

THE POWER OF PERSONAL BRANDING

If you haven't given much thought to personal branding in the past, it might be time to embrace this powerfully persuasive business tool.



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While the term “personal branding” has been around for many years, its relevance today continues to be an essential factor to career success.

Personal branding relates to the way in which you market yourself to the outside world and what you stand for ... your values, skills, capabilities and attributes. It also incorporates how others see you and what you're known for – and, thankfully, you do have some influence over it!

You may not have given too much thought to your personal brand in the past. However, from a business perspective, your reputation can definitely be a powerful persuader.

Developing your own unique, quality brand increases personal confidence, attracts opportunities and can certainly influence a client's purchasing decision. Additionally, creating a credible and solid brand has the potential to project you and your career to new heights. But like anything worth achieving, it can take time, effort and commitment to effectively position yourself in a cluttered market.

Inevitably, each industry or profession has competitors – and whether it be in business, sports or entertainment, the simple fact is you need to find ways to distinctly stand out. In saying that, personal branding is definitely not about blatant self-promotion or hard-sell; rather, it's more about projecting the value you can offer or bring to your intended audience.

The rise of social media platforms has certainly created opportunities for individuals to showcase their value, although it's important to appreciate that projecting one's brand goes well beyond the scope of using just one resource such as social media.

There are a multitude of ways to broadcast your brand, engage with others and get your name out there – some of which include getting involved in charity work, attending networking events, writing articles, speaking at events (large or small), becoming a mentor, volunteering to chair a meeting, sponsorship opportunities and leading by example in your particular work environment.

Building a quality brand proposition also incorporates the way you communicate, the service you provide, how you present yourself and the way in which you conduct yourself. Managing your brand involves creating a mind-set that is purposeful, intentional and also accountable.

When it comes to your brand, everything attached or associated to you matters and has the potential to either reinforce your brand reputation or, in fact, sabotage it. An example of this includes LinkedIn. Consider the number of times you may have googled a potential client or colleague, then accessed their LinkedIn profile only to find a photo which is more akin to a holiday snap (or something worse), spelling or grammatical errors and a half-hearted attempt at completing their profile. Does this support their intended brand, or in fact work to sabotage it? Sometimes it may be better to have no profile at all rather than risk a less-than-professional perception being formed about your capability.

Your brand also involves every interaction and “touchpoint” you have with your colleagues and clients. Again, such contact will either serve to support your brand or weaken it, depending on your delivery. While seemingly trivial, sadly little things do count when it comes to your brand and your reputation.

SOME TOP TIPS TO BUILD YOUR QUALITY BRAND PROPOSITION:

1. Seek feedback from colleagues, management and clients. How do they see you? What words would they use to describe you?
2. Do an online search. What do social media platforms reveal? Could they be cleaned up or deleted?
3. Now consider your “ultimate” or “desired” personal brand. What does it look like? Where could you improve or develop?
4. Create a brand strategy. What plan do you have for developing your brand? What is unique or different about you compared to others?
5. Broadcasting your brand. How will you communicate your value? What strategies will you use to increase your professional visibility?

In today's fiercely competitive market, if you don't make the effort to take responsibility for creating your own identity, then unfortunately others will do so for you. Authenticity and a genuine brand are paramount to success and also builds credibility in the eyes of others. Most people prefer to do business with those that they perceive as being trustworthy, reliable and someone they can rely on.

Reputable brands are those which always deliver on a promise and provide lasting value to their clients; personal branding is no different. The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to consider what you would like to achieve professionally, identify your competitive edge and develop a brand strategy aligned to success. ■

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