

PERFORMANCE POINT

BUILDING YOUR ATHLETE BRAND ONLINE

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Building your 'brand' as an athlete is an exercise involving a bit of soul-searching and a lot of story-telling. You have to establish what you stand for and what you represent, both within and outside of the realm of sport. Every elite high performance athlete has a unique and interesting story about their journey, their motivation and their goals. The amount of dedication, persistence and passion it takes to pursue an Olympic or Paralympic dream is immense, particularly considering the relative obscurity most Canadian athletes face in the lead-up to 'the big show'.

As evidenced in the lead up to, and throughout the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, Canadians do have an appetite for high performance sport. The media coverage is in large part responsible for this surge in interest due to their exceptional work profiling Canadian athletes; telling stories of their journeys, struggles, personal quirks, hobbies and interests. The members of Team Canada became familiar faces, and their stories struck a chord with people watching from home, or on the sidelines. People cared about Team Canada's performance in marquee and non-mainstream sports, not because they were interested in luge or freestyle aerials or para-alpine, but because they came to care about the people competing in these sports, striving to achieve their dreams.

The 2010 Games not only galvanized our nation, but also inspired one Vancouver man so much that he quit his job as a successful investment banker to pursue his dream of competing for Canada in the sport of speed skating – despite never having tried the sport! Kevin Jagger moved to Calgary so he could learn from the best, and train alongside Canada's world-leading long track speed skating team. Through his journey, he maintains a number of social media platforms, including his blog: longtracklongshot.com and has built an incredible network of supporters along the way.

Jagger's ability to build a team of sponsors and supporters comes down to his innate understanding of the business world, and the need to ensure each member of this team is treated as a stakeholder in his brand – hoping to see some return on their investment.

Please view a recent presentation on "Building your Athlete Brand" at our Vancouver-based Sport Performance Speaker Series:

SO, WHERE DO YOU START?

Building a brand requires consistency – everything you do, say or emulate in public will impact your brand. Traditionally, people think of logos and corporate colours when thinking about brands, however branding is much more than just the look and feel of a company – it is their identity; representing their values, style and vision. As an athlete, being consistent, living in accordance with

your values and always representing yourself the way you want to be perceived is essential. Aside from your behaviour and comments in public and in traditional media, you can build your brand by developing an online presence. You do not need to have an account on every single social networking site out there to be successful. You should pick your avenues wisely and be consistent in your maintenance of your presence on the ones you choose.

Internet-based social media options are growing daily. There are a plethora of options for athletes seeking avenues for story-telling. The key to building a strong presence online is choosing one or two avenues and committing to doing them well.

BLOGGING

Blogging is the most comprehensive and flexible online storytelling option. There are a number of free blog hosting sites available to get you started. [Wordpress](#) and [Blogger](#) are two of the leading free blog hosts, and offer attractive templates and features. Many people are intimidated by the idea of blogging due to the perceived time it takes to maintain, or the perceived necessity to be a strong writer. In actual fact, there are many ways to build regular blog posts with minimal effort or skill. Blogs are unique in that followers are interested in learning more about the people they follow so images, video and text can be combined to create an effective blog site. Followers have the ability to "Subscribe" to your news feed, receiving notifications of new posts – which will penetrate your follower base more effectively than a website (which relies on user-driven search).

Suggestions for quick, easy posts:

- Post photos! You may be at a training camp doing three-a-days with limited time or energy to think about your community of followers. If you have a smart-phone or a digital camera, simply have your teammates snap a few shots of you throughout the day to capture the essence of the work you are doing. People love getting a glimpse of other people's lives – it's no mistake that Instagram, y-frog and lockerz have enjoyed huge market growth over the past few years.
- Post short video clips! Maybe you're lifting a personal best that day in the gym. Have someone capture a 10 second clip of you bench pressing or power cleaning your way to the podium and post it to Youtube. Kevin Jagger's "[Max Hurdle Jump](#)" video is a mere 38 seconds of handycam work and has garnered nearly 1,000 views.
- Post links to articles you've read or links to places you've visited during your travels (restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, etc.), and don't be afraid to let your followers know why you like the links you provide.

TWITTER

Twitter has become a major player in the realm of social media with over 300 million users registered. Giving users only 140 characters to post information, the format has become one of the most popular ways to share interesting news, links and converse with the “Twitterverse”. Twitter is easy to use, can be monitored and updated online, via mobile devices and through desktop applications. Tweets can be scheduled in advance to help maintain a consistent presence and in the case of speaking to followers in different time zones, at all hours of the day, or in preparation for times when you are travelling and will be away from the internet. Tweeting is a great way to drive traffic to other online resources like your blog, website or facebook page. Be sure to build relationships with influential people in your Twitter network. It is common for Twitter users to ask for each other’s help in the form of a ReTweet, a mention or simply a follow, to help generate a little more buzz around the information you are sharing, and ultimately, about your brand.

FACEBOOK

With 800 million active users world-wide, Facebook has undeniably become a part of many people’s daily lives. Accessing a base of supporters in the environment that they naturally log into each day is a great way to reach your network without asking them to reroute their daily ‘surf’ to another location. With logging into Facebook becoming habitual practice for many people, it is wise to ensure you share your information in an unobtrusive, “human” manner. People want to hear about you and not your sponsors; they want to feel like they’re getting an inside track on your daily training, struggles,

growth and progress and not just press releases written by your Provincial or National Sport Organization’s publicist. Understanding the environment you’re in, and the type of interaction people expect within this framework is key to your success in social media.

YOUTUBE & VIMEO

People in this day in age are often more inclined to watch a short video than read something. With most smartphones now offering video camera technology, capturing basic video footage of interesting, exciting or funny moments in your life as an athlete is incredibly easy. With two clicks of a button, your footage is captured. To then connect your phone to a computer and upload the MP4 files to YouTube or Vimeo generally takes less than five minutes, and voila, you have the opportunity to become a viral sensation.

HOOTSUITE & TWEETDECK

To help manage all of your social media activity, try out HootSuite or TweetDeck. Both platforms offer great tools to schedule posts, monitor interaction and manage your profiles in one place.

FROM SOCIAL TO REAL LIFE

While internet-based social networking is a great way to make connections and grow your base of support – nothing beats a handshake and a real conversation. Be sure to follow up on face-to-face meetings by following your new connection on Twitter or LinkedIn, and vice versa, don’t be afraid to connect with your online friends and meet for coffee or meet up at an event.

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