

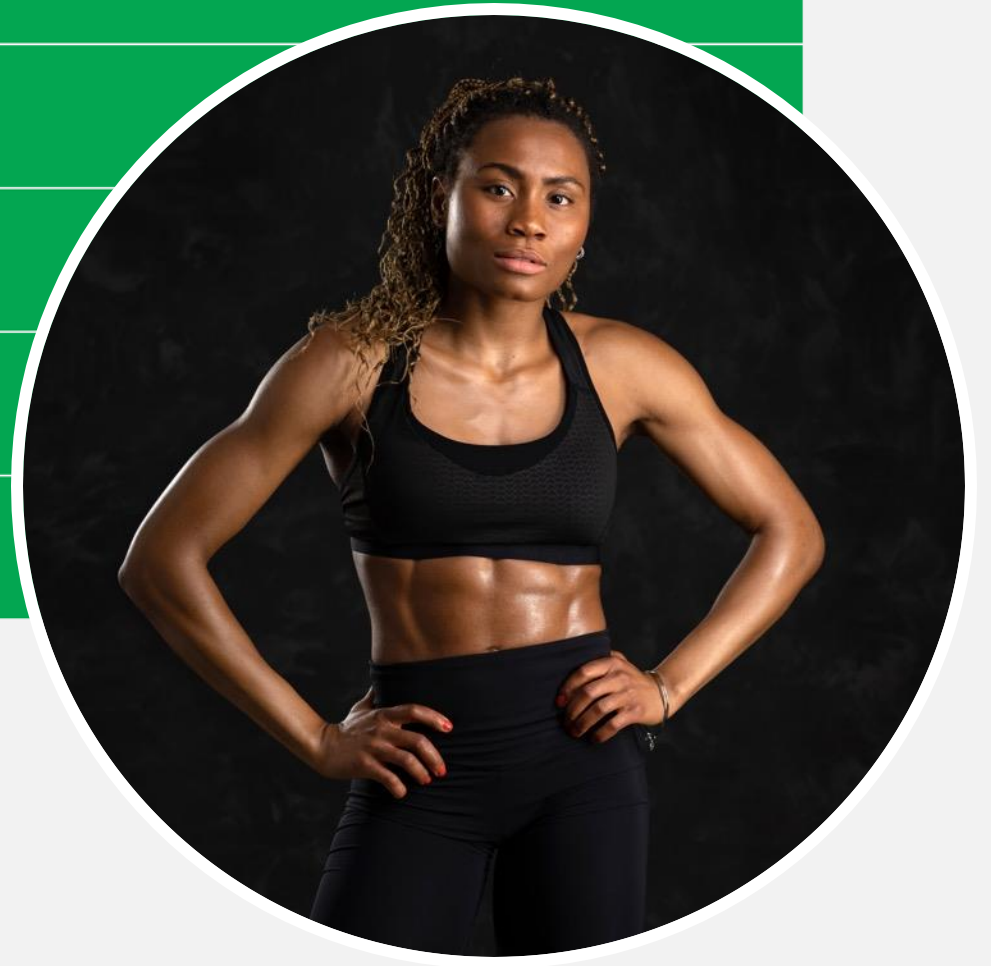


IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

EVERY ATHLETE HAS A BRAND

...but why do you need one?

- ☐ To differentiate yourself from other athletes and stand out in the industry
- ☐ To showcase your unique qualities and expertise
- ☐ To showcase your athletic achievements
- ☐ To tell your story and connect with fans
- ☐ To attract partners and sponsorship deals



HOW DO YOU BUILD YOUR BRAND?

Whatever level you compete in a sport, as an athlete, you are in a unique position. Not only do you have an interesting story to tell (both within and beyond sport), you also have a voice and platform to share it. But, how?

First, you'll need to figure out what your personal brand is. This isn't just a list of facts and achievements. It's a narrative that reveals who you are, what motivates you, what you are passionate about, and what you stand for.



What's your brand?

Together, these qualities make up your unique personal brand. So, what's yours?

Take a moment to reflect on and identify your own personality, values, strengths and passions.



MY VALUES

What do I want to be known for?



MY STRENGTHS

What do I offer that sets me apart from other athletes?



MY PERSONALITY TRAITS

Who am I?



MY PASSIONS

Why do I do what I do?

Check out examples [here](#).

BUILD A BRAND STORY

Now that you've begun to think about who you are and what you stand for, how do you explain this to everyone else in a way that is engaging and easy to understand? This is where brand storytelling comes in.

START AT THE BEGINNING

To structure your story, consider:



- what story you want to tell
- who is involved in your story
- why people should care about your story
- how you are going to tell your story.

FRAME YOUR STORY



It's all about creating a compelling narrative to capture attention and bring your story to life. To help you do this, make sure your story has:

- a well-developed and believable character
- a challenge that your character is facing and a solution for overcoming it
- an emotional or functional tool, sometimes referred to as a “treasure”, that the character can use to overcome the challenge
- clear actions that the character is taking to get to a better place.

ADD THE FINISHING TOUCHES

The details matter!

Consider things like quotes, statistics, descriptive phrases, a catchy title, images... anything to make your story more memorable.



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Everyone has an authentic story. It's time to tell yours.



ONCE UPON A TIME...

Set the scene and provide the context for your story. It could be about a specific achievement or experience, or it could be a more general story about your hobbies and interests.

For example: "When I was growing up, it was so expensive to participate in athletics at a high level."



I am...

It may seem obvious, but don't forget to introduce yourself and explain what you do. Keep it simple— you want to showcase, in a few words, why you are worth paying attention to. Think back to the personality traits that you identified earlier, which could help you here!

For example: "I am a three-time Olympian, and British and European record-holder. I've had to work hard for these achievements, so I know what it takes to be successful at this level."



Now...

Briefly outline what is currently available to overcome this challenge and why it's not working.

For example: "While there are programs to engage children in organized sports activities, many don't take into account the additional barriers experienced by children in deprived areas."

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Everyone has an authentic story. It's time to tell yours.



Why not download and save this [storytelling template](#) and start writing your own today!



Then...

So, what can you do? It's important to highlight your strengths and how these can help overcome the challenge.

For example: "With my expertise and networks, I will provide free after-school sport clubs for children in deprived areas and give out scholarships to allow some of these children to participate in sport at a high level."



BECAUSE...

Focus on why your solution to the challenge is different and better than everything else out there. You have an opportunity here to incorporate your personal values and how they are guiding your actions.

For example: "As someone who believes in giving every child a chance to participate in sport, regardless of their background, and as someone who has benefited from having the right support available to have a successful career in sport, I know I can make a difference."



WHAT I LEARNED IS...

This is how your story ends. Make sure you highlight the action you are taking and leave a lasting impression.

For example: "I'm excited to have opened my first after-school sports club already, with children attending from all over the city to take part. And I'm not stopping there! Plans are in the works to expand this offering in three other locations soon."

FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

The best brand stories create an emotional connection between athletes and their audiences. To do this, you'll need to understand who your target audience is and what they are interested in. This could be fellow athletes, fans, partners, sponsors... even people not interested in sport.

Segmentation is a great way to help you sort these people into groups according to unique characteristics, such as demographics, geography, psychographics and behaviors.

BEHAVIOURS



This method goes a bit deeper and focuses on analysing how your target audience interacts with you.

For example, what type of content do they consume, how often, and where?

PSYCHOGRAPHICS



Put simply, this is about segmenting your target audience based on their personal attitudes, hobbies and interests.

For example, if your audience is into a particular sport or sport-specific topic, like nutrition, you can tailor your personal brand story accordingly.

GEOGRAPHY



This method divides your audience according to location. It could be where your target audience lives, such as by region, city or country.

But it could also be used to target sport-specific communities, either locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

DEMOGRAPHICS



Grouping people based on shared characteristics like age, gender, income level and job roles is the most commonly used – and the easiest way to segment an audience.

For example, if you discover that your target audience is predominantly young people, you may decide to adjust your tone of voice when telling your story and engage them on relevant social media and news media platforms.

Who's your audience?

Before we move on, let's stop and think about the information below.
Can you identify who your target audience is by answering the following questions?

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4
What is the average age range of your target audience?	At what level do you most often interact with your target audience?	What interests your target audience most?	What social media platforms do your target audience use? (Select all that apply)
<input type="radio"/> 18-29 years	<input type="radio"/> Local	<input type="radio"/> Sport-specific topics	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook
<input type="radio"/> 30-39 years	<input type="radio"/> Regional	<input type="radio"/> Sport-related topics	<input type="checkbox"/> Instagram
<input type="radio"/> 40-49 years	<input type="radio"/> National	<input type="radio"/> Non-sport related topics	<input type="checkbox"/> TikTok
<input type="radio"/> 50+ years	<input type="radio"/> International		<input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn
			<input type="checkbox"/> YouTube
			<input type="checkbox"/> X, formerly known as Twitter

Summary

For more tips on how to do this, check out the following resources:
[Athlete365's Personal Brand Toolkit](#) [LHH Quick Reference Branding Guide](#)

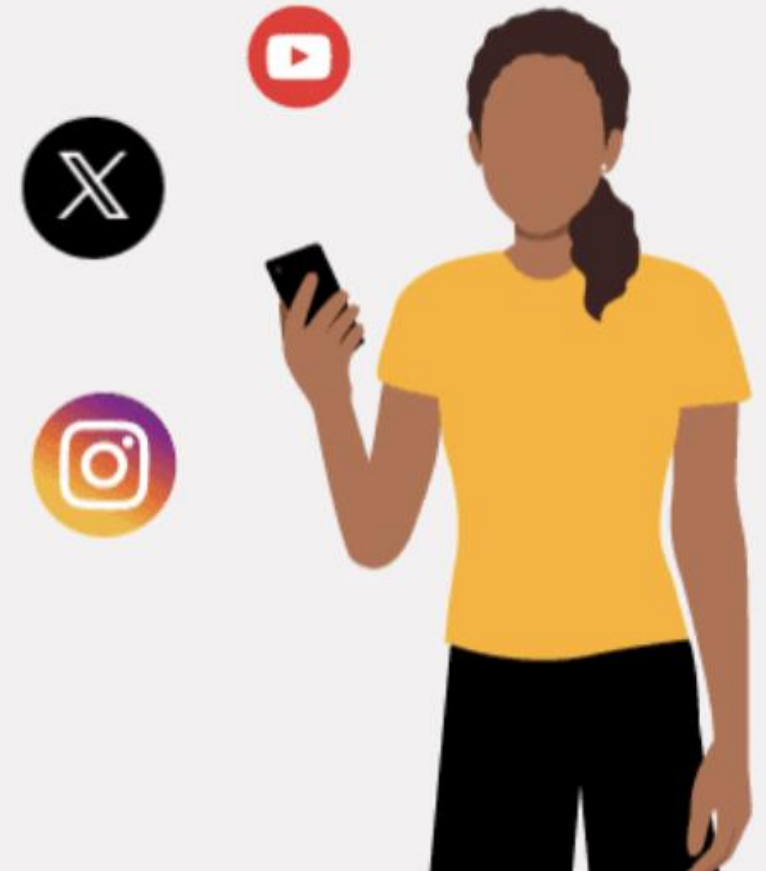
Next up, let's look at how to tell your story through social media.



BE SOCIALLY SAVVY

Tell your story

Now you have your brand story, the next step is to make sure everyone in your target audience knows about it! So, how do you get it out there and engage your audience in order to keep their attention? You can, in fact, get your story out there all by yourself through social media.



Social branding

There are lots of social media channels you can use to tell your story, and you might use more than one! Regardless of your approach, the secret to communicating your brand story effectively on social media is to keep things clear and concise, but most important, consistent.

Why do you think this is?

- ☐ It signals to your audience that you are authentic and credible
- ☐ It keeps your audience guessing
- ☐ It makes your personal brand more recognisable and memorable
- ☐ It ensures you talk about different topics on different social platforms
- ☐ It showcases a diverse range of skills



It's not just the story

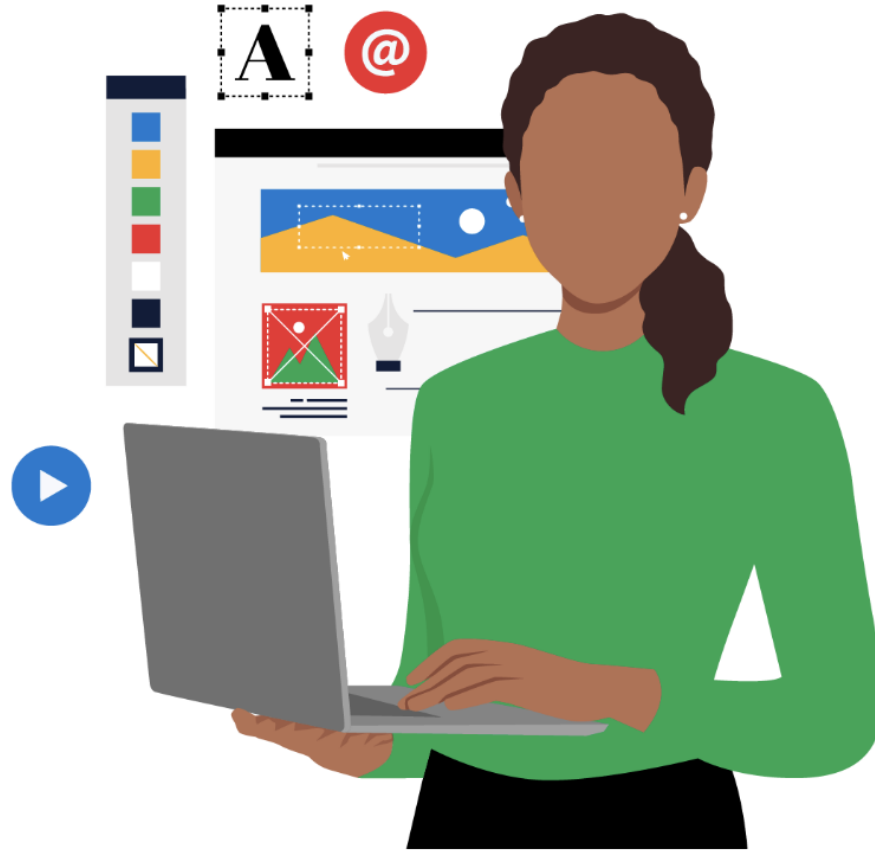
...but how you tell it! Take a look at the two example social posts below.

>>> Just finished up an awesome training session and feeling pumped! 💪 #StayPositive

>>> Training has been rigorous, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to pursue my passion and represent my country on the global stage. Thank you for being a part of this journey with me.



Stay on brand with your visuals



The attention span of social media users is notoriously short. So, to grab and hold their interest, great visual content is a must. Engaging images, consistently-used logos and colour schemes, and interesting videos and infographics are necessary to help users recognise and remember your brand across different platforms and to help you build a strong personal brand online.

Note that there are free apps available for creating simple branded templates. Or to elevate your brand and protect its integrity, you could acquire the services of a designer or agency to create a brand guidelines document containing everything from your brand mission, values, style guide and more!

A winning strategy

Social media is a powerful tool for building a personal brand and attracting new followers. But you must make sure you are engaging in the right practices to engage the audience you want to reach.



How do you know when and what to share? Take the time to consider the following questions to help you get the most from your social media channels.

- How often will you be posting?
- What language will you be posting in? *(You should consider the geography of your target audience here.)*
- Will you be sharing professional and/or personal content?
- What channel will you be posting on?
- Is the audience you want to reach active on the platform you are using? Or do you need to consider other platforms to reach them?
- What is your audience or the wider public talking about, and how can you be a part of the conversation? You might even consider reaching out to your audience directly and asking what they want to see from you so that you can tailor your content accordingly.



It's not just about what you post but when and where. Every social media platform will have its own recommended time for posting to ensure optimal engagement.

Check out the [What should I use each social media platform for?](#) resource guide on what to post on each channel and do your research to maximize your reach and ensure your content is viewed by as many people as possible.

Be you

There's no doubt – social media provides an opportunity for you to share your story again and again, in order to build and grow a strong, authentic personal brand online.



"I've always had a passion for nutrition and the impact it can have on health and well-being. So, it made sense to focus my personal brand on this area.

I have already successfully collaborated with many like-minded companies and built up engaging online channels of communication for people interested in this subject area."



"I used social media to grow my personal brand.

This eventually expanded into a sports academy for children in partnership with a national leisure management company and with the support of several sponsors."



"I focused my efforts on producing exceptional video content, and it wasn't long before I amassed hundreds of thousands of followers online.

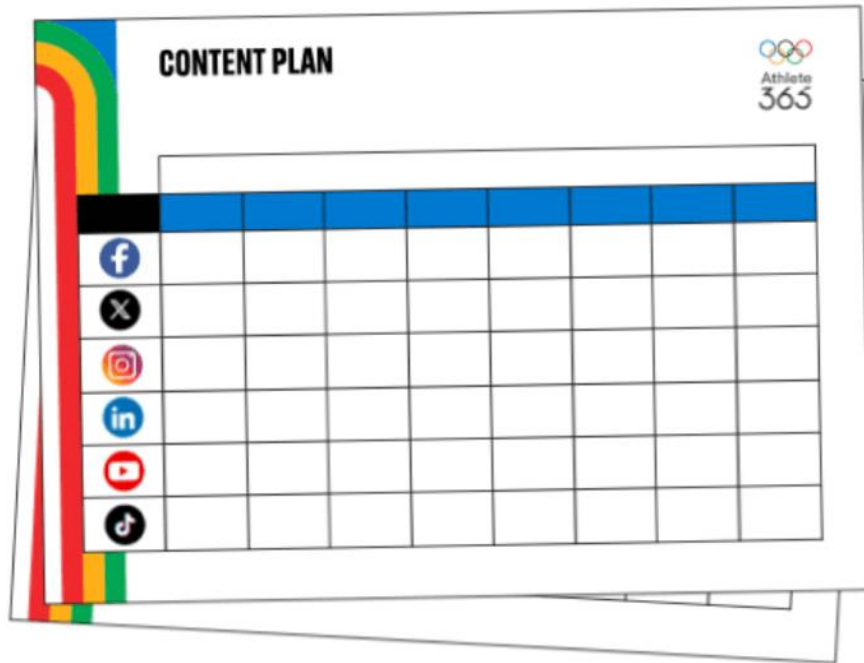
Over time, I've gained recognition and trust from people in my field, all across the world."



"I feel so privileged to use my online platform to raise awareness of eating disorders.

If my personal story can help other people facing a similar situation, then that's a great thing!"

Get noticed



As the examples showed, you are your own media first, so why not tell your own story using social media? And keep telling it consistently.

Follow the steps in our ["Developing your strategy"](#) guide to create and publish quality social content at the "right" time. And use our ["Content plan"](#) to organize and keep track of all your posts. This is a critical step towards building an impactful social media presence for your brand.

Don't forget that the Olympic and Paralympic Games offer a unique opportunity to shine a light on you and your personal brand too, so make sure you use this attention to your advantage.

Use these [Olympic](#) and [Paralympic social media guidelines](#) to help you share your sporting journey with fans and peers across your personal digital platforms.



WHY BRAND PARTNERSHIPS MATTER

BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media allows you to draw attention to your story and in doing so can create opportunities for sponsorship and build partnerships.

Partners can be:

- organizations that you can support in various ways, such as volunteering time, providing resources, raising awareness for a cause, OR
- sponsors that provide payment to you for using your name, image and likeness.

MAXIMISE YOUR VOICE



Promoting your personal brand on partner channels means that you can leverage the strengths and resources of other organisations to help you get the most out of your content.

GAIN EXPOSURE TO NEW AUDIENCES



A successful partnership can help your brand reach people who may have never encountered it otherwise, so you can extend your audience base.

GATHER MORE SUPPORT FOR YOUR CAUSES



Partners can help shine a light on causes that matter to you. More than that, they can offer support in other ways, such as helping to raise vital funds, recruiting new volunteers or providing expertise.

CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES



Successful partner collaborations can help you stand out and attract other brands and sponsors who see the potential of working with you. Remember, this is a two-way relationship that benefits both you and the partner.

Who benefits?

Which of the following statements accurately reflects the benefits of a collaboration between an athlete and a partner?

- ☐ The athlete always gains more than the partner
- ☐ The partner always gains more than the athlete
- ☐ Both the athlete and the partner can enjoy mutual benefits
- ☐ Neither the athlete nor the partner benefit



Choosing the right partner

Finding the right partner for your personal brand is like finding the right coach – they can make all the difference to your happiness and success.



WHY ME?

Participating in the Olympic or Paralympic Games makes you part of a global community that has many different views, lifestyles and values. So, how do you tell your story in a way that makes you stand out and get noticed by potential partners? This comes back to you being able to show what makes you unique and an incredibly valuable asset to the partner.



IS IT A GOOD FIT?

It's important to look for partners that align with and share the values you identified earlier. Consider other factors such as their target audience size and engagement level, their brand reputation and content quality to decide if it makes sense for you to work together.



WHAT CAN I BRING?

As an athlete, you can contribute to a brand partnership in a number of ways, such as creating content or engaging in motivational talks for employees.

For example, a sunscreen brand sponsoring an outdoor sport athlete might prefer the athlete to create content using the product and show how they integrate it into their training and competition. However, an accounting firm sponsoring the same athlete might value learning about resilience, team culture and a winning mindset through an in-person presentation.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

A brand partnership should always offer added value to all parties involved. So, when considering a potential brand partner, always evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and compare with your own. This way, you can make an informed decision on whether a partnership can deliver mutual benefits.

Approaching a partner

Once you've identified a potential partner, how do you reach out and make contact with them?

- *Determine how the partner organization is structured and find out the name and title of the appropriate contact person*
- *Make a connection via LinkedIn or an alternative communication channel, finding a common ground to connect and build rapport*
- *Schedule a face-to-face or virtual meeting, even a phone call with this person*
- *During the meeting, be clear and concise about what you have to offer, sharing your personality, values, strengths and passions, and highlighting how a partnership can be mutually beneficial*
- *Follow up after making an approach to show that you are serious about the partnership.*



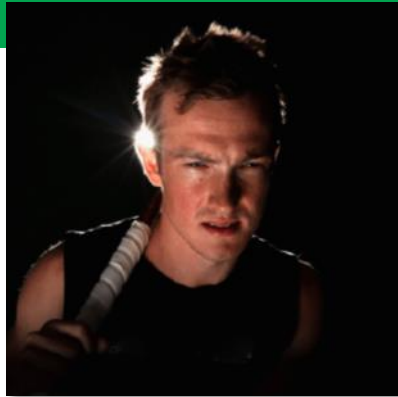
If you're looking for your first partner or sponsor, it's best to start local. Community engagement is a powerful tool and can create special links and opportunities for telling your story.

So, why not reach out to your local business community or council? Think about who you know in your local network, your friends, family, colleagues and entourage. What brands do they work for? Which of these brands do you already use authentically? Does your story align with any of these brands' products or services?

Making an impact

Working with partners can add credibility to your story, help it reach more people, and, therefore, have greater impact.

See the images below for some inspirational examples of athletes who took their brand stories to the next level by working with the right partners.



Unclean drinking water is responsible for more than 1.2 million deaths each year. To help reduce this, Hugo Inglis supports [Evidence Action](#), an organisation that provides and installs chlorine dispensers across rural areas in Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. As of 2024, more than 39,000 chlorine dispensers have been installed, providing clean water to more than 6.8 million people.



Wanting to become a sustainable athlete, Marcus Mepstead connected with [Trees for the Future](#), a leading charity in sustainable agriculture, tree planting and climate adaptation solutions for smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Marcus contributes by fundraising, creating educational content and volunteering in Ugandan regions impacted by catastrophes.



In 2013, Sloane Stephens founded the [Sloane Stephens Foundation](#) with the primary goal of enhancing life through exposure to tennis as a basis for life-long learning and healthy lifestyle choices. Since then, the Foundation has worked with a number of partners that simultaneously benefit the community and effectively activate partner brands to their supporters. It's a win-win!

Connect, inspire, thrive

Take a moment to reflect on your personal brand and think of a potential partner you would like to work with (remembering that a partner should share the same values as you).

Consider how this partner could benefit from working with you:

- ☐ Greater reach and visibility among new audiences
- ☐ Attract new social media followers
- ☐ More effective marketing campaigns
- ☐ Generate product interest
- ☐ Increased sales and brand loyalty
- ☐ Improved reputation and enhanced brand image
- ☐ Open doors to new networks, contacts and industry connections
- ☐ Greater support for the brand's charitable causes
- ☐ A route to enter new regional, national or international markets



Successful partnerships can increase your brand awareness and take your story to the next level. So, what are you waiting for? Set yourself a goal of putting a plan together, with timelines, to approach and engage a partner that can add credibility to your story.

Next up, let's take a look at how to practically engage with traditional media sources and help scale your personal brand from local to global.



MAKING NEWS MEDIA WORK FOR YOU

“friendly news media” explained

Your personal brand goes beyond social media and partnership working. You also have an opportunity to communicate it through traditional media sources – what we sometimes refer to as “friendly news media”.

LOCAL NEWS MEDIA

If you’re just getting started with the media, local news sources and community sports outlets should be your first point of call. They are always looking for stories about what matters to people in their area. You have an interesting, unique and compelling story to tell, and so it’s likely to be interesting to many others in your community.

Who do you like to read or listen to locally? Why not reach out and ask how you could work together?



“friendly news media” explained

REGIONAL NEWS MEDIA

Once you engage with local media, your story might then be picked up by regional outlets. These are likely to be looking for more targeted content based on their audiences' preferences and interests.

Consider the audience you identified earlier and see if you can engage relevant regional media sources that publish stories that align with your personal brand story.



“friendly news media” explained

NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA

Operating within the boundaries of a country, national news organisations tend to publish topical news stories that appeal to a broad audience. Getting your story out at this level can help raise awareness of and build support for your personal brand.

Try contacting your National Olympic Committee (NOC), as they are always on the lookout for strong human interest stories that help to develop, promote and protect the Olympic Movement in their respective countries.



“friendly news media” explained

INTERNATIONAL NEWS MEDIA

Getting international press coverage can help you stand out from the crowd and take your story to the next level. Although it can be quite difficult to catch the attention of international news media, it's not impossible.

For example, sponsors can pitch stories about you, associated with their brands, to help you secure international (and national) news media.

Olympic-specific media may also seek out stories from International Federations (IFs), which will often use athletes to promote sports to a wide audience. Get in touch to see if you can get involved.



The power of three

Yes! You've been in touch with the media and have an interview lined up. It's a great opportunity to tell your story to a new audience. Then, you start to get nervous. "What if I don't know how to answer one of the questions?" "What if I stumble over my words?" "What if..." These worries are completely normal.

But relax! We've got some expert advice from May at P&G to help you navigate any media interview with confidence and flair.



What's your message?

Now that you've heard from the expert, what are your three key messages?

Managing the media

No matter how well prepared you are, there's always a chance that an interviewer will ask other questions that don't relate to your key messages. If this happens, what do you do?

Read below to find out how you can turn an interview around and get back on course.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Before your interview, look at what the "hot topic" of the moment is in sport as you may get asked about this.

For example, has there been a controversy or an important announcement made? Knowing this information means that you'll be better prepared to answer or deflect questions that may arise.

And remember, it's okay to request questions or topic areas from the interviewer beforehand to allow you to prepare.

BE ALERT

Recognising that the interview has taken an unexpected turn can help you evaluate the situation and take steps to get things back on track quickly.

STAY CALM AND PROFESSIONAL

Breathe! Don't be afraid to take a pause and gather your thoughts. Remain polite and courteous, even if you're asked difficult or confrontational questions. Remember, whatever you say can be used in the wrong way and can have significant consequences.



Managing the media

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REFLECT

Recall your three key messages and remember why you're doing the interview in the first place. This can help you refocus the conversation and steer the interview in that direction.

DEFLECT

Use transition phrases to get things back on track. For example, a good response to an unexpected question might be: "I've never considered that question, so I will need to give that some thought, but what I can tell you is..."

IT'S OKAY TO SAY "NO"

If a journalist perseveres with a line of questioning that makes you feel uncomfortable, simply ask to end the interview and reconvene at another time.



What would you do?

You are attending an interview about your performance at a recent event. Unexpectedly, the interviewer asks:

“As an elite athlete, you’ve been vocal about various social and political issues in the past. Recently, there’s been a lot of discussion about the IOC’s Mental Health Action Plan, with many athletes taking different stances. Where do you stand on the issue?

How would you respond?

- ☐ I fully support the promotion of mental well-being and believe that all athletes should speak out about it, using their platforms to raise awareness about it
- ☐ I don’t have a stance on this action plan and I don’t think it’s appropriate for athletes to get involved in this matter, especially in the run up to the Games
- ☐ Athlete mental well-being is important, however my focus right now is building on my performance after last week's event and I’d prefer to keep the conversation centred on that
- ☐ Thank you for the question but I prefer not to discuss this issue publicly



It's your story to tell...

Your story matters! And no one can tell it better than you. So, what are you waiting for? Use the tools and strategies in this module to tell your story and elevate your personal brand today. We can't wait to hear what you have to say!

If you'd like to read more about this topic area, check out:

- [Maximise your Personal Brand resource page on Athlete365](#)
- [Athlete Career Portal](#)

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF PERSONAL BRANDING



Whether you've spent time intentionally building it or not, you already have a personal brand.

It's who you are, the values you embrace, the skills and experiences that set you apart from everyone else, and the purpose that drives you to do what you do. It's the telling of YOUR story.

