



How to Create a Personal Brand as a Venture Capital Professional

Using Social Media, Speaking Engagements and Published Articles as a Way to Make a Name for Yourself

Billie G. Blair, PhD, President/ CEO, Change Strategists Inc.

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About the Seminar Speaker

- About Dr. Billie Blair, President/CEO, Change Strategists, Inc.
- Dr. Blair is an organizational psychologist and has held executive positions in the corporate, health care and university arenas. She has successfully led numerous efforts of reorganization and change. In all of her management roles, she holds the distinction as the first woman appointed to each position.
- In addition to work with corporate clients, her current service on national and state boards as well as membership in Venture-related organizations contribute to Dr. Blair's currency in the Venture Capital arena. She is a member of the San Diego Venture Group; CONNECT and the San Diego MIT Forum; and serves as Vice President of the Economic Development Corporation for Southwest California.
- Dr. Blair is the author of over 500 technical reports and articles, three monographs, and three books, the latest: ALL THE MOVING PARTS: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT. An upcoming book is: VALUE + EMPLOYEES AS VALUERS.

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Overview

- Personal branding for executives is the most challenging of all executive tasks. Those in executive positions receive mixed messages about their professional positioning – and question whether it is necessary. Determining to look seriously at branding affords one an opportunity to get beyond the confusion.
- Branding requires the executive to take a long view of career, position, opportunities, goals and responsibilities in conjunction with the corporation's goals and direction – this initial process provides sound information that will be used throughout one's tenure.
- A good branding process serves the company as well as it serves the executive who is undergoing the branding process – and it provides sound career development guidelines for current as well as future positions.

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What to Know

- 1 -- Who you are
- 2 – Who you want to be
- 3 – What advantages that a new orientation will offer
- 4 – How to utilize these advantages
- 5 – What will be the ultimate goal

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What to Know

- WHO YOU ARE
- Step 1 – Do a personal audit: on the left side of the page, list the outstanding things about yourself; on the other side, the things that could be improved.
- Step 2 – Develop your “Personal Quotient - PQ” from the left-hand list – first, give everything on the left side a value, based on a scale from 1 – 10 (10 being highest). In a second pass, create a parallel value scale by setting a value that you’d like to see these qualities reach.
- Step 3 – Notice the disparities between the two PQ scalings – circle the areas where there are the greatest differences, representing the greatest need for growth. Set this list aside while you go on to the next phase of branding.

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What to Know

- **WHO YOU WANT TO BE**
- Step 1 – Start a new list – this time enumerate all the things that you would like to be, aspire to.
- Step 2 – Look over the list and do a “validity audit” – that is, determine, if there are items included that are unrealistic at this time.
- Step 3 – Circle all that seem realistic, obtainable – put asterisks beside those that are the highest priority.

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What to Know

- **WHAT ADVANTAGES WILL A NEW ORIENTATION OFFER**
- Step 1 – Compare the results of your work on the first sheet (Who You Are) with the items retained on the listing on the second sheet ((Who You Want to Be).
- Step 2 – Your branding effort will focus on a combination of the two. Determine the best way to combine your two lists (that is, who you are, combined with who you want to be).
- Step 3 - On a new sheet of paper, left-hand column, include a full listing of your preferred branding aspects. In a column to the right of the first one, specify what concrete advantages branding yourself in this way will bring. In other words, indicate the reasons why these personal branding elements will be beneficial to you.

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What to Know

- **HOW TO UTILIZE THESE ADVANTAGES**
- Step 1 – The advantages you listed in the last exercise will serve as your branding goals. Reframe the statements you made about the advantages of each branding aspect by forming these into goals statements.
- Step 2 – Review the goal statements for their interaction – if some areas warrant, combine into larger, more comprehensive goals.
- Step 3 – Using these goals as your branding reference, list three steps under each goal that will be required in order to achieve that purpose in the branding effort.

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What to Know

- **WHAT WILL BE THE ULTIMATE GOAL**
- Your goals and their action steps will form your branding plan.
- Adhering to this plan will provide you with the opportunity of forming your personal brand in the Venture arena.
- As Venture Capitalism has become ever more competitive, it is absolutely vital to initiate personal branding – no two people are ever the same, but those who know definitively who they are and what they are to do will have the upper hand in highly-competitive situations every time!

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Social Media

- LinkedIn is a very good way to not only establish a professional network but the mechanism also has advantages of joining groups of like-minded people. This offers a good advantage for the Venture Capitalist professional.
- Facebook offers similar connectivity, but is geared more specifically toward personal and social aspects. These are what we call “connection factors” and rate highly for the Venture Capitalist who needs to stay in touch with those on the move.
- Blogging is a great way for the Venture Capitalist professional to establish a professional persona – maintaining a blog allows you to identify how you are different from your competition; allows those you seek to represent to get in touch with you; and provides a venue for you to offer good advice to potential clients.
- Twitter provides instant access to a large group of people (who are following you). Use this to advantage by announcing some great coups, some of the latest Venture directions, anything at all (in 125 characters) that provides support of your brand.
- Use YouTube for clips of your best video sequences – all sorts of possibilities to support your personal brand here.

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Speaking Engagements

- Strategy 1 – Speaking at a Professional Conference – Offer a seminar session at a large national conference – this gets your views and expertise in front of a large group of people – and also allows you to try out your new branding directions. You’ll be joining new organizations as part of your branding efforts – position yourself with these groups so that they are sure to invite you to be a session presenter. Even better if you can be a keynoter – but that might come later.
- Strategy 2 - Speaking at a Tradeshow – These are usually shorter speaking engagements but can also be very rewarding from the branding perspective. For shorter speaking engagements, work carefully to refine and hone your message.
- Strategy 3 – Speaking to University Classes – This is a very good way to reach business students and others interested in the VC field - this sets you up as the expert and links you with both the class professor as well the students who also have a large array of connections (and probably know people who might be potential clients).
- Strategy 4 - Doing a Webinar – Allows you to link with individuals who are specifically interested in your topic. Once again, you are the expert and the mechanism allows you to present your unique views and to share your skills.

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Published Articles

- Strategy 1 - White Papers – A great way to get data and operational details out to potential clients. Having several white papers to draw upon (and to put up on your website, offer on LinkedIn, etc) allows you to establish high credibility – and also is an excellent way to make gain new clients.
- Strategy 2 - Articles in the Professional Press – Ask your clients and colleagues what journals and professional trade publications they read. Contact several of these with a proposal to do an article. Here again, articles offer great visibility and allow you to establish credentials and expertise.
- Strategy 3 - Newsletters – You can establish your own newsletter and develop a data base made up of current and prospective clients. This allows you to control content and be able to say exactly what you'd like in order to support your branding. Alternatively, your company probably publishes a newsletter – make sure that you are a regular contributor, or ask that they allow you to do a regular column.
- Strategy 4 - Books – When you have become intrigued with a particular topic – perhaps something unique like how a Venture Capitalist best operates in the arena of clinical trials for new medical procedures - gather all available information and materials and turn it into a book. This is a great way to serve your clients as well as to support your branding – and provides a number of wonderful opportunities.

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Other Outlets

- Option 1 - Radio shows – Look for opportunities to be a guest on a local (or better yet) a national radio show. There are frequently calls to appear as a guest – use your LinkedIn and FaceBook contacts to find these.
- Option 2 - Give special presentations to local/regional organizations and associations. In both the San Diego and Los Angeles areas, for example, there are numerous opportunities to tell others about what Venture Capitalists do – the “ins and outs” of the business. The local Economic Development organizations are a natural – and people are usually fascinated by the VC field.
- Option 3 - TV appearances – These opportunities occur less frequently than radio shows, but should not be overlooked as possibilities. Once again, use your LinkedIn and FaceBook connections to find the opportunities – and don’t forget to Tweet when you’ve made an appearance!
- Option 4 – Radio Host – There are a number of opportunities that allow a professional to start a radio show of their own – you might want to look into these – either for the short-term or for a longer period. A business associate did a one-year contract for a radio show in order to promote his new book!
- Option 5 – Serve on national or local boards – There is always the possibility of finding new clients, making new contacts.

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Case Studies

- Case Study # 1 – The CEO of a Large, Privately-Held Manufacturing Operation Gave a Speech As A Courtesy . . .
- But this resulted in three new avenues for funding and expansion. By sheer happenstance, sitting in the audience were three individuals who were looking for solid operations in which to invest. Each contacted the CEO privately, arranged for follow-up discussion, and consequently became investors.
- - Never pass up an opportunity to “range” - that is, to meet people outside of your normal professional circles, find out how things are done in other places and what current thinking is prevalent.
- - Approach these opportunities from the perspective of interest – generate a genuine interest in exploring a variety of options. Go armed with your branding perspective and never pass up the opportunity to talk about what you do, who you are, and what you represent -- by way of describing you in terms of your defined branding.

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Case Studies

- Case Study # 2 – A Professional Presentation That Led To Other Speaking Opportunities . . . That Led to a Book Opportunity . . .
- The best way to get to meet a large number of people quickly is to speak at a professional association’s annual meeting. One of our clients did this a few years ago at our suggestion and found himself with two other invitations to speak – requests with which he complied. From these speaking engagements, one of the people listening happened to represent a national publishing company and contacted “Jack,” to ask about his interest in writing up his experiences in the form of a book.
- Don’t hesitate to seek opportunities to speak at public events, particularly those that will have audience members representing diverse professions. And, the bigger the city where the conference is held, the better – those with contacts often live in the larger population centers.

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FAQs

- Question 1 – Why would I have to explain who I am – everyone knows me.
- Question 2 – Creating a personal brand seems to imply that I am misrepresenting myself.
- Question 3 – Branding could be a lot of work – and for what?
- Question 4 – If everyone starts branding, what would be the point?
- Question 5 – I haven't seen anyone who seemed to know what branding was!

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FAQs

- Question 6 – How can branding be accomplished quickly and expeditiously?
- Question 7 – Why would I want to spend the time branding – I have a demanding work schedule and a home/family/social life that I enjoy – so there's really no time,
- Question 8 – Branding seems like the opposite of professionalism – I've worked hard to make myself into a credible professional.
- Question 9 – It seems to me that if a person is authentic and honest, there is no reason for branding.
- Question 10 – Is this another one of those processes that goes on and on and costs a LOT of money?

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Conclusions

- Point 1 – Branding is the first step in becoming the professional you’ve always wanted to be.
- Point 2 - Branding follows a specific process and takes as little or as long as you prefer.
- Point 3 – Branding is a contract with yourself.

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Action Plan

Social Media – Set as your goal, within the next week, to start with the social media site of your choice – explore those that have been mentioned and select the one that best meets your needs – each performs a different function. If you are an executive, I would recommend the LinkedIn site as the first you might explore: [Linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com).

Speaking Engagements - Determine at least one speaking engagement that you can seek in the next month. Start with a local service club like a Rotary Club to get your feet wet, if you prefer. In the meantime, select a professional venue that will allow you to begin to test your new personal branding.

Published Articles - Look to your clients and colleagues to suggest the journals and other publications that they read most frequently. From this list, select at least one to focus on during the next month – make the contact and propose an article's topic – include a brief description of the proposed article. Determine that you will publish in at least three national publications within the next year – start to work now and this will be completely doable!

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