

Leadership That Gets Noticed

The Mercer-MacKay Guide to personal branding

Become a champion of trust, expertise and authority for your organization in a world full of distractions and competing messages.

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Welcome – it's time to get noticed

In today's business world, the way leaders interact with their audience has completely shifted. In the past, we would meet someone and then research them online.

Not anymore. Today, the first place you meet someone is when they look at your LinkedIn profile and begin forming ideas and opinions about your leadership qualities long before they ever meet you in person.

If a leader fails to demonstrate their ability to master 21st-century communication tools such as Social media, then it calls into question their ability to lead a 21st-century organization.

I call this digital-first leadership, and it requires leaders to rethink and reprioritize their efforts towards building a personal brand and influencing their customers, partners and employees.

Gail and the Mercer-MacKay team that she leads are some of the best in the industry at helping today's leaders find their voice and extend their influence and brand online into the digital world.

I've known Gail for more than a decade, and she continues to inspire me to always be growing. This guidebook will help you prepare to be a digital-first leader.

Richard Bliss

President, BlissPoint

PS - You can follow my content on LinkedIn by subscribing to the [Digital-First Leadership Newsletter](#). While it might be unusual to self-promote in a forward, Gail encouraged me to add this link as she is a big believer in the new information I provide in my newsletter. Both Gail and I are big proponents of sharing knowledge freely so that we can all get succeed. Enjoy!

Why executives need a strong personal brand on social media

Character counts – now, more than ever.

The world is changing rapidly. Organizations need to adapt to the new digital landscape that we are all operating in for the foreseeable future. With so much change and transformation happening, customers need to trust the brands they engage with.

People buy from people, so executives have become one of the best assets for a company to elevate its overall brand. Social media provides an opportunity for executives to build relationships, engage in conversations and market in real time.

A recent study by Influential Executive noted that leadership profiles have triple the engagement rate of corporate profiles, driving the trend of developing social presence for leadership teams.¹

Social media is at the forefront of personal brand development. Being proactive on social media helps you establish and develop your brand rather than allowing others to decide who you are and what you are about.



“
If you don't turn your life into a story, you just become a part of someone else's story.”

Terry Pratchett

Introduction

The Mercer-MacKay blueprint for personal branding

In 2007, Gail Mercer-MacKay googled herself and was shocked by what she found. She expected the search results would return her company website and her LinkedIn profile, but she showed up in other places she never imagined.

She was talked about in content written by other people, she was quoted in articles she was never interviewed for, and her advice was being

repackaged and repurposed in ways she never intended. The “Gail” she found on Google didn’t match the way she wanted to be recognized.

As a storyteller and an entrepreneur, Gail realized she needed to take control of the narrative for herself and her company. Very quickly, Gail learned a few valuable lessons about building her personal brand, which turned into her blueprint to help others get there too.

Get noticed, without the noise.

Building a personal brand is not about becoming “internet famous” or gaining a ton of social media followers or adding more noise to an already busy platform.

It is about establishing yourself as a leader and an expert in your industry. It is about building trust in order to connect authentically with employees, customers, partners and industry people. And it is about letting your network know that you are a valuable resource for information related to business, leadership and the challenges they are facing.

Executive leaders who come out from behind the desk and podium and communicate more publicly than town halls and internal emails can have a significant impact on strengthening business relationships. An executive's personal brand can have a direct impact on the overall financial health of a business, along with recruitment, corporate reputation and stakeholder confidence.



65% of US employees say it's important for CEOs to actively communicate about their companies online, particularly during times of crisis



60% of employees say they would check an executive's social media before joining a company



One report says that a CEO's reputation is directly responsible for 44% of a company's market value²

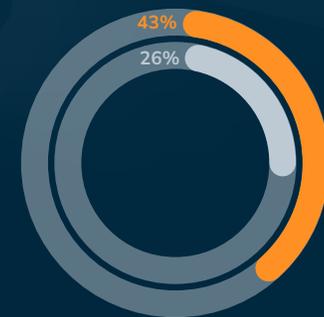
Consumers are more likely to trust a company whose leadership has an active and engaging social media presence.



93% of consumers believe that CEO engagement on social media helps communicate company values, shape a company's reputation and grow and evolve corporate leadership in times of crisis.



Half of consumers believe that CEOs who don't use social media will get out of touch with customers.



43% of executives with socially active CEOs labeled their company's leader as inspiring compared to only 26 percent of the executives with CEOs not using social media.³

Lesson 1

Own your personal brand

The foundation of a great personal brand starts with identifying who you are and what you stand for. To help identify that, you need to ditch the imposter syndrome (most of us suffer from it) and confidently build a personal brand that allows you to control your story. When Gail took control of her own narrative, she consciously decided to ignore what was out there and move forward with a personal brand of her own design, one that matched her personal values and ethics but was also aligned to her career goals.

How to define leadership with your personal brand statement

Your personal brand statement is for you and only you. It's a succinct description you can return to, time and again, to help you re-focus your activities.

Here's how to build one.

Without overthinking it, choose five words from the list. These words are meant to represent the way you want your community to see you. If there is a word you want to be known for that is not on the list, go ahead and use it.



Use the 5 words you chose to craft your statement

Example

As a leader, I want to be known as an appreciative and confident professional in the world of digital marketing who motivates, and collaborates with others to help them achieve more. When others work with me they can expect an enthusiastic interaction from someone who cares about their success.

Build your personal brand statement

Use this framework to fill in the blanks and build your personal brand statement.

As a leader, I want to be known as a _____ in the world

of _____ who _____ others to

become/achieve _____ through _____.

When others work with me, they can expect _____.

Adventurer

Ambitious

Appreciative

Authentic

Brave

Career-focused

Caring

Competent

Confident

Collaborative

Contributor

Courageous

Dependable

Determined

Effective

Energetic

Futurist

Honest

Integrity

Knowledgeable

Leader

Loyal

Motivating

Organized

Positive

Purposeful

Quality-driven

Respectful

Successful

Supporter

Teacher/Educator

Team Player

Tolerant

Trusted

Unique

Versatile

Lesson 2

Define what you stand for

What traits do you want as the foundation of your personal brand? How do you want people to see you? These traits should speak to who you are as a person and how you show up in your professional network. Are you creative? Innovative? Collaborative? Focus on traits that connect or overlap with the interests of people you want to connect with on LinkedIn, but make sure they resonate with you first and foremost. For Gail, these were creativity, community and collaboration.

How to action your personal brand on LinkedIn

Here are four opportunities to use your personal brand statement to personalize your professional brand on LinkedIn.

Profile background/banner image

The images on your profile are what visitors see first, creating that important initial impression of your reputation and personal brand. The background banner image in particular is not something many even consider adjusting. Some users simply use the default image of the blue gradient with dots and lines, perhaps because they don't realize a custom image can be uploaded, don't get around to it or just don't know what image would be good to use.

Your LinkedIn background banner photo should reinforce who you are and visually support the written portions of your profile. This image should communicate your value, skills and professional identity. A picture really is worth a thousand words!

Your background image is a perfect place to highlight social proof or achievements. LinkedIn is all about branding. With the right messaging, both visual and text, you can create a better impression.



Your personal brand is an extension of yourself. With your banner image and profile picture, you have an opportunity to represent yourself authentically – to really show up as the best version of you!”

Sarah Stoyanovich

Art Director, Mercer-MacKay

TIP

People stand out by contributing to their network in a meaningful way. It's about being relevant and authentic, so that people can learn who you are as a human being and recognize you as someone they want to work with.

Here are some considerations to inspire the types of imagery you want to share:



1 Your personality and leadership style

Use your personality and leadership style to come up with a list of images or a style of art that reflects your desired aesthetic/persona.

Example #1: you're a thought-leader, so include an image of you presenting

Example #2: you're collaborative, so include an image of you working with a colleague

2 Your environment

Your environment can say a lot about you.

Example #1: an image of your ideal workspace

- a flat lay of items that would be found on your desk (we can help!)
- an image of an office space you are proud of (we can tweak it just right!)

Example #2: the city you operate out of

3 Your interests and hobbies

You are more than just what you do for a living. Do you have interests or hobbies that you would like people to know about? Include images of items or places that reflect your interests.

Example #1: you enjoy outdoor activities, so use a photo of the environment you love most

Example #2: you're a collector, so reflect that interest with a flat lay of your collectables

Example #3: you are philanthropic, so include an image from a project you took part in

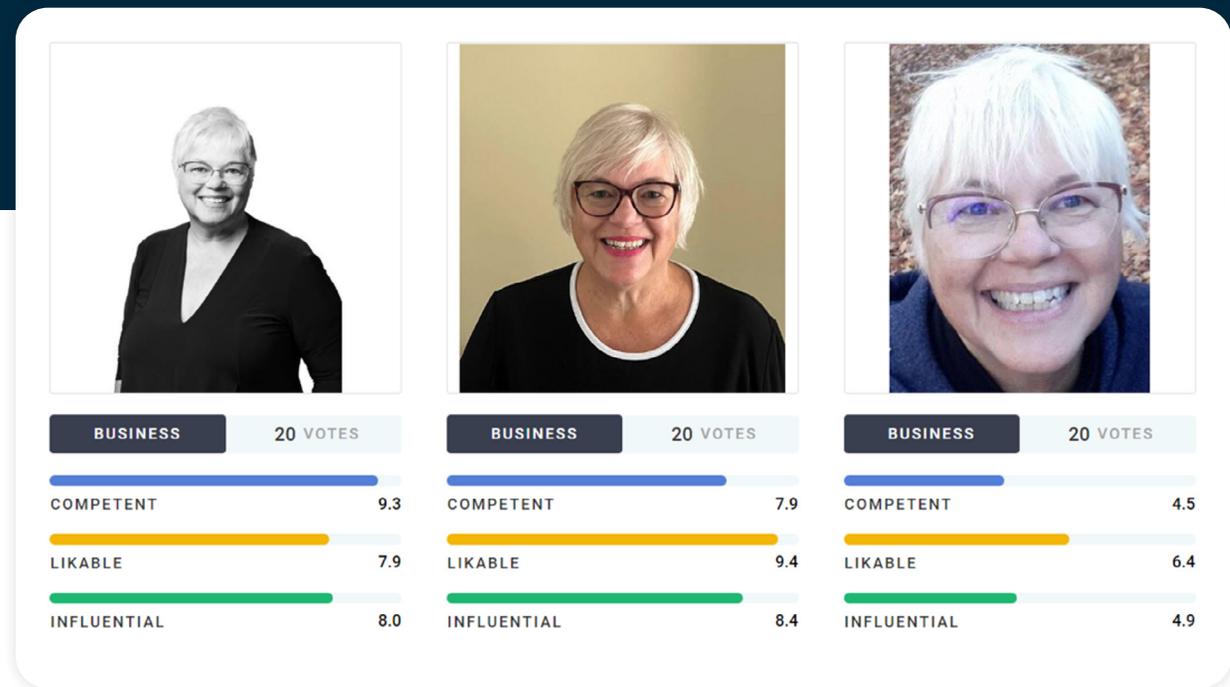
Profile photo

Research shows that just having a profile picture makes your profile 14 times more likely to be viewed by others!

You've probably met someone whose social profile photo looks nothing like how they look now — maybe it's a photo that was taken 10 years ago, before they started wearing glasses, or before they dyed their hair. It can be startling to meet them in person if you've only got that picture to go by, and it might even make you question their credibility.

It may sound obvious, but your photo should give visitors a clear idea of what you'd look like if they met you personally or on a conference call tomorrow.

Make sure the photo you select is professional, eye-catching and consistent with the image and branding that you are trying to create.



One study of 800 profile pictures found that people view you as more likable, competent and influential if you smile in your pic. And smiles that show teeth were rated twice as likable as closed-mouth smiles.

Invest in your profile picture – and this doesn't just mean monetarily. Take the time necessary to think about what you're trying to project to your network and ensure that your picture really is worth a thousand words!

TIP

Use a professional to take your LinkedIn picture but if you want even more data to validate your choice, consider uploading three or four sample pictures to photofeeler.com where your business profile can test your photos in a respectful, moderated environment.

Profile headline

Most people just use their current job title and company in their headline – but YOU are not most people. With 120 characters, you have the opportunity to tell the world, not only what you do, but how you do it.

For example, are you a Vice-President of Global Sales at ABC Company? But what if you were also Digital Transformation Champion | Diversity and Inclusion Leader | VP Global Sales?

Which one of these people would you be most likely to connect with?

TIP

When someone clicks on your name, they should immediately see how you're relevant to their business. If you don't make it easy, they'll just move on.





Profile “About” section

Here’s a secret for your About section on LinkedIn – it’s not really about you. This section is your biggest 2000-character opportunity to share your relevancy to your network.

Write in the first person and go beyond the facts to share who you are, what you do and who you do it all for.

Use this space to share what you’re passionate about, what fuels you and what your life experiences have been.

But put them into the perspective of how it will help your reader (a.k.a. your customer).

- Are you an avid cyclist who can talk about how the grit and determination of those long bike rides give you the endurance, the discipline and the perseverance to make it towards an end goal?
- Did you play college sports and have a story to share about the importance of teamwork when it came to winning that championship in the dying seconds of the clock?
- Do you love science fiction books or movies, and this has always given you an appreciation for the art of the possible – the what-ifs and the if-onlys?

In just a few sentences, your About section should give a clear idea of who you are, what sets you apart and what you’re looking for from the reader.

TIP

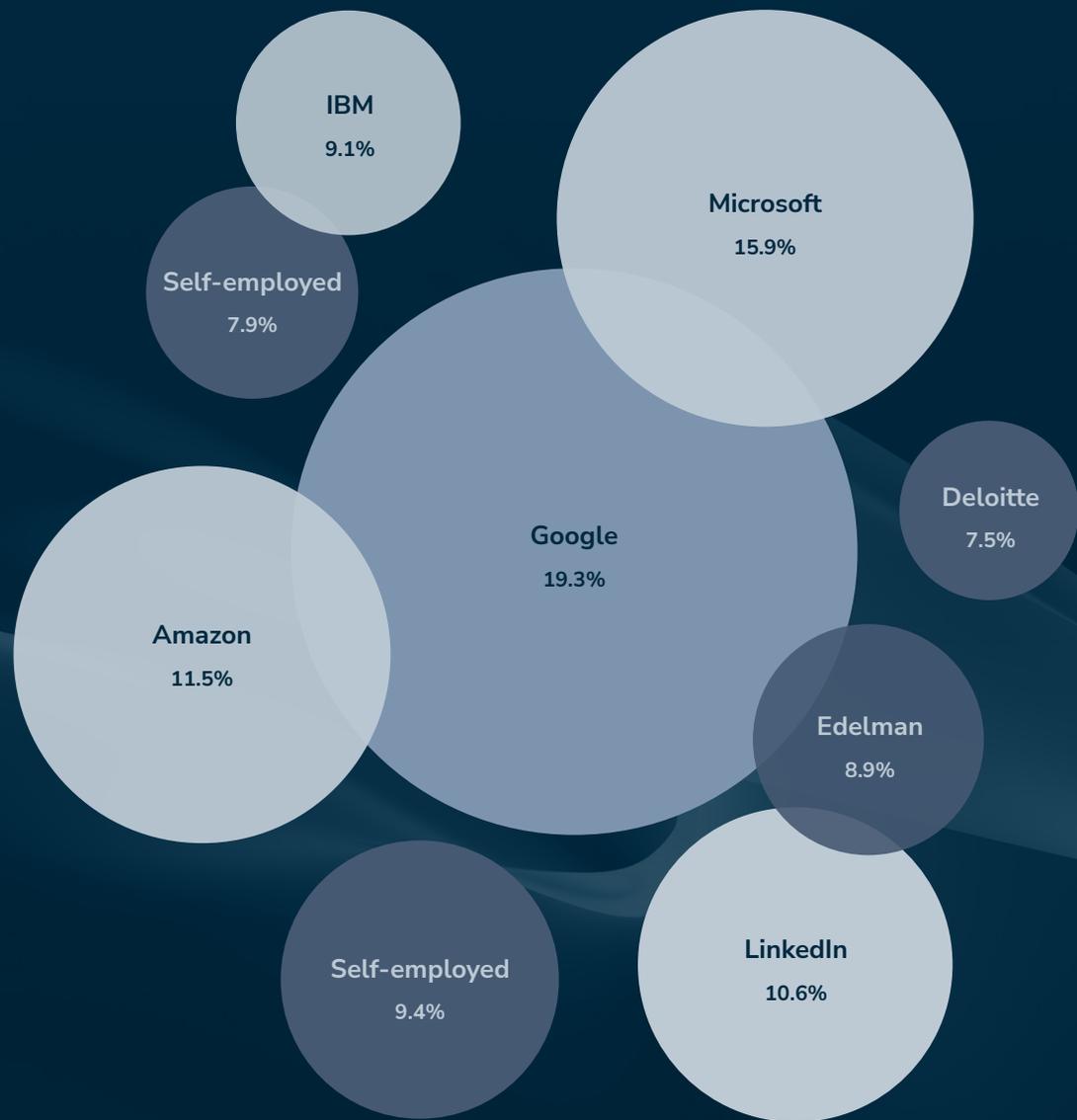
Don’t just tell people what you do, show them what makes you excel at it. What expertise and experience do you bring to the table, and how have you applied that to help other people?

Lesson 3

Identify your goals

What themes or pillars will define your brand? What topics and subject areas do you want to be known for? How do you want to show up as an expert or a leader? Choosing core pillars will help you shape the content you will share via posts and articles, as well as the commentary you add on social media. These themes should be deep and narrow, not broad and wide. We recommend choosing four themes: three with a business focus and one personal. For Gail, these pillars included digital marketing, entrepreneurship, mentoring and diversity.

Measure the things that matter to you. Connect with the right audience. Understand who is consuming your content and discover more about their demographics. Target individual companies and people whom you want to meet and build connections with. Always make it about them. Comment on their posts and share their posts. Build authentic conversations for at least three months before you reach out to try an in-person dialogue.



Conclusion – lead with our Digital Executive program

Leadership that gets noticed. Rise above the social media noise with the Digital Executive program

In a world full of distractions and competing messages, who is championing trust, expertise and authority in your organization?

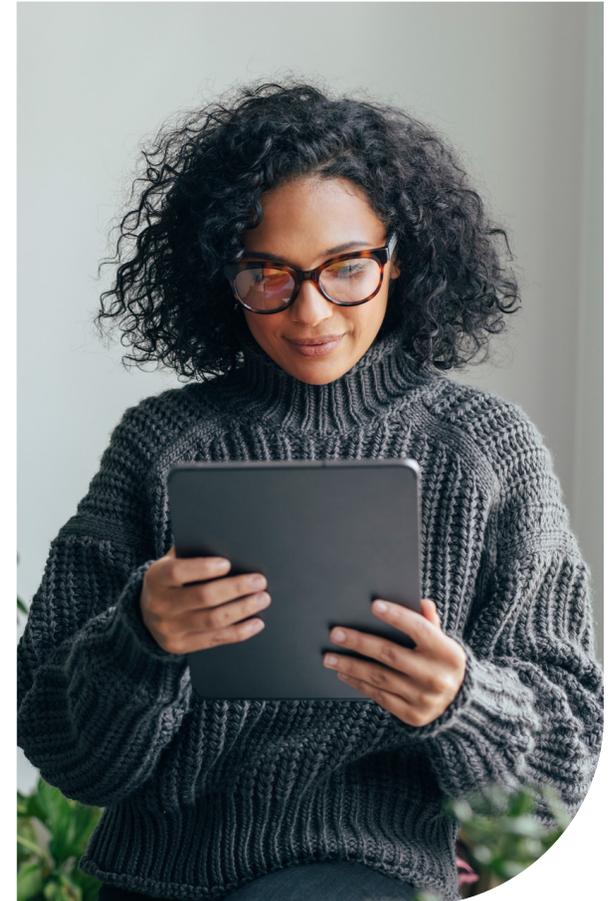
The Digital Executive program is built on the maxim that people buy from people. Amplify the personal brand of your executive leaders to develop, accelerate and strengthen the thought leadership of your business using social media.

Problem

Traditional in-person approaches to building trust aren't enough in today's fast-paced digital marketplace. Making connections now happens as much online as anywhere else, which makes social media an essential tool for leaders to express their authentic personal brand and establish credibility. However, being present isn't enough. Leaders need to stand out in a noisy and competitive environment.

Solution

Mercer-MacKay helps executives build a meaningful social media presence that reflects their professional expertise and personality. Starting with a personal brand built on values and themes that are tailored to each leader, we create a unique digital footprint with thoughtfully curated content, including a rich social media profile, a consistent cadence of social posts and a deeper dive into relevant topics with executive-authored articles.

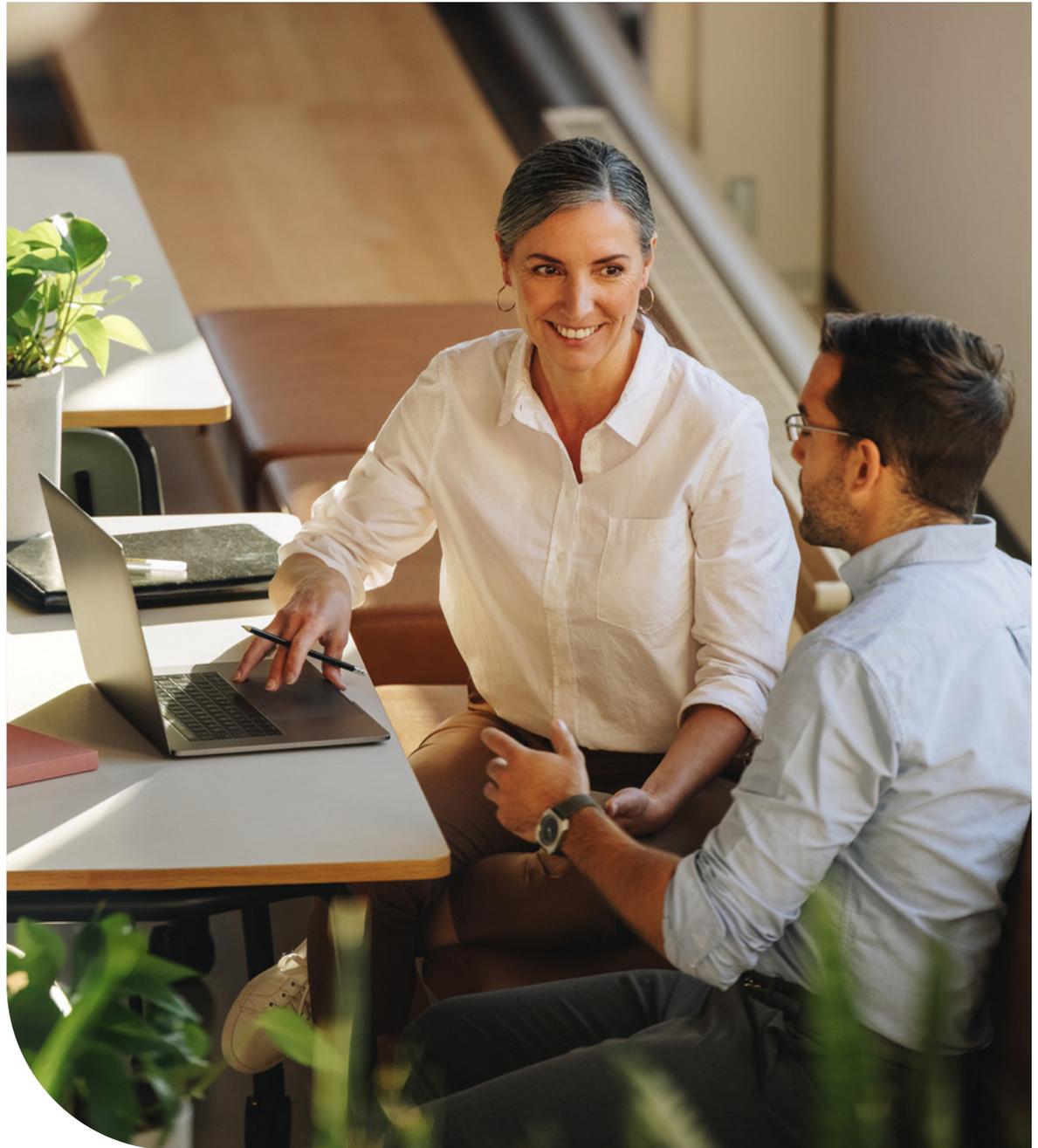


Building a strong social media brand might sound like a lot of work, but you don't need to do it alone. Through our Digital Executive program, we create and cultivate an authentic and consistent social media presence for busy executives who have a lot to offer and no time to do it. Starting with the fundamentals described in this guidebook, we develop and strengthen your thought leadership platform and help you achieve your professional goals.

TIP

We would love to be your social media and thought leadership partner. You can reach out to our team for a conversation by emailing sales@mercermackay.com

And of course, you can find us on social media.



References

¹ <https://everyonesocial.com/blog/executives-on-social-media>

² <https://onlinemba.wsu.edu/blog/the-importance-of-a-business-executives-reputation/#:~:text=Global%20executives%20who%20participated%20in,the%20CEO's%20reputation%20as%20well>

³ <https://everyonesocial.com/blog/executives-on-social-media/#:~:text=93%25%20of%20consumers%20believe%20that,leadership%20in%20times%20of%20crisis>