

Building yourself as a 'brand' on the Internet can go a long way in keeping you always "saleable" in the job market, writes **Yogesh Bansal**

WITH the changing time it has become extremely important for each one of us to find the unique qualities in the brand in us. In fact, one is no more a professional or a worker or just a job title. One is a brand. Google yourself to know if you are a known Brand. The proliferation of Internet has made it imperative to have the right kind of online presence through right kind of profile. That will definitely connect one with the right individual or group.

Manleen Kaur, a PR professional is becoming a known brand as her profile was found and checked out online. She says, "We need to build ourselves as brands — You and I. How do sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Apnacircle, blogging communities add to our benefit: Type my name on Google, do you find Manleen Kaur... if yes, this is how you would realise the HR managers or employers go through your profiles these days before hiring you. My boss did the exact same thing, she found out if I was somewhat a known 'brand'. She liked my profiles which helped me win the trust of my employer."

"We are no less than a "product brand" as individuals if we might think so. Everyone knows who Amitabh Bachchan or Shah Rukh Khan or Irfan Pathan or even Sanjeev Kapoor is — they have become "Brands" in their respective fields and as individuals they hold a worth whether it be films, sports or the culinary world.

So, you may belong to the IT industry, banking institutions or public relations or to the corporate world, it is a must for you to create a "Brand" for yourself as an individual. You have to market yourself with your efficiency, skill-set and tools

Unleash your BRAND power

that can "package" and "brand" you well.

Security ring

Branding is something that one has to learn. It is important for a professional to create his own job security and branding is an integral part of that.

With the emergence of Internet, especially with the emergence of Google it is critical to try and control what information comes up when one's name is searched online by a potential employer, or business partner or potential customer. That is why it has become more relevant to brand oneself with the right messaging; otherwise Google will brand you with not so relevant messaging. Perhaps even worse can happen i.e. nothing will pop up.

If you are thinking what the brand power can do for you, then just think of certain well-known brand names like Britannia and Disney. If a child says, "you know I was watching Disney, they are coming out with a new show on Teen Fashion on the channel", the fellow kids will give him an ear and might go back home and look out for the show. Similarly, if I ask the shopkeeper for some nice creamy biscuits and he suggests Britannia, I would not mind buying it, as I know that there is no harm trying a Britannia product.

Starting point

Not being online today is almost like not existing. So establishing an online presence is a strict YES. But now the question is where? It is advisable to start small so you won't be overwhelmed. Choose either LinkedIn or Facebook or ApnaCircle — the sites most often recommended by branding and job search specialists as a crucial first step in establishing your brand.

All these sites also help in other ways — provide information on job openings, online mentoring programme, and inter-

est groups among others.

It is also advisable not to join multiple sites, rather one should join a site, which is oriented toward one's field and provides local information. It is also important to mention about the niche that you have.

There are four important processes for self-branding — discover, create, communicate, maintain. Consistency is the key.

More than a resume

Is branding just a new term for what we all knew when we marketed ourselves by sending out a resume — a resume highlighting the expertise and emphasising the achievements?

No, it is beyond that. In fact, branding is about building a community or being part of a community. Creation of an online profile is just the beginning. It is important to be part of a larger group — alumni, former employees of your last jobs, trade groups, etc. Join the groups and wait and observe the discussions.

When there is something thoughtful to say, then chip in with the comments.

Stand apart

Start branding yourself as someone insightful in that particular area. The Brand YOU needs to be unique and authentic. Ideally, one should create the profile before the need for a job arises, to be an established part of a network when one goes out looking for a job.

As you build relationships and networks, know that these people will act as your "career insurance" at the worst. Should a job or career fall short and you need to make a change, then these individuals will help you in getting your next position.

So, package and brand yourself well so that people know your worth and are willingly open to buy you as a brand.