



10 BEST Practices for Online Branding and Self-Promotion

By Clifford Brooks

1) **AWARENESS** – People are starved for individuality. When pursuing a career in any field, being aware of the way you see yourself in relation to the way others perceive you, is tantamount to success. Be YOU, and be graceful in the process of being you. Perception is that individual’s reality, yours or theirs, so manage the perception.

2) **FOCUS ON YOUR CRAFT** – Whatever your chosen form of expression/art may be, stay steadfast in the pursuit of that focus as it is more important than image sculpting when it comes to branding or promoting via social media. Without the “meat and potatoes,” this avenue yields no value and can become very time consuming. Don’t let the perception of writing the perfect Facebook post usurp energy better spent on crafting your flawless stanza, on-point dialogue between characters, and/or harmony in your current song lyrics. In surest respect of your art, never lose your audience in the FLUFF.

3) **STAY BALANCED WHEN FACING OPPOSING OPINIONS** – When branding or promoting via social media outlets, you will surely come across people who are only online to seek out those who are in a forward progression of positive influence. Pay no mind to these distractions as they are pop-ups that materialize to heed/steal your energy and ultimately, YOUR FOCUS. Debate of any kind is healthy character building, but you’re not here to debate. You’re here to build your BRAND.

4) **IMAGING CONSIDERATION** – This “Best Practice” applies across the board from image sculpting to maintaining your reputation in a positive light. When deciding on images to use that best fit your brand, consider material/photos that are consistent with posts you have made, events you attend, and material you provide/share. One misleading image or photo can yield a perception that is more negative than positive.



5) **PROMOTE/SHARE THINGS YOU LOVE** – The biggest opportunity in branding yourself and your art is to focus on the things that make you happy. Example: Use Twitter to mesh songs that keep you creative and visual art that helps you recall the reasons your craft materialized to begin with. Post/share quotes from others that inspire you and show a shared interest or perception. Compose/share “practice pieces” about family and or friends that support or motivate you when doubt clouds your dreams. These things deem you human, relatable, accessible, and understood without coming across as grand-standing or soapboxing in a world filled with fast and furious chaos.

6) **KEEP GOOD COMPANY** –All of us are prone to having a bad day every now and again. It’s called being human. We all would like to use social media as a platform to vent about those bad days as we find comfort in the fact that the delete button is close by for when we come to our senses. Apply this logic to those you associate online with as well, as “you are only as good as the company you keep.” Perception is reality in the eye of the individual seeking constancy in your brand/self-promotion. If consistencies differ in what you promote versus friends or associates you keep, fair or unfair, that perception, if negative or positive, will be the perception of your brand as well. Keep it real, real close.

7) **ASK** – I’ve yielded incredible success with the motto, “All one can say is ‘no’.” If you see others online that are sculpting their brand, promoting their product, or building a network you deem interesting and would like to know more about – simply ‘Ask’ in a respectable manner that is. Self-promotion in this area and shared information only promote us all and stages an audience for a craft we are all passionate about. As comfortable as the conversation feels, ASK how they got started, and stayed on track to where they are today. Validation of your interest may yield a new connection that could lead to opportunities for both. With all due respect to time, keep in mind we are all furiously busy with day jobs, families, and personal strife. Keep your inquiries simple, honest, and humble. Artists miss possible opportunities when connections aren’t being pursued for a “piece of the pie.” So ASK!

8) **CONNECTING WITH OTHER GENRES** – Many of us are limited by time or finances when it comes to self-promoting/branding in regards to professional photographers or agents who could spearhead us to the front page of this literary world. The funding for SEO writing or website design could be a task as well. The age-old practice of bartering has been lost on the creative mind. Find out how you can “trade services” or knowledge to build relationships between genres. There may be a photographer that needs a breakthrough in her career, but doesn’t know who to contact. You could be her key into the house of happiness. Often in my life, these professional contacts become life-long friendships. Above all, be sure that you give back as much as you take. Perhaps, for due diligence, you give just a little bit more.

9) **SCULPTING YOUR SENSE OF SELF** – Remember who you are. Remember those who were there for you before you broke through all the walls that stood in the way. Don’t neglect the innocents you first started out with when this journey began. Remember people are starved for individuality. It is not a grandiose notion that you will become a hero to more than a few people in this career that carries brilliant color, and more than its fair share of drama. Be an image/brand that is confident, humble, professional, and above all – honest. The minute you switch gears and stumble over hubris, the public will notice, and they will disengage. Don’t sweat it. Don’t lose sleep. Be you. Be proud of your talents. Stay FOCUSED and eager to help others of the same ilk get ahead. When “the team does well,” we all get ahead, and “we” includes “you.”

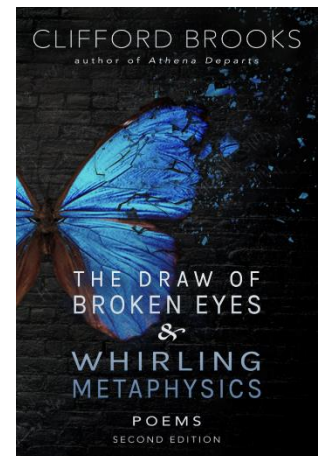
10) **REMEMBER YOU ARE HUMAN** – All of us have a bad day. An old flame finds your account, a bad friend may lash out, and/or haters galore at your door with their 2 cents. Just-delete-them-block-them-and-move-on. Getting into any squabble online about religion or politics is only going to make you mad, look like a temper tantrum, and change nothing. It could also alienate possible fans.

RECAP

- 1) Be true to yourself and the world.
 - 2) Don't put social media ahead of your product.
 - 3) Others will have their opinions; focus more on your branding than on the distraction of others.
 - 4) Keep the party pictures under lock and key. If you hit the city like a rock star, that isn't a sin. However, the paying public, and your mother, may not approve.
 - 5) Self-promote without fear. Celebrate YOU: The artists, venues, scenery, and delight that help create your brand. This is who you are, and that's who people want to see.
 - 6) Focus more on how a "friend's" opinion may negatively reflect on your brand, than how they may feel over the decision to discontinue association via social media. Don't allow another's rants to sully your trademark.
 - 7) You are your own advocate. Don't get caught up in the hype.
 - 8) Network, a new or unexpected connection could be a side door to the main stage.
 - 9) Seek out other genres for equally yoked artists who may be of help in polishing your trademark sound, look, or voice, while gaining opportunities themselves from your ideas and processes. Don't fear the idea of bartering. Giving a little more than you get can yield results faster than ever imagined.
 - 10) Don't neglect to water your roots. Stay true to yourself, and those who brought value to your life before your first publication, etc. Find solace in the first stars that lit up your heaven.
 - 11) Don't give away your hard work on social media. Why would people pay for your thoughts when they can get it for free on LinkedIn?
 - 12) Videos are a valuable chariot of positive exposure on social media. It promotes your style, melody, and ideals. Possible venues are able to view in "real time" the exact image and art you have to offer, so make it count.
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CLIFFORD BROOKS is a poet, teacher, and founder of the Southern Collective Experience. His new books, both legitimately published through **Kudzu Leaf Press**, are "Athena Departs: Gospel of a Man Apart" and "Exiles of Eden." Most recently, his first book, "The Draw of Broken Eyes & Whirling Metaphysics," was reissued with a new cover and added content. All are available on www.kudzuleafpress.com. "Exiles of Eden" is a limited edition chapbook, and few remain.



Today, Clifford tours with readings and lectures that span the country. Recently, "Athena Departs" was nominated for Georgia Author of the Year, and he attributes hard work, honesty, and wise marketing as reasons he finds success in any shape.