

Stand out from the crowd with a personal brand symbol

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When I met Kevin Rokosh at an AWAI networking event, he was wearing something that perfectly illustrated why his prospects should forget everyone else and hire him.

(HINT: I'm not talking about his bow tie, although that was nice, too.)

He was wearing an iron ring on the pinky finger of his left hand. In Canada, all engineers wear a ring like that. And according to Rokosh, there is a story behind it.

In 1907, the Phoenix Bridge Company was building a bridge across the St. Lawrence River, 6 miles north of Quebec City.

Theodore Cooper oversaw the design and construction of the 2800-foot-long, 67-foot-wide bridge. When the initial designs came across Cooper's desk, he approved them without asking for many changes.

Work on the bridge began very quickly . . . even before the final drawings were complete. It was well underway by the time the official design arrived at Cooper's desk for approval.

Even though he noticed flaws in the design, he chose to let the workers continue building it rather than start over and have to postpone the opening of the bridge. Work continued even after tiny miscalculations and misalignments were revealed.

On August 29th, the girders buckled and the entire bridge plummeted 150 feet into the river, killing 75 workers.

"It was designed wrong," said Rokosh. "It wasn't that it was being put together wrong, it was designed wrong in the first place. These rings remind us that we need humility as engineers. We need to be aware all the time that people's lives depend on what we do. There's a responsibility that goes with being an engineer."

"The engineer's copywriter"

With his background as an engineer, it was only natural for Rokosh to promote himself as the "engineer's copywriter."

The niche fits perfectly (just like a well-worn ring). He understands what his clients are talking about when they discuss their products, no matter how technical. He understands that mindset of an engineer who is in the process of making a buying decision and tailors his pieces to appeal to other engineers. As a fellow engineer, he is concerned with accuracy, with whether the product works the way it should, and with safety.

All those things make him an ideal B2B copywriter.

When he shows people the ring and tells the story, he is able to communicate all of his good qualities very quickly, without bragging.

What is your personal brand symbol?

Choosing a niche makes it easier for most copywriters to find clients and land work.

Once you know what your niche is try to find a symbol for that niche.

What makes a good symbol? I have a few ideas.

It should be a physical object. Something tangible that you can carry with you to networking events and meetings with clients.

There should be a story connected to it. Knowing what your story is will make it easier for you to talk about who you are and what you do in a clear and compelling way.

It should subtly provide a benefit of working with you. Rokosh's ring expresses his experience in this specific area. When we first met he told me the rings are designed to be rough along the edges at first. He said, "Then, over time as you are working, it gets smoothed off. You can see how green or how experienced the engineer is."

It should be personal. Use something connected to your own personal and professional history.

Creating a personal symbol is a way to build on your personal brand and give yourself an easy way to communicate your message when you network with others. It can even be used on your website and promotional materials.