

Building Your Personal CS Brand (Without Being Cringe)

Episode 25 Companion Download

This toolkit provides the frameworks, templates, and action steps for building professional credibility the right way - through competence, consistency, and genuine contribution. Use these resources to document your expertise, demonstrate your results, and build a reputation that opens doors while making you better at your job.

Professional Visibility Assessment

Rate yourself honestly from 1 to 5 on each dimension
(1 = Not Present, 5 = Fully Established):

Level One: Internal Credibility

_____ My manager trusts me to handle complex customer situations independently

_____ Colleagues come to me for advice on customer success challenges

_____ Customers specifically request to work with me

_____ I have documented evidence of results I've driven

_____ Leadership knows who I am and what I'm capable of

Internal Credibility Score: _____ / 25

Level Two: Peer Visibility

_____ I'm connected with CS professionals beyond my current company

_____ I share insights or frameworks occasionally with the broader community

_____ Other CSMs reach out to me for advice or perspective

_____ I attend industry events and have meaningful conversations

_____ People in the CS community have heard my name or seen my work

Peer Visibility Score: _____ / 25

Level Three: Industry Recognition

_____ I'm known for specific expertise in the CS community

_____ I've spoken at conferences or published thought leadership

_____ Companies reach out about opportunities without me applying

_____ Other practitioners reference my frameworks or approaches

_____ I'm regularly asked to contribute expertise to industry discussions

Industry Recognition Score: _____ / 25

Interpretation:

- Level One (20+ points): You have the foundation. Ready to build external visibility.
- Level One (<20 points): Focus here first. You can't skip this level.
- Level Two (15+ points): You're building meaningful peer relationships.
- Level Three (15+ points): You have genuine industry credibility.

Results Documentation Framework

Template for Capturing Your Wins

- **Situation:** What was the customer challenge, risk, or opportunity?
- **Your Action:** What specific approach, framework, or strategy did you use?
- **Measurable Outcome:** What quantifiable result did you drive?
- **Why It Worked:** What made your approach effective in this situation?
- **Applicable Lesson:** What framework or insight can other CSMs apply from this experience?

Example: Completed Results Documentation

Situation: Enterprise customer (\$450K ARR) went red after their executive sponsor left. New leadership didn't understand our value. Renewal at risk with 60 days to close.

Your Action: Rebuilt stakeholder map from scratch. Identified new economic buyer. Created custom ROI analysis showing \$1.2M in cost avoidance. Scheduled executive business review within 14 days.

Measurable Outcome: Closed renewal with 12% expansion (\$50K additional ARR). Customer became reference account for similar vertical.

Why It Worked: Led with business outcomes the new stakeholder cared about, not features. Demonstrated value in their language. Moved fast to establish credibility before evaluation period started.

Applicable Lesson: When your champion leaves, you have a 2-week window to establish credibility with new stakeholders before they start evaluating alternatives. Lead with outcomes, not product.

Your Results Documentation (Complete 3-5 examples)

Example 1:

- Situation:
- Your Action:
- Measurable Outcome:
- Why It Worked:
- Applicable Lesson:

Example 2:

- Situation:
- Your Action:
- Measurable Outcome:
- Why It Worked:
- Applicable Lesson:

Example 3:

- Situation:
- Your Action:
- Measurable Outcome:
- Why It Worked:
- Applicable Lesson:

LinkedIn Content Framework

Content Quality Principles

Before worrying about structure, understand what makes LinkedIn content credible:

Specific and Honest

Don't write about "the importance of customer success." Write about "Here's how I handled a situation where our champion left mid-renewal and nobody else knew who we were." And don't pretend everything works - talk about mistakes and what you learned.

Helpful

Provide frameworks or approaches other CSMs can actually use. "Here's the three-question framework I use to decide whether to escalate internally or handle an issue myself." Give people something actionable.

Not Too Frequent

Once a week is plenty. Once a month is fine. Quality matters more than frequency. Don't post just to post.

The Three-Part Structure for Credible Posts

Once you have something worth sharing, use this structure:

Part 1: The Specific Situation (2-3 sentences)

Set up the real customer challenge or scenario. Make it concrete enough to be interesting, anonymized enough to protect confidentiality.

Example: "Last quarter, I inherited a red account where the IT director wouldn't return our calls. Their CISO had escalated to our CEO. Internally, everyone was panicking."

Part 2: What You Actually Did (3-4 sentences)

Explain your approach. Share the framework, the decision, or the strategy you used. Be specific about your methodology.

Example: "I wrote a three-page get-well plan. Not 30 pages of analysis. Three pages. Current state in three bullets. Path forward broken into phases. Clear ask from internal teams. That constraint forced clarity."

Part 3: The Outcome and Lesson (2-3 sentences)

Share the result and what you learned. End with something others can apply.

Example: "We resolved the escalations, rebuilt the relationship, and closed the renewal. The lesson: recovery plans fail when they're comprehensive. They succeed when they're clear."

Content Quality Checklist

Before posting, ask yourself:

- Is this specific and honest (not generic, includes what I learned from mistakes)?
- Is this helpful (provides a framework or approach others can use)?
- Is this based on something I actually did?
- Have I protected customer confidentiality?
- Would another CSM find this immediately actionable?
- Would I respect this post if someone else wrote it?
- Is this my original writing (not taken from another's post/article)?

If you can't check all seven boxes, revise or don't post.

Monthly Content Planning Template

Month: _____

Content Piece #1 (Post Week 1)

- Topic:
- Situation to share:
- Framework or lesson:
- Target length: 150-250 words

Content Piece #2 (Post Week 3)

- Topic:
- Situation to share:
- Framework or lesson:
- Target length: 150-250 words

Engagement Plan (30 minutes/week)

- Meaningfully comment on 3-5 posts from peers I respect
- Share one industry article with specific insight (not just "great article!")
- Respond to anyone who engages with my content

Speaking Opportunity Progression Path

Year 1: Build Foundation

- Present at internal company meeting or brown bag
- Speak at local CS meetup (20-30 people)
- Guest on CS podcast or webinar
- Submit talk proposal to regional conference

Topic Focus: Share a specific framework you've built or problem you've solved

Year 2: Expand Reach

- Speak at regional CS conference
- Lead panel discussion or workshop
- Guest lecture at local university or bootcamp
- Submit to national conference

Topic Focus: Present case studies with measurable outcomes

Year 3: Establish Authority

- Keynote or featured speaker at industry event
- Multi-session workshop leader
- Conference advisory board member
- Regular podcast guest or contributor

Topic Focus: Thought leadership on CS trends or strategic frameworks

Talk Proposal Template

Title: [Your topic in 8 words or less]

Format: [30-min presentation / 60-min workshop / Panel discussion]

Abstract (150 words): [What will attendees learn? Focus on takeaways, not your background]

Outline:

1. [Opening: The problem or challenge]
2. [Framework or approach you'll teach]
3. [Real example with outcomes]
4. [Key takeaways attendees can apply]
5. [Q&A]

Why You: [2-3 sentences on your relevant experience. Focus on results, not titles.]

Audience Takeaways:

- [Specific framework or template]
- [Actionable strategy they can implement]
- [Common mistake to avoid]

Networking Relationship Tracker

Internal Relationships (Build These First)

Name	Department	How I Add Value	Last Interaction	Next Step
	Sales	Share customer insights weekly		
	Product	Provide usage feedback		
	Engineering	Customer technical challenges		
	Leadership	Strategic account updates		
	CS Peers	Mentor on complex situations		

Peer CS Network (Build Alongside Internal)

Name	Company	Shared Interest	How I Can Help	Last Contact	Next Touch

Senior Practitioner Relationships (Build After Foundation)

Name	Title	How I Add Value	Engagement Plan	Status
	VP CS	Research for their writing projects	Quarterly check-in	
	CS Consultant	Customer feedback on their frameworks	Comment on content	
	Industry Speaker	Volunteer for association projects	Attend their sessions	

Value-First Networking Approach

Instead of: "Can we connect? I'd love to pick your brain."

Try: "I noticed your post about [specific topic]. I've implemented a similar approach with [specific result]. Would you be interested in comparing notes on what's worked?"

Or: "I saw you're speaking at [event]. I have data from 15 customers on [related topic] that might be useful for your talk. Happy to share."

Or: "Your framework for [topic] helped me solve [specific problem]. Here's how I adapted it and the outcome. Thought you'd want to know it worked."

Offer value first, relationship second.

90-Day Professional Credibility Plan

Month 1: Foundation

Week 1-2: Document Your Wins

- Complete 3-5 results documentation examples
- Identify your unique frameworks or approaches
- Create LinkedIn content bank (3-5 drafts)

Week 3-4: Establish Baseline

- Update LinkedIn profile with specific results
- Connect with 10 CS peers you respect
- Post your first piece of content

Month 2: Build Consistency

Week 5-6: Content Rhythm

- Post bi-weekly on LinkedIn
- Engage meaningfully with 5 posts per week
- Attend one industry event (virtual or in-person)

Week 7-8: Relationship Building

- Have coffee with 2 CS peers (virtual counts)
- Offer help to someone who posts about a challenge you've solved
- Identify 3 people whose career trajectory you admire

Month 3: Expand Reach

Week 9-10: Speak Up

- Submit talk proposal to local meetup or conference
- Guest on CS podcast or webinar
- Write longer-form content (LinkedIn article)

Week 11-12: Assess and Adjust

- Review what content got meaningful engagement
- Evaluate which relationships are developing depth
- Plan next 90 days based on what's working

Professional Brand Sustainability Checklist

Building credibility is a long game. Make it sustainable:

Monthly (2-3 hours total):

- Post 1-2 pieces of valuable content
- Have 2 coffee chats with peers or mentors
- Attend 1 industry event or webinar
- Engage meaningfully with others' content (30 min/week)

Quarterly (4-6 hours):

- Document new results from past 3 months
- Submit speaking proposal or write longer piece
- Review and update relationship tracker
- Assess what's working and adjust approach

Annually (8-10 hours):

- Speak at 1-2 conferences or events
- Publish thought leadership piece
- Evaluate professional credibility progress
- Set goals for next year's development

Red Flags: When Your "Brand Building" Has Gone Wrong

Stop immediately if you notice:

- You're spending more time creating content than doing your actual job
- Your posts are getting generic engagement but no real conversations
- You're talking about things you haven't actually done
- Your content sounds like everyone else's
- You're uncomfortable showing your manager what you've posted
- You're measuring success by likes instead of relationships
- Peers are calling your content "performative" or "cringe"
- You're posting advice on topics where you lack deep experience

Recovery Plan: Return to fundamentals. Focus on results. Document real work. Share only what you've actually done.

Your 6-Month Credibility Goals

Primary Goal: What level are you targeting? (Internal credibility / Peer visibility / Industry recognition)

Specific Milestones:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Key Activities (Choose 3-5 you'll actually do consistently):

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Success Metrics (How you'll measure progress):

- _____
- _____
- _____

Accountability Plan:

Who will you share these goals with? _____

When will you review progress? _____

Final Reality Check

Before you start building external credibility, honestly assess:

- **Do you have internal credibility?**
If your manager, peers, and customers don't already trust your expertise, external visibility is premature. Build the foundation first.
- **Are you actually good at your job?**
Professional credibility can't compensate for weak results. Make sure you're delivering before you start demonstrating.

- **Are you willing to be patient?**
Meaningful professional credibility takes 18-24 months minimum. If you need results next quarter, this isn't the right strategy.
- **Can you sustain this?**
If your plan requires more than 3-4 hours per month, you'll burn out. Build a rhythm you can maintain for years.
- **Are you doing this for the right reasons?**
Building credibility to become better at your job and expand your impact? Good. Building credibility to feel important? Don't start.

Get Started

This Week:

1. Complete your Professional Visibility Assessment
2. Document at least one significant result using the framework
3. Draft one piece of LinkedIn content (don't post yet - just practice)

This Month:

1. Choose your 90-day plan focus (Foundation / Consistency / Reach)
2. Set up your relationship tracker
3. Post your first piece of content or have your first networking coffee chat

This Quarter:

1. Establish sustainable rhythm (monthly content, relationship building)
2. Submit one speaking proposal or write one longer piece
3. Review what's working and adjust your approach

Remember: The goal isn't to become a LinkedIn influencer. The goal is to build genuine professional credibility that makes you better at your job and creates opportunities aligned with your expertise.

Start small. Be consistent. Focus on value. The rest will follow.

Next Steps and Resources

This guide is part of The CS Strategy mini-series on ClearPath Conversations:

- **Episode 24:** The Internal CS Playbook You Wish You Had
- **Episode 25:** Building Your Personal CS Brand (Without Being Cringe)
- **Episode 26:** Customer Success Metrics That Actually Matter
- **Episode 27:** What Makes a CSM Great? My Non-Negotiables

Additional Resources:

- *ClearPath CX Website:* Templates, frameworks, and resources at [ClearPathCX.com](https://clearpathcx.com)
- *LinkedIn:* Connect with Mark at [linkedin.com/in/markbernardin](https://www.linkedin.com/in/markbernardin)