

# 45 IDEAS: Networking and Personal Branding

## MODERATOR

**Pat Trowbridge** is English Group Publisher – Equine Network, LLC — Practical Horseman, Dressage Today and In Stride. He began his publishing career in 1996. During his over 20 years; he has held many positions including Advertising Sales Representative, Advertising Sales Manager, and Advertising Director for Equine Group Publications, Director of Corporate Special Project, Associate Publisher for Trade Titles and Vice President/Group Publisher: Equine & Farm. Pat grew up riding horses on his family's small farm in Kansas. He resides in Southern California with his family.

## PANELISTS

**Whitney Allen** is the current President of American Horse Publications (AHP) and has been on the board since 2009. Whitney is a '98 graduate of Centenary University's equine science program and holds a Master's degree in Sports Management from the University of Kentucky. She began working for the United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA) in 2005, is currently the managing director of sponsorship and advertising sales and oversees the sponsor relationship management strategy. Originally, from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, she lives in Lexington, KY with her husband and two dogs.

**Kathy Dando** is an experienced multi-channel marketing and sales professional having created effective, integrated sales and marketing strategies for industry verticals such as equestrian, automotive, consumer goods, and e-commerce. Her process is designed to align both sales and marketing teams to drive growth and increase revenue.

Kathy is the Founder & CMO of Kathryn Dando LLC Media Group which offers a broad range of marketing services for start-ups, small to mid-size companies, and brands.

**Emily Marquez-Dulin** is an accomplished nonprofit leader with over 20 years of experience, mainly working for animal welfare

organizations. She serves as the CEO of Brooke USA, a charity focused on improving the quality of life of working equines and the people they serve. Emily earned a Master's in public relations and a Bachelor's in foreign languages from the University of Miami. Procter & Gamble trained her in brand management, and she is certified in "*The Art of Asking*" by the Institute of Charitable Giving. She lives in Doral, Florida with her husband, son, cat, and parrot.

**Catie Staszak** is the CEO of Catie Staszak Media, Inc. and an international show jumping commentator. Primarily working with the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ North American League, Catie has announced at showjumping events across the globe. In 2018, she moderated at the FEI Sports Forum in Lausanne, Switzerland, and in 2019, she was named a Chief Liaison Officer for Olympic Broadcasting Services at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

In 2018, Staszak founded Catie Staszak Media, a boutique media agency with a focus on storytelling-based marketing and PR. She is a former winner of the AHP Student Award and will receive the inaugural AHP Equine Media NextGen Award at the 2021 AHP Back in the Saddle Conference. When she's not working, she's enjoying time with her "superhero" horse Zantos, whom she shows in the Amateur-Owner jumpers, and her dog/sidekick, Omaha.

- 1. Follow people on Facebook and social media.** Create calendar reminders for their birthdays and anniversaries so you can reach out with a personal message.
- 2. The key to successful networking is building and maintaining relationships.** Essentially, it's matchmaking for business. Getting colleagues and businesses together that should get to know one another. The best networkers are often connectors who help others by referring customers, providing resources, testimonials and recommendations, or helping to promote events and other businesses in some way. With a sense of community and support, you will feel comfortable asking for advice when needed, and be happy to offer yours in return.
- 3. Don't network until you figure things out.** You're only new once and networking is all about sharing ideas, information, best practices, and lessons learned. You need to have all your ducks in a row and be able to communicate consistently each time.
- 4. Never say no to an opportunity, especially when you're starting out.** When you're getting started in the industry, don't wait for the perfect job. One open door can lead to so many others. Make the most of every opportunity to network and form new connections/relationships. You never know what it might lead to!
- 5. Set monthly meetings with all of your clients or partners even if they are 10 minutes long.** Check in, say hello and see if there is anything you can help them with.
- 6. Focus on the right contacts.** For better or worse, it's not just what you know and are capable of accomplishing, it's who you know, that is important for business development. Reach out to the people who can provide you with the specific help you need. Also take every opportunity to meet new people. You never know who you are talking to, who they might know, or how they might be able to contribute. You do not need to know many people, just the right people. Quality vs. Quantity.
- 7. Determine what you want to be known for.** Your personal brand is more than a reflection of who you are; it is a roadmap of where you want to go. You need to perform your own SWOT analysis to understand your competences and weaknesses, and where there is room for improvement.
- 8. Think about how you can contribute to a group or project, not what the group/project can do for you.** Don't expect anything. When working with someone, don't think about what you will get out of an opportunity. Think about what you can contribute to the task or project. How can you learn, grow or shine?

- 9. Use people's first names when speaking with them.** People like to know you remember them and people enjoy hearing their name. Just make sure it is the version they like. Do not shorten a name unless you know that is what the other person prefers.
- 10. Cultivate your power contacts.** Over time, you will realize that some contacts have become *power* contacts. These are the people who consistently introduce you to other interesting contacts, refer you to others, recommend you and your business, and simply push your business forward. "Give and take" is mutual and you both support each other very willingly. These are the people who know us well (and vice versa) and that we truly trust.
- 11. Research your desired industry and follow the experts.** You need to be able to stand out in a crowd so finding your uniqueness is paramount. An easy way is to learn from others who excel and ask those who know you best to share their opinions about you. Be receptive to constructive criticism.
- 12. Always carry business cards.** It's all about preparation! Even in this digital age, individuals and companies still ask for business cards. Having one handy suggests organization and professionalism—and that you won't be forgotten.
- 13. Whenever possible connect other people and provide introductions.** If people see you as a solution person and someone that can connect people, it goes a long way for your personal brand and integrity.
- 14. Have courage and be kind.** My mother used to say, "You never know who is watching you, so you always need to be on your best behavior." Prospective customers and opportunities can come from anyone, anywhere, and at any time, so be prepared. And for my fellow Disney fans...be a bit like Cinderella and remember that *kindness* holds great power. People will not remember what you said, they will remember how you made them feel. Your personal brand is your reputation. Your reputation is the foundation of your business success.
- 15. Follow the trends; be at the forefront of your industry.** Paying attention to those who are the top of their game is a perfect place to start. These people always offer great experiences and cases studies. Yet be warned: You may want to imitate but it is best to be yourself.

- 16. Don't be afraid to ask the question.** Opportunity is born from ideas. Don't be afraid to propose something out-of-the-box. The answer is always "no" if you don't ask.
- 17. Ask people for introductions.** Approach a trusted colleague or partner and ask them to provide an introduction for someone you have been hoping to connect. Most people want to help provide connections and asking someone a favor lets them know you trust them.
- 18. Connect on non-business topics.** It is so much easier to build successful business relationships when you connect with people on a deeper level than simply business. Trust is not formed in meeting rooms or on conference calls, it is built when we are able to connect on a personal level. It is crucial that we create spaces, virtual or in person, that are dedicated to simply spending time together.
- 19. Talk the talk and walk the walk.** Be sure to add value to others; become an influencer, and to this end, you must create your own "swim lane", meaning that when you jump into the pool and join the race, focus on your lane, and go for the win.
- 20. Be Authentic (!!)**. To be successful and remembered, you need to stand out. Be your true self, always. This is how you develop your brand.
- 21. Get to know people.** Start the conversation all about them; ask questions about their family or events you may have seen on social media. People love to talk about themselves, and people love to know they are more than just a stepping-stone for you or a checkbook. Don't be in a rush to get to business.
- 22. Adapt to networking in a virtual world.** As businesses adapt to the new reality of remote work, it is important that we adapt the social behaviors that enable us to stay in touch and forge new relationships with coworkers, partners, customers, and potential clients. Think text messages or WhatsApp instead of emails; FaceTime instead of telephone calls; Google Hangouts, Uber conference, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom instead of personal meetings or conference calls. Reach out to those connections who are currently in your network and ask how you can support them. Take the initiative to connect in a different way and create a sense of community.
- 23. Prepare your elevator speech.** You need to come up with very short concise things to say. These are stories to tell that frame your brand and focus on key points you want to make. This pitch should last 30-to-60 seconds. You can always expand later.

- 24. Think before you post or click “send.”** Social media is omnipresent and everlasting. Don’t post something or send something you might regret later. Think about perception before you send or post.
- 25. Do not be short with emails.** Start with Hello\_\_\_\_ many times we are quick to fire off emails as if they are text messages. Formality goes a long way even if it is someone you know well.
- 26. Join professional associations, organizations, and events.** These have been the most effective networking channels available for those looking to build valuable connections. During the Pandemic, these organizations had to postpone indefinitely or cancel their in-person events and activities. Fortunately, many of these groups have created new ways to engage audiences by leveraging collaborative productivity technologies to provide quality networking opportunities. The Post Pandemic environment will likely continue with hybrid events that include both in-person and virtual components.
- 27. Deliver with excellence.** Make sure that people understand who you are and the contributions you can make. Use your experience and perspective to rise above the rest. Also, don’t forget to be authentic.
- 28. Be politely persistent.** If you want something, make it known. Don’t expect a potential employer, client, or colleague to think of you; keep reminding them, politely.
- 29. After a conversation with a new contact look for an article or post or book that reminds you of a topic you discussed in conversation with that person.** Send them a note with a link saying something like, I came across this article and thought you might enjoy it based on our conversation last week. Let it happen as organically as possible but be on the lookout for opportunity.
- 30. Leverage learning centered networking opportunities.** Given many of us are continuing to work remotely post pandemic, potentially with flexible schedule options, it can be a great time to learn some new skills. Many organizations are offering webinars and virtual training events to educate and engage their members. Participating and sharing your expertise is an excellent way to create trust and build a reputation as a thought leader.

- 31. Ask for recommendations.** Have others endorse you as the most effective way to define your brand is when others communicate your values and attributes. LinkedIn is a great place for these endorsements and develop a list of references who you can always count on.
- 32. Don't compromise on your morals.** Don't get involved with something unless you believe in it and would promote it wholeheartedly.
- 33. Send a handwritten and hand signed note as a thank you.** This will never go out of style and the more digital we are the more people appreciate the personal touch.
- 34. Do a self-audit.** "Google" yourself and check to see *if* you come up. What information comes up? Search yourself online and find out what information is out there on you both personally and professionally. Be sure to check both Google and Bing's search engines. Remove anything that could be damaging to your personal brand! Also, be sure to note both Google and Bing's recommended search words and phrases to learn more about how people may be looking for you. It is great keyword research and extremely valuable in building your personal brand's SEO.
- 35. Remember that you can always adjust and change.** Reality is that the world we are living in is ever-changing and being able to be flexible is key to maximizing your brand. Stay on top on all the trends – internal and external.
- 36. Don't burn bridges.** The equestrian industry is small and tightly knit. It's impossible to get along with everyone, but don't burn bridges. In this small industry, you will cross paths with that person again.
- 37. Always be more curious about the other person.** When you are developing the relationship, make it about the other person. Find out all you can about them. Your turn will come but the initial relationship needs to be about the person in front of you and not what you are trying to get from the contact.
- 38. Content is KING.** Content marketing is key to increasing visibility. Create content that is helpful and offers value to others. Be a teacher first and dedicated to educating your audience. That could be sharing industry knowledge, updates, presentations, webinars, writing blogs, sharing videos, as well as hosting or guest appearing on podcasts. Your goal is to educate your audience by making complicated material easy-to-understand.

- 39. Thank those you meet, and follow-up:** After connecting with someone thank them for taking the time to meet with you. After the initial contact, you need to keep that connection active. Besides, in today's world, good manners are a differentiating factor.
- 40. Listen! Listening is an opportunity to learn.** Never bypass an opportunity to listen to another's knowledge, insight, or perspective.
- 41. Doing an event or trade show.** If you are handing out tchotchke, make it something people will use and not be burdened by, always be solution focused. Some small inexpensive ones are pop sockets, Chapstick, small travel kits.
- 42. Build Your audience and engage with them.** Be proactive in building connections, as well as sharing and engaging with relevant content. Share your knowledge and expertise to build and grow your audience. Follow, connect, comment, like, share posts, and respond to engagements. Show your personality and be YOU. Good networking is rarely about immediate results, it is nurtured over time.
- 43. Enjoy the hustle and bustle.** Apply passion to everything you do. When you are doing what you love, you feel more energized and refreshed. Your brand needs to be you and you need to be happy with who you are. After all, passion and happiness are contagious.
- 44. People will remember you if you are genuinely interested in them.** If you can help provide ideas and solutions for them and if you can connect them with other people. These things will in turn elevate your own personal brand and people will remember you as someone they can trust.
- 45. Use LinkedIn, as well as other networking platforms for personal branding.** With 171+ Million users in the United States, LinkedIn makes up more than 50% of all social traffic to B2B websites and blogs, with 92% of B2B marketers including the channel in their digital marketing mix. Have a strong personal profile! Your profile is a snapshot and summary of you, available to EVERYONE online. Your profile should include your full name, a complete bio section with relevant information, your work experience should be clearly listed and include samples of work, and your education as well as any additional training listed. Whether you are a sole proprietor, or a business with many employees, create a separate LinkedIn Business Page and link it with your personal profile or those of your employees. The two are a powerful combination for branding. Invite relevant connections to follow your business page

to create and grow your audience, as well as increase your brand visibility. Completely fill out your profiles on all platforms and use professional photos. Keywords and phrases are your best friend, sprinkle them throughout your profiles and be sure to include your location. All platforms should have a similar look and feel for consistency and to make you recognizable. Think Target's circles or Purina's checkerboard! You know immediately who they are when you see them. You want to be recognizable as well. Be sure you have optimized viewing for all screen sizes, particularly mobile.

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