

Personal branding podcast: Episode 2 transcript

Cerys (Host)

Hi and welcome back. I'm Cerys and we're talking about personal branding and how it can make a difference when you're taking your first steps into the world of work.

In this episode, we have experts ready to answer some student questions about all things personal branding. This time, we'll get a different perspective - recruiters and what they're looking for. We also get some insights from a professional building their personal brand.

First up, we're going to hear what employers and recruiters are looking for when they meet candidates. Basically, finding out how to make a professional first impression and what makes you memorable to employers.

Abi

My name's Abigail Tittley, although a lot of people call me Abi, so I tend to refer to that more than anything. But I am a manager here at Sanderson Recruitment overseeing the permanent delivery tech team. So, we specialize across AI, software engineering, data and cyber security, and essentially through that, I get to meet a lot of different clients and candidates and see what's going on across the market where things are evolving. So, it can be quite a lot every day.

But on the side of my desk, I do kind of do a couple of the bits, which are really interesting. So, I get involved with supporting our Strive incentive here at Sanderson, whether it's helping underrepresented groups get internships when they graduate in school. So, we kind of do that as a little bit of a side project to support the community across the South West, and we hope things running into South Wales shortly, soon as well.

I'm also the founder of our Women in Tech initiative here at Sanderson. So that started with me interviewing a whole variety of women across the industry just to kind of get their stories, what challenges they're seeing, and kind of where the gaps are in the initiatives that are currently running. And we've got to a point now where we've hosted our first event, we're setting up our second one and done a couple podcast series ourselves as well, to help showcase the voices of women in the industry and kind of how to make more inclusive environment overall.

And my final kind of side project is I support quite a few mentees of people career transitioning into security, or people that have just graduated trying to get into the security space as well with sort of CV feedback, what different schemes they can get involved with and kind of coaching that way as well. So, I keep myself busy.

Okay. Let's hear the first question.

Student:

What are you looking for as a recruiter when you meet people?

Abi

So, I think from a recruiter perspective, it can be quite different because we essentially sit both sides of the fence. I probably would say the best way to describe us is as a professional friend, which is probably a little bit cringey, but it comes from my background working in care. And for someone that's on the market, as a recruiter, I really want to understand what makes them thrive at work, what motivates you, and essentially what you want to get out of your career. Not just whether or not you can do the job. That way then, it helps us kind of match you to companies that you're really going to thrive in, as well as help companies find the right culture fit.

There's definitely been a bit of a compression across the tech market where we are seeing a lot of roles push more and more sort of soft skills like mentorship, people that can lead in team meetings, kind of influence stakeholders and effectively coach up into management as well. Not just be kind of technically credible. And it's something we've actually seen through a lot of research as well.

So, there was a study done in November last year by I'm going to pronounce his name wrong by [Marvin Wyrich](#), [Lloyd Montgomery](#) that essentially looked at tech job postings and found employers are looking beyond technical skills now and focusing on interpersonal interaction, cultural alignment, career growth and individual purpose as well. And that really reflects what we're seeing on the market.

So, for people to stand out now, it's about showcasing that they've got gravitas. They can be someone that can carry themselves with confidence. They're willing to learn new things and show curiosity to help stretch what they can do.

I think another bit of research is quite important to draw on is the UK government's 2025 labour market survey, as well, reported that 30% of organizations are struggling with skills gaps on the non-technical side of things.

So, it is really important now that when I meet people, I get an idea of who they are and what skills they can bring beyond just the technical side.

So, I guess let's move on to the next question.

Student

What is the biggest mistake people make when trying to build a personal brand?

Abi

I always find this such an interesting topic to cover, because I think a lot of people unintentionally weaken their personal brand by just being too vague. A lot of people use LinkedIn and CVs, almost like a reporting document where they'll put bare bones of their career history and lose a lot of character of who they are as individuals, as well as kind of what the day to day looks like for them.

So, if you can see that sort of the design, well, the UX, UI, front end engineers wear a lot of that role is being creative. Seeing a black and white evening either just as job title company or kind of work experience, it doesn't really showcase who you are or what you can bring. So, a lot of the personal brands that stand out, are built on evidence where people can quite clearly explain a problem that they've solved, the decisions they made along the way, the impact they have rather than just listing: I did this. It's thinking about the whole story.

I think with the evolution of AI at the moment, which is a huge topic for a lot of people, it's made it even more important because it's so easy to create generic, polished content on platforms, social media, even on CVs, and kind of people's individual project management side of things.

So, the people that are standing out are the ones that can bring really specific real-life examples and in their own voice. So, they're not sitting there reading a script, just saying

what we want to hear. It's actually, here's some challenges I went through and how I addressed it and what why it was important to do that for the business.

There's been, again, quite a bit of research in this space, I feel quite passionate about, especially around sort of women in the industry. So, on the Wales side of things, with only 30% of women that work as IT specialist at the moment, so creating a personal brand where visibility matters isn't just important to you yourself and hireability, but also important help showcase to people growing up that these people exist in the market.

They might be doing weird and wonderful roles, but there are women leaders out there. There are people that have been through transition or people that identify as different genders, all those kinds of things. We need those kinds of people to give themselves a platform and personal brand to support everyone coming up the ladder. Even kind of from LinkedIn side of things, there's been a lot of research done around how if you're just using an incomplete profile of all the bare bones, you actually ruin your perception in the market. It kind of helps influence views of professionalism and kind of trustworthiness. By filling out everything appropriately and kind of building your story up.

Okay, so onto our last question.

Student

How would you make your personal brand stand out when so many people are creating similar content profiles?

So again, I think this feeds into kind of the AI narrative, where it has become so easy for people to create all of that similar content. I mean, it's so important that people don't overcomplicate it. That's the biggest part of it. In reality, it's just a way of showcasing to people what you, what you do, how you think, and the impact you've had, rather than trying to optimize your personal brand or your profile and kind of get stressed over how often you post.

Where people really differentiate themselves is by going beyond your job description. So, talk about personal projects you've done, anything in the news that you think's really exciting, any side work you're doing, career achievements, just think that

genuinely interest you and kind of get you excited about what you're doing or where the world's going to take you in that career, because it really gives a chance to showcase why you're different. Essentially why you're different, what your level of thinking is and why you're in the right career for you. It's very much, especially in the world of tech, you want people that love what they do. You don't want someone that is just, 'I'm doing this for the sake of it', because that's not how anyone's going to progress in the industry.

So, interviews, LinkedIn, or any other kind of personal branding platforms. The people that stand out are the ones that can tell a real story, that can explain their thinking and sound human, rather than providing a polished template. So, a lot of where you'll see people stand out is when everything they're stating is kind of talking around what you can bring to the table, what meaningful information you can share, rather than just creating content.

Cerys

Really interesting and great to hear that employer perspective from Abi. Our last expert is Lily, who works in the rapidly growing field of Property AI.

Lily

Hi, I'm Lily, I am Business and Operations Lead at Planna. Essentially, we are an AI prop tech company. It's probably the easiest way to describe who we are, and we essentially analyse properties and neighbourhoods within the UK. So over 27 million properties in the UK and every neighbourhood, I think it's around just over 4 billion data points that we analyse to be able to give us kind of what we have back.

So, we curate that information then into easy to read, easy to understand information about areas, properties, how to be a better homeowner. What's going on in your area, how to look after your home. And essentially, what is your property? You know, how old is it, all the information that you need to look after it or on the flip side, what an insurer or a bank might want to know.

My background is not AI at all. So, my background, originally was mortgages - that was kind of my career before I jumped into the AI side of property, I guess. When I actually started at this role, I, like I said, I had no AI experience, like maybe ChatGPT or something along the lines of that, but nothing in depth.

But when I joined the company, ideally, they wanted somebody with experience, but I kind of just said to them, I don't have the experience, but here's what I do have that I think could be kind of transferable to, to this role. And I'd be willing to I'd be willing to learn what I need to do, you know, what, how I need to use AI. What is AI? Because I think a year ago, when I joined Planna, I knew what it was, but I didn't really know how to use it. So, I think being able to have my kind of relevant experience from the different job roles that I had, and kind of pass it along to this new job role, I think that really helped. But it was definitely kind of a fresh start for me.

Okay, so let's hear the first question.

Student

What skills and experience best represent a personal brand?

Lily

I think for me, I touched on it a little bit earlier on, was I think that your personal brand, whether you are self-employed, whether you are, you know, employed for a large company, employed for a small company, I think you still need to build your own kind of personal brand.

So, for me, I think that my personal brand has been built on my experiences. So, for example, I worked on a lemon farm, for a couple of months and hated it, but it taught me, I took skills from that. You know, I was a very small fish in this huge, not pond, field at that point of what it was.

And but, you know, taken the experience from that more of like, resilient side of things. When I was a mortgage advisor, it was very much my whole kind of brand for that was built on trust, you know, making sure that those customers or my clients, they trusted me to help them with huge, maybe the biggest purchase of their life.

I was self-employed for a little while. And I guess from that, you kind of learn that you have to do everything that is your brand. You are everybody within that team because -it was only me. So, I think for me, my personal brand has kind of built from those experiences. And, Business and Operations Lead now at Planna.

And for me, one thing that I find is that we all have our own, in Planna, we all have our own personal brands that kind of equate to the bigger brand of Planna. So, I think it's really important that, even if you don't think you have a personal brand, so to say, you know, maybe you don't post on LinkedIn or you don't have an Instagram or you don't feel like you get out there enough.

In my experience, is that, all those things that I learned from different job roles have equated to my own personal brand. So, you know, when you when you meet people now and I can tell people whether it's at networking events or whether it's, you know, coffee mornings or whatever, it is, my personal brand for me is my experiences and how I can kind of speak about them and how I can make connections through them, rather than having an Instagram, you know, brand or a LinkedIn brand as to say.

Okay, so I think it's question two.

Student

What is one thing you've learned about building your personal brand that you wish you'd known when you first started?

Lily

Okay, I think this one, it's quite an easy one for me to answer. And I wish that somebody had just told me that it's not just about your online presence. I think for me, I thought that almost to be successful or to be known, I had to be, you know, constantly posting on Instagram or constantly posting on LinkedIn or wherever it was. I thought that a personal brand was an online presence.

I think I've learned now that it's how people experience you, how people have conversations with you, how you, you know, are you approachable? You know, you may be putting out great things online and people may know your online version of you, but if they saw you at a networking event or if they, you know, wanted to approach you and ask you, you know what, what are Planna doing? And you know, what do you do with your company? Who are you working with? What do you think about AI whatever the question is, I wish somebody had told me that that is personal brand. Can they approach you? You know, can they come and speak to you? Can they ask you for a

coffee? I think that personal brand is who you are and who you are as a as a person, essentially.

And it's great to have, again, an online presence. I'm a huge you know, I think it's really important, especially when you're building a brand, a company for people to recognise you or recognise your logo. But I think more importantly is could they sit down and have a coffee with you? You know, could you ask them to go for a coffee and for some advice? That, for me, is really important. I think that if you ask anybody, I've probably been in everybody's DMs on LinkedIn. Hey, do fancy your coffee? Hey, I saw your post on this. Would be great to chat over a coffee or, a lunch or whatever is because I think it's really important. You know, you can over a message, I think, you can still have a great conversation over a Team's call, a Zoom, whatever it may be. But I think when you sat in front of somebody, and you know, you've got your favourite drink, I drink an oat milk latte. So, I know that if I got an oat milk latte in my hand, I'm instantly more chilled.

You know, you can have genuine conversations. It's not. So, it's then not just a sales pitch or a sales meeting, or, it's you as a person and them as a person. And you know what? What can you two do for each other? Is there is there synergy there? That then kind of escalates your personal brand, you know, they may go back to the office and say, 'I had a great coffee with so-and-so today', you know, 'oh, what do they do?'

And that's, to me, the best way to build your personal brand is get out in front of people, go to networking events, don't stand in the corner. Even though it's horrible going to networking events and not knowing anybody. Just go and have a coffee and just ask a question. And that's how you build, I think.

So, let's move on to the last question.

Student

How would you decide what parts of your life to share and what to keep private?

Lily

Okay. So, I think there's kind of two sides to this, I guess. I think this for me, there's a lot of kind of my personal life, whether that's family or relationships or anything like that, I do tend to keep kind of to myself. My brother graduated from his masters in July. And I, you know, I shared about that because I was super proud of him.

He's doing amazing. So, for me, that was something worth kind of sharing. And, you know, I put it out to my network and I spoke to people about it, and that's the type of thing that I am happy to share. You know, if, for example, if I'm going on holiday, then again, I'll make sure I tell everybody I speak to, I'm going on holiday, I've been on holiday. So those types of things, yes, I will, I will chat away. And I think it's really important to have you have to be yourself whether again, whether you're employed, whether you're self-employed, whatever it is, I think it's important to build that trust with everybody that you work with, whether that's within your company or outside of your company.

So, telling them those pockets of information is really important. They get to know you. You know, I mentioned earlier I drink the milk latte. Everybody at Planna knows that I drink an oat milk latte or an oat milk flat white. That is, that is it. So, it's those types of things, you know, if, one of my colleagues will go and grab me a coffee, they then don't have to ask me. So, those types of information, I think they help build those relationships.

There's another side of it, which is, you know, private business information, let's say. So, whether Planna are currently working with different businesses that I know I can't speak about, then that you have to keep private. You know, if the company is working on something and you don't want to be going running around telling everybody, we're doing this, we're doing this, we're doing this, because I think sometimes not everybody is there to support you as such.

And so, I think it's really important that we understand what to share and what not to share. I think on the flip side to it, in regards to, let's say, something maybe was going wrong in my personal life or, you know, I was having a bit of a tough time, wasn't quite feeling myself. Then, again, I think there's a little bit of a 50/50 split because half of me says it's really important to share that with your team, whether that's you, maybe your manager or somebody close that you work with just so they understand, you know, what is going on.

On the flip side, it's not something that I would want to share with everybody. You know, I'm not I'm not one to shout and scream about what's going wrong. I'll tell you what's going right, but I'll keep the rest of it, kind of to myself or who needs to know. But yeah, I think with kind of deciding what to share and what to keep private, I think it is based on

who you're speaking to, what's their relationship to you, and what will that information do?

If I tell my boss I'm having a rough time, that information is going to help me. If I tell a potential client that I'm having a rough time, probably not going to help me. So, I think it's kind of just understanding who to share information with. But I think it also comes back down to be yourself as well, and making sure that you're comfortable with everything you're saying, your authentic to yourself. And, if you're telling somebody something, then it's got to feel right.

Cerys

So, that's your introduction to personal branding. We hope you found it useful. I know I did, and I hope it's a good starting point for you to build your brand.

A huge thank you to all of our experts, Rhys, Luke, Abi and Lily, who have contributed to these two episodes. We hope it was a good starting point for you in building your own personal brand. But that's it from us today - good luck.

References

- [\[2511.13656\] What's in a Software Engineering Job Posting?](#)
 - A study of technical job adverts found that employers increasingly value culture fit, communication, personal/career growth and alignment with company purpose, not just technical skills
- [Tech Hiring Market Snapshot SW - ADLIB Recruitment](#)
 - The South West tech hiring market is increasingly prioritising AI awareness, cloud/DevOps skills and strong collaboration, while candidates are also demanding clear progression, flexibility and a healthy workplace culture.
- [AI Labour Market Survey 2025 report: executive summary - GOV.UK](#)
 - UK gov report looking at the growing demand for AI skills, the skills gaps employers are facing, and what this means for the future workforce.
- [\[2606.21894\] Skills for the future software profession: beyond agentic AI!](#)
 - A research paper exploring which skills software engineers will need as AI coding agents become more capable, with a particular focus on human skills like verification, validation and critical judgement.

- [When Less Is Not More: Incomplete Information in LinkedIn Assessments and the Moderating Role of Applicants' Résumé | Journal of Business and Psychology | Springer Nature Link](#)
 - A study examining how incomplete LinkedIn profiles can negatively affect how recruiters perceive candidates, particularly when LinkedIn is used to assess potential hires.
- [2026: PGR female tech founders across Africa | Bristol Doctoral College | University of Bristol](#)
 - University of Bristol case study showing how research into barriers facing female tech founders in Africa has been turned into practical support, training and opportunities to help women build and grow tech businesses.
- [Nature of employment | BCS](#)
 - A BCS report showing that women remain significantly underrepresented in UK IT roles, highlighting the scale of the gender gap and how this varies across different regions.
- [Employer Skills Survey: 2024 \(Wales report\) | GOV.WALES](#)
 - Welsh gov survey exploring the skills employers are struggling to find, where skills gaps exist across the Welsh workforce, and the challenges businesses face in recruiting and developing talent.