

Athlete Branding Tips from xoxo sports

As an NCAA athlete, you're not only competing against other athletes on the field but you're also competing with them for sponsors. Kat Bitove from xoxo sports shares her expertise in athlete branding and sponsorship below to highlight the top three things you need to remember when it comes to building your personal brand:

1. You already have a personal brand.

Your personal brand isn't specific to your sport or your school. Your brand is your reputation and the impression people get from who you are in the media, on social media, and in person. You can shape the way people think of you if you have a strong personal brand strategy. Your brand is what will set you apart from all of the other athletes trying to secure sponsorships, so make sure it is unique and authentic to you.

Are you funny? Trustworthy? Inspiring? Eco-conscious? A leader? An inventor? You could be all of these things, or none of them, and that's OK. Your brand should be built on who you truly are.

2. Create your brand values & elements.

In order to create an authentic, consistent brand you need to determine your brand values. These are your core beliefs that guide you, both in marketing and in life.

Set a timer for 5 minutes and write down words that you feel describe you. Anything you care about, love, or hope for. Then, look through the list and narrow it down until you have 3-5 values that you feel are your strongest values, and ones that you're comfortable sharing with the world. Why only 3-5 values? Every person is unique and complex, but the key to building a strong brand is clarity and consistency. By sticking to only a few key values, you can ensure that your personal brand is recognizable to potential sponsors and the public.

Once you have the values locked in, you can bring your brand to life. What colours relate to your brand? What font will you use on your website/business cards/email signature? What social media platforms will you be using? These are just some of the elements that you put together in different ways to make your brand stand out from the rest. Plus they make you look polished when you consistently use them on social media and in your everyday life.

3. Find sponsors that align with your brand.

When a company wants to partner with an athlete, it's not (only) based on what sport they play. The sponsor takes into consideration who you are, what you value, and if those qualities align with their own corporate brand and values. You want sponsorships that are authentic. Do you already use their product/service? That's great! It means you already have an authentic connection to that brand. If not, do some research to make sure the company aligns with your brand values. The industry is big enough that you can find the right companies to work with without sacrificing your values.

Companies look at sponsorship as a marketing spend, so that means they have an objective for what they want to achieve when they work with an athlete. This could be more sales, greater brand awareness, employee engagement, or increased brand perception for example. You need to do your research and understand what a company's goals are, and show them how you can help them get there.

Want more help with your personal branding? Check out [@xoxosports](#) on Instagram or book your virtual personal branding session at [xoxosports.com](#) using code **NILNETWORK** for 25% off.

