



## **Personal Branding: Do My Thoughts Really Matter?**

### **Skills and Professional Development**



As for many, last year was a rollercoaster of emotions for me. I returned to work after maternity leave in March, just as COVID lockdowns were beginning. Coping with a seven-month-old baby and six-year-old remote learning at home, while trying to settle back into work in a strange virtual environment, was extremely challenging. I found myself struggling to cope with the degree of multi-tasking required and the anxiety, loneliness, and despair caused by the uncertainty of the circumstances in which we found ourselves. As these emotions threatened to overwhelm me, I found myself turning to a very public form of journaling — writing on LinkedIn.

## The beginning

When I first started writing, the only purpose was to release my thoughts and feelings from within me by putting pen to paper, or in this case, finger to keyboard. I assumed that the people reading my posts would be those that I was already connected to — friends, family, and colleagues.

However, one day someone reached out to me and told me that my post had really helped them — that it had echoed their own experience and made them feel less alone. That was the moment I realized I could also be the voice of others. By writing what I was feeling or thinking, positive, negative, or neutral, I could potentially help someone else be heard and seen. That, in turn, could lead to a lightbulb moment for someone else and lead *them* to act and think differently, to be more empathetic and aware.

## A pivotal moment

The realization that I could help others led me to write an article that had been stuck in my head for two years, a deeply vulnerable article about my pregnancy losses, the impact they had on my mental

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health, and how I presented at work. I knew it was a topic that needed more airtime, more awareness, and more dialogue, but I hadn't been able to build up the courage to share it publicly.

I fretted about pressing that “post” button, about sharing something so deeply personal.

What would people think? Would they think I had shared too much or overstepped? I finally worked up the courage to publish, and for that first half hour, I questioned having ever written the article in the first place. But then, something incredible happened. People started to share their own personal stories with me. Some shared publicly, others through private messages, but they all moved me so deeply. Many of them made me cry.

That was a pivotal moment for me. The experience awakened a deeper, more visceral reason for writing: a desire to help others and to give back, to lead conversation, drive change, and explore a side of me that I had kept private over the years.

## **Would people read my writing?**

But even as I started writing more regularly and making connections, I found myself questioning whether my stories would be interesting to anyone else or if they really mattered.

For those first few months, I would pour over my content for hours. I would look for the perfect hook and often find myself unsatisfied. I would struggle when a post barely elicited any reaction and even deleted a few, fearful of attracting pity-likes.

But over time, I understood that I was overthinking it, and that my content could, and should, be raw, real, and authentic — a true reflection of myself. I understood then that I didn't need to be profound or share stories of personal adversity every day and that, in essence, every day that we live is a beautiful compilation of stories that others can relate to like:

- The feeling you have as you walk down the street and feel the breeze gently caressing you.
- That moment where you put down your phone and laugh with your family, fully present.
- The conversation with a colleague that triggers an emotion within you.
- The memory of a childhood experience or holiday.
- The lightbulb that went off in your head as you listened to a podcast.

## **But why does this matter to in-house lawyers?**

People *connect* with people. People want to *do business* with people. And very importantly, people want to *work* with people.

As lawyers, we are no different. Our colleagues want to know who we are behind the title. They want to understand what drives us, what motivates us, what we love doing on the weekend, and who we go home to.

To an extent, the last year of virtual working and the window it provided into our personal lives has enabled us to connect with our colleagues on a far deeper level. As businesses move to hybrid models of working, it will be even more critical that we continue to find ways to build these connections with our business colleagues, both near and far.

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This is where social media can help. It is increasingly being used by lawyers, including those who work in-house, to quickly and effectively build their personal brand and network, whether through LinkedIn, Clubhouse, TikTok, Instagram, and more.

Networking has also changed. Gone are the days when networking only took place through physical conferences or law firm events. Over the past many months, I have made online connections that have led me to participate in social justice initiatives, legal webinars, panel discussions, video interviews, and podcasts. I have been able to start a club called “More Than A Lawyer” on Clubhouse, a new audio-only social media application, and even write this article.

## **Are you ready get started?**

If someone had told me five years ago that I would be a regular social media content contributor, I would have laughed.

Now, I wonder what took me so long to step out from behind my title and into my whole, wonderful self.

[Niti Nadarajah](#)



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Coaching by Niti

After serving as the head of the legal team for Philip Morris in Australia and the Pacific Islands and member of the local management team where she advised on a variety of legal issues in a heavily regulated environment, she has transitioned to coaching and acting as a freelance GC.

She is an advocate for a range of issues at work, from mental health to flexibility, gender equity and authentic and inclusive leadership. She has also advocated for other issues such as pregnancy loss,

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DEI in all its forms, and changing the old-school culture of the legal profession on LinkedIn and Clubhouse, in the hope that her voice, and her stories, might just make a difference.