



Help Grow Your Coaching Practice with a Strong Brand

These days figure skating coaches across the country are thinking more and more about ways to grow their coaching practices. This article looks at two popular trends that may increase the probability of growing and sustaining successful coaching businesses. These include developing your personal brand and creating websites that reflect your practice goals, areas of expertise, and personal brand.

Developing a Personal Brand

Everyone has a personal brand – you know – what others think about when they think of a particular person. Are they fun-loving? Grouchy? Strict? Intelligent? Thorough? Have perseverance? Care about others? Have integrity? Creative? And the list goes on and on.

A coach's interactions with everyone in and around the rink over time generates an individual's personal brand. Think about the coaches in your rink. What are they known for? You too have a personal brand. Is it the brand message you want to be out there? Many coaches are careful to construct a personal brand that emphasizes their strengths, skills and positive personality traits. As Oprah Winfrey once said, "You can help manage and develop your personal brand or one just gets created about you."

Many people are branded accidentally. They have no idea that they've been developing a brand over time so they fail to capitalize on their brand's strengths and continue to be sabotaged by its weaknesses. Figure skating coaches all have a public profile and should evaluate what their personal brand stands for. How does it represent them and how it can be maximized to deliver the best message possible?

In these days of instantaneous communication with increasing social media posts, email, interactive websites, blogs and text messaging each and every communication made says something about the individual who sent it. Yes, electronic communications have inserted themselves strongly reinforcing ones' personal brand. Do you take the time to think about what you send to others electronically? Do you respond in a timely fashion? Have you considered how your social media comments reflect upon your brand? Do you think about the fact that every email or Facebook post can be resent and resent? Are you staying in touch with any of the current trends in social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, relevant blog posts and the like? Are you seen as relevant through the rapidly growing social media exchanges revolving around figure skating? Most skaters these days are actively involved in social media. Should your brand include some social media participation so that you are seen as relevantly as possible?

A True Social Media Success

Those coaches and skaters who are on Facebook and Twitter are all aware of one coach that we know and love – Doug Mattis. Doug has become very well-known these past few years by developing an online persona as a fun-loving, supportive, positive and intelligent coach and choreographer. He doesn't just write and post about skating but also takes us along on his business trips and regales us with humorous travel stories. He periodically and appropriately involves his family in his posts in fun ways. Everyone online knows his mother, Mama Jill, for her style and humor that seems to mirror and match Doug's. This is just part of his personal brand.

Doug's extensive social media presence does not mean that others need to be this involved. Rather his activity is just an example – perhaps unusual among figure skating coaches – as to how his positive personal brand has spread far and wide.

Doug is always encouraging and never says negative things about anyone. In fact he always sees the upside of everything. He has a clear, optimistic and informative personal brand. This makes him a well-known and desirable traveling coach and choreographer to have on your team. Doug was an early adopter of social media. This, along with his great talents and skills, have made him a widely known and popular coach.

Why Enhance Your Personal Brand?

- Protect and Manage your Reputation
 - Once well-defined it can influence how you are perceived
- Create Clarity About Your Brand
 - Refining and communicating a clear brand message strengthens your brand and increases your influence
- Increase Loyalty and Opportunities
 - Deepen emotional relationships with “fans” (skaters and those at the rink and beyond) and the probability of extending your brand to new “fans.”

First Steps to Enhancing Your Personal Brand

- How do people describe you?
- How do you describe yourself?
- What makes you different from your peers?
- Are you a part of the fabric of the rink and the skating community at large?
- Do you communicate clearly and regularly with your skaters, parents and “fans”?

Websites to Create and Reinforce Your Brand

One option that is becoming increasingly popular is for coaches to have a simple website created to build their brand and business. These websites can be as basic as an online brochure with some interactivity on the site such as the website we developed for Coach Sara Robertson of Anaheim, CA. Her website is based on her personal brand as a competition coach. The site reinforces her competition successes and her years of amazing showmanship with ten years of professional skating show experience. www.strobertson.com

Sara's website offers a scheduling component so that her skaters and their families can track weekly changes and see openings for lessons. Sara also plans to use her new site to communicate with her athletes about upcoming competitions and to share pertinent information such as offering links to popular skating websites such as Entryeeze.

Olympic and performance coach Bobby Martin created his own website to enhance his personal brand and continue to develop his coaching practice beyond his uber well-known presence in Boston. He uses his self-developed website as a way to grow his national dartfish expertise and coaching business. Bobby created a colorful and powerful website that is right on point to reach his goals. www.bobbymartincoaching.com

Conclusion

In our fast-paced and evolving world we must admit that things are changing. It might be the time now to take a closer look at your personal brand and decide if you are pleased with it. If not, take some steps which will gradually increase your image (brand) until it reflects just who you really are and what you stand for.

Coaching is like any business – it needs fuel to grow, reflection as to what the message you want out there to be, and requires consistency and being genuine in order for your personal brand to become a reality.

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