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BUILDING YOUR DIGITAL BRAND

As a floral designer, are you Internet-famous? Do you want to be? Even if you have loads of talent, supreme confidence, and want to make an indelible mark in the floral industry, you won't register in the real or virtual marketplace unless you leverage digital marketing tools. Here are a few strategies you can consider about how to grow your professional digital brand.

CREATE A BLOG

Although your first inclination may be a straight jump to social media, getting Internet-famous is really about building relevance in search. Think about it: what's the first thing a potential client or employer will do after meeting you? Type your name in search! What will they find?



See page 6 for ideas about writing blogs.

The best way to control the first listings in search is publishing a personal website. Why? If you think about it, a website is the only Internet tool where you have complete control of how information about you and your work—blog (text) posts, photos, links, and video—is presented. And it'll probably come up first, if not second to a LinkedIn profile (more on this later).

Before calling your friend's sister who has a brother-in-law who does websites, let's talk about a free and potentially better tool. Visit blogger.com and log in with your Gmail account—create one if you don't have Gmail. You'll be asked to configure a free blogger domain or purchase a new one, pick a theme for your blog, and write your first post. Believe it, you'll create a new website within five minutes.

We strongly consider you purchase a new domain, which should only cost \$12-\$20 a year. Since this is a professional blog, use your name as the domain. AIFD? How about www.yournameAIFD.com? Post about your travels, speaking engagements, design philosophy, and/or event work as topics. Post lots of photos and video! What you want to convey is your personal style.

ADOPT VIDEO NOW

During our meetings with Google, the media they constantly suggested we use is video. They stated that videos score massive rel-

evance points when embedded in websites. From a presentation perspective, video is certainly a step up from photos, since viewers now can watch and appreciate presentation style, get a good idea of your design skills, and enable you to convey your personality.

Every smartphone is an awesome video camera, so start using it to take selfie videos. Purchase a Gorilla Pod stand (joby.com/griptight-one-gorillapod) to capture video on the road or when you are alone.

Purchase video editing software, such as Adobe Premiere Elements or if on a Mac, use the free iMovie software. Lastly, using the same Gmail used to start your blog, create your own YouTube channel. Upload all videos into this account and share from this account to social.

UTILIZE SELECT SOCIAL MEDIA

Our advice is don't try to do it all. Be strategic in the social you use. Since our industry involves a visual crowd, go with Facebook and Instagram as your main tools.

Now here's the trick to build relevance:

Use your blog posts as basis for posts for social.

So, if you blogged about an event where you created the floral arrangements, copy the link to your blog post and drop it into Facebook. The idea is to drive links back to the blog, which builds relevance. Same with Instagram: If you posted a gallery of photos on the blog, choose the best one, post to Instagram, and drive a link back to the blog.

As for LinkedIn, although it's not the most exciting social media, our contacts at Google claim it builds relevance fast. Be sure to fill out your profile in full, join and post in relevant groups—be the expert, and connect with others in the industry.

FOLLOW THE LEADERS!

I try to practice what I preach, so please check out my own blog and follow all the social links found within—you'll see this guidance in action at renatosogueco.com.

Also take a few moments to Google-search Donald Yim, AIFD, Sandy Schroeck, AIFD, and Jackie Lacey, AIFD ... who are each excellent examples of designers who are building their personal digital brand using these best practices. 

