engage with your tweet is minuscule compared to your email subscribers.

7. Engage

My favorite part of writing is when I hit “post” and share my article on social. Then I get to see people retweeting it, commenting on it, sharing it, etc. I try to engage wherever possible. I’ve talked with all the top YouTubers and they all say the same thing: You’ve got to engage. It’s a lot easier when you get five comments than when you get bigger but the point is you need to be in touch with your audience. You can’t just hit “post” and turn your phone off. You need to be part of the conversation. Also, you’re going to get negative comments if you’re any good. Don’t sweat it. I used to get so mad but now I either ignore them or I mess with them. It’s more fun than sitting and stewing.

8. Use Twitter And Get Verified

Every writer uses Twitter. Why? Because it lends itself to the written word, you can link to articles and it's easy for people to follow you. Getting verified is an absolute must! If you're a writer and you're not verified, that should be your number one priority if you're trying to build your brand. That little blue check gives you instant credibility. I don't care if someone has 100,000 followers, if they're not verified, I don't take them as seriously. If you're a writer and have had your work published in legit places, then it should be no problem to get verified. I got verified with only 500 followers, so you can do it even if you're not big. Check out my article [here](#) where I break it all down for you.

9. Associate With Successful People

This is the easiest, the most fun and probably most effective way to build your brand. Think about it. If you see someone that you've never heard of, hanging with Gary Vaynerchuk or Tim Ferriss, you assume that they're somebody. I've used this strategy to great success. I started to get really interested in influencer marketing a year ago and I wanted to meet some but I didn't know any.

I reached out to someone at an influencer agency and he put me in touch with Marissa Rachel. Shout out to Marissa! At the time, she was an up and coming influencer. I interviewed her and it went well, so her manager introduced me to a bigger influencer, and so on and so on. Because I associated with successful influencers, it was natural for me to hang in their circles. My mom always said, “You are who you hang with.” If you want to build your brand, hang with someone who’s already built the brand that you want.

About Me

I'm a New Jersey native living in Los Angeles with my wife and toddler.

I'm a sales guy by trade but I also write about influencer marketing for Forbes and other publications.

Thanks for stopping by! If there's anything I can do for you, hmu. I respond to each and every email. Even the trolls!