

# Selfies, the new way to die

 By Leigh-Anne Acquisto

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We live in an age where personal brands are as, if not more, important than where people work or what brands they surround themselves with. In fact, the role of self promotion and self branding has become a rather dangerous pastime in some countries.



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There were twelve recorded selfie deaths in 2015, and only eight recorded deaths from shark attacks. Which means we live in an age where more people die from taking selfies than from shark attacks.

In fact, in some countries, selfie-related injuries have become so prevalent that governments have released guides on selfie safety.

So what's going on? Has the world gone mad, are people completely idiotic or is there some reasonable explanation for the way people have taken so strongly to self promotion?

Self branding is not new, it's just become a lot easier to do as there are now so many channels available for people to build profiles and promote themselves. According to statistics released by Facebook in late 2014, over 1 million selfies are

uploaded on its platform daily.

Potential employers have also become more likely to do background research on candidates through social media to help them make an employment decision.

This shows that with every freedom comes some measure of responsibility, and while these offer opportunities for people to empower themselves, they can also be a tool for destruction.

So how do you balance between positively promoting yourself and not doing yourself a disservice?

## **You are a brand**

Like any brand you need to think about the reputation you are building for yourself through the use of social media. Your public persona is critical. Once you decide how you want your brand to be perceived, you can start to be much more strategic about what you post. A strong personal brand can yield significant return on investment, whether you are looking for a new career opportunity, working with an organisation, or leading one.

## **What would Mom say?**

Successful brands understand the value of storytelling as a way of connecting with people. But how you tell your story is just as important as the story itself. Gauge the appropriateness of your posts by thinking what your mom or a future boss would think if they saw it. Remember, great brand stories:

- Are rooted in truth
  - Are created with intention
  - Appeal twice as much to the heart twice as to the mind
  - Make people feel like they belong
- 
- Give people something to talk about and, more importantly, something to believe in

## **Humility and honesty**

While not every part of your story will appeal to everybody, remember that few things diminish likeability as quickly as arrogance. When it comes to your own accomplishments and failures, it's probably best to take things in your stride. Don't laud your own accomplishments too much - rather aim to make other people feel valued. You can share your lessons from success, but it's important to then also engage in conversations about failures.

## **Engage, connect and share... but stay legal**

Social media laws relating to who owns the content being shared, when and where sharing is appropriate and what limits may be imposed on sharing often raise issues relating to trademark infringement, copyright infringement, social media marketing, labour relations and more. In addition, your company will also have a policy or two in place that you need to adhere to. Claiming ignorance is no longer a good enough defense when it comes to what happens on social media.

So go out there, take advantage of this new personal branding adventure - build your brand, tell your story, but always remember once its out there, you can't take it back or do it over, so do it right the first time with finesse and style.

## **ABOUT LEIGH-ANNE ACQUISTO**

Leigh-Anne is a brand behaviour specialist who has spent the last 15 years developing brands within some of the biggest organisations across the continent. During this time she has been awarded a number of awards for communication effectiveness, most memorably for the world renowned Trillion Dollar Campaign which was accolade the most awarded campaign in the history of Cannes. She is currently the director of Liquorish Ink a strategic communications consultancy.

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