

## The Muhammad Ali approach to branding

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Not only did **Muhammad Ali** know a thing or two about boxing, he was a champion of his **brand**, too. I instructed a class this month on "Making the Most Out of **LinkedIn** for Your Personal **Brand**." If **LinkedIn** were around when **Muhammad Ali** was in his prime, his description might read something like: 'Self-proclaimed greatest boxer of all time. Entertaining audiences globally for over a decade.' Well, you get the idea.

My **LinkedIn branding** class not only encouraged students to maximize all the categories **LinkedIn** offers to describe yourself, but also to provide a detailed, engaging, and yes, in some ways, entertaining description of you and your career. I reminded attendees that your online **brand** is the "first **digital** impression" of you before someone meets you in person (or IRL=In Real Life) -- and haven't we all done an internet search on someone before we meet them, do business with them, or even accept their connection request on **LinkedIn**?

### "Float Like a Butterfly..."

Ali's personal tag line is so well **branded** that I bet you can finish it without my help. Think about applying Ali's **branding** techniques to your personal **brand**. Are you the best in your business? How can you convey, maybe in a more subtle way than Ali did, why someone should believe in you and your **brand**, want to get to know you better, or want to do business with you? Here are five things to think about to make the most out of your personal **brand**:

1. **Think:**Take a moment to think about what you want to be known for.... Got it? Now own it. If it's not boxing (or maybe it is), what do you want people to think or say about you when you leave the room? For example: "He's the most entertaining boxer I've ever seen and I would pay to see him again anytime!" Think about what you want people to say about you when you're not there.
2. **Craft:**Now that you've thought about what you want to be known for, take time to create

an authentic, descriptive, and again, maybe even entertaining, summary of yourself. Does it lead someone to want to read more about you? Does it summarize your successes? For example: "Olympic gold medal winner known for putting boxing on the map and dominating the sport for over two decades." I immediately think, 'Wow, how did he do that?' I want to continue reading to find out!

3. **Be the champ:** Now that you have a winning summary of yourself, figure out what makes you different. What makes you the best at what you do? For example: "First man to win a heavyweight boxing title three times. Career-ending 56-5 record, with 37 knockouts, and lifetime earnings of \$57 million." Well, you don't have to include your career earnings, but it sure sounded good in this example. Take the proverbial bull by the horns and own the title of best in your industry. Be prepared to prove it. Customer testimonials are a great way to help prove how good you are and they sound much better than you saying how fab you are -- unless of course you are **Muhammad Ali**.
4. **Trailblaze:** Now that you've figured out what makes you a champ, you need to share your forward-thinking ideas with others. Ali was known for speaking his mind (even if he was a bit controversial at times), but I would encourage you to be a thought leader in your industry. Take time each week to think about how you can help others -- your customers and future customers -- where your industry is headed, etc., and put it in writing. Start a blog, post it on your **social** networks, and even launch a podcast (consider reading "[The Rising Popularity of Podcasting, and Why Your Business Should Care](#)").
5. **Make a difference:** Lastly, highlight what are you doing to make the world a better place (ever heard of good karma?). Some of the students graduating from high school and college are so smart -- some with over 4.0 GPAs. (Don't ask me how you earn over a 4.0 GPA; I preferred to **socialize** a bit more than study too hard). What is going to be the tipping point of an employer when they are looking at two resumes with identical grades? Their **social** consciousness (and they have it -- a 2014 millennial impact [report](#) showed 92% of millennials are contributing their creative skills to companies they feel are making a difference in the world). Find out what you are passionate about and donate your time, talents and/or treasures. Ali was an inspiration to the young, recognized for his race relations, humanitarianism, and standing up for what he believed in, even when the consequences were great. He fought for truth and justice.

## What will you fight for?

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