

## How to build a personal professional brand

In academia, producing excellent research is not enough. If findings are not communicated effectively, they risk going unnoticed – both within the scientific community and beyond. Building a personal professional brand helps researchers increase their visibility, connect with new audiences, attract funding, and enhance the overall impact of their work.

It is not about self-promotion, but about making research and values comprehensible, so that achievements have greater reach and professional networks grow stronger. By choosing the right audiences, producing content consistently, using storytelling and visuals, and engaging through appropriate channels, researchers can build a credible, authentic brand. Over time that fosters trust, collaboration, and new opportunities.

In order to start building a personal professional brand, the first step is to define a clear core message or statement. What motivates your research? What makes your approach or topic unique? What kind of impact do you want to make? A well-crafted positioning – one or two sentences describing your area of expertise and goals – helps align all your future communication efforts. This clarity forms the foundation of a strong and recognisable professional presence.

An up-to-date online presence is essential. Whether on a university profile, a personal website, a social media account, or a research network like ORCID or Google Scholar, your digital profile should include your main areas of interest, a clear description of your work, and links to key outputs. A professional headshot, short bio, and consistent use of your name and keywords across platforms all improve searchability and credibility.

The next task is to identify your target audience: who are you trying to reach? Is it peers in your academic field, students, industry partners, policymakers, or the general public? Each group speaks a different language – not just in terms of jargon, but also in tone, interests, and preferred formats. The style and depth of your communication should adapt accordingly.

Once the target audience is defined, it's time to choose the right channels. Creating content regularly is one of the most effective ways to share your expertise. This can take many forms: blog posts, data visualisations, short videos, public talks, policy briefs, or even informal reflections on platforms like LinkedIn. Each channel requires a slightly different tone and rhythm, but with some experimentation, you can find the mix that best suits your style and goals.

As science communicator Julius Wesche points out in his [article](#), “A short explainer video on how a vaccine works may not reach millions, but if it helps a schoolteacher, a city council member, and a journalist explain it further, that is signal spreading where it matters.” The goal is not mass reach, but meaningful connection.

Just as in communication in general, storytelling and visual tools help bring research to life. Telling the story behind a discovery – why it matters, how it was made, who it affects – often resonates far more than technical summaries alone. As a [research](#) recently published in *Frontiers in Environmental Science* explains, “Authentic storytelling in science can build bridges between the lab and society, turning curiosity into connection.” Graphics, photos, and narratives can also help translate complex ideas. Platforms such as Canva can make it easier for researchers without a design background to create clear visuals that enhance understanding.

Beyond content creation, researchers are also encouraged to engage in professional conversations. Taking part in webinars, panel discussions, peer review, or simply commenting on others’ work help build connections and demonstrates active involvement in the wider scientific community. As with science communication in general, dialogue is key to building trust.

Building a personal brand takes time – just like research itself – but the results are tangible. According to [Wesche](#), there is a simple progression: “First, people notice you – a post in their feed, your name in an article, a slide shared from your talk. Then they engage – a like, a comment, a click to read more. If you keep showing up with clarity and consistency, some of those people begin to trust you. Eventually, a small portion will act: inviting you to a panel, citing your work, applying to your lab, or collaborating on a project.”

In short, a personal professional brand is not a marketing trick but a practical way to make your research matter more. Through careful planning, audience awareness, visual storytelling, and strategic use of digital tools, researchers can turn their expertise into lasting influence – both inside and outside academia.