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“Does Your Virtual Presence Reflect Your Personal Brand?”

By: Rita Balian Allen, Rita B. Allen Associates

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Author of Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself

Social media is a powerful and effective way to communicate within our global marketplace. In fact, if you are not using the various venues available today, you will be limiting your career prospects both in terms of effectiveness within your current role as well as potential opportunities you seek. As you use the multitude of offerings, are you deliberate and strategic with your choices and your communications? The ease of which we can establish accounts and start communicating is quite impressive and enticing. In addition, what we can share and offer is equally compelling. As we do so, we want to be selective and thoughtful with what we share, how much we share and the manner in which we share.

Our virtual presence is a critical part of our personal brand. With so many social media choices, many people opt to use different ones for different aspects of their personality and lives, professionally and personally. They might leverage Facebook to connect with friends (past and current), to see or share photos, upcoming professional events, and recent achievements; Instagram for vacation travelogues and/or professional catalogues; Twitter for trends and breaking news, as well as for up-to-the-minute event information and reviews; Pinterest for shopping and/or showcasing visual images of professional offerings and accomplishments; as well as LinkedIn as a standard professional source for job search, employers, recruiters, sales leads, and market information as well as thought leader materials and articles. These are just a few examples of the many options available to us. The important thing to remember is that

even if used for personal reasons, the information can (and will) also be viewed by professional sources and contacts. Select the ones that make sense for you, meet a specific objective of yours and use each of them appropriately, and wisely.

Establish a presence that is complete, current and strategic. Whichever venues you decide appropriate for you professionally and personally, ensure your profile shows up when necessary and reflects you in a positive light. Be aware of the overlap and the fact that everything you put on line will represent your personal brand. Have you ever googled yourself? Are you pleased with what shows up...or what does *not* show up? Know your personal brand, continually work on creating your brand as well as articulating it effectively so that people think of *YOU* when they think of your area of expertise. Add pictures to your profile that are professional and belong to appropriate groups and networks that allow you to stay current as well as enhance your visibility while building your brand. Be thoughtful about the people you choose to follow and your commentary. Post remarks and valuable information that offers helpful insights and resources to others; and that showcases your relevant knowledge and experience. Request recommendations from several leaders, colleagues, peers, staff, vendors, clients and other key stakeholders that can speak to your expertise, your value, and your personal brand. Share success stories that make a difference and will inspire others.

In our current global marketplace, we have four generations in the workforce, very closely creeping up to five, and people working together from all over the world. How we do business as well as communicate with each other and establish relationships is very different today and will continue to evolve. With such diverse mix of demographics and different preferences, styles and approaches, social media is an increasingly essential branding opportunity.

Take social media and your virtual presence seriously and be strategic, proactive and deliberate in how you use it, work with it and leverage it in establishing, building and articulating your brand. Remember that everything you put on the internet is a public record of your personal brand. So put your best self out there! *See you on line...*

Ask Rita: Do you have a career question and/or a career story to share? Email your questions or stories to rita@ritaballenassociates.com

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the newly released book, "*Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment*". Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal .