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Short personal development exercises designed to bring more insight into your life

## 9 PERSONAL BRANDING TIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS



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## 9 personal branding tips for professional success

### Your personal brand - where do you stand?

As Catherine Kaputa puts it - you don't brand yourself, other people will.

### Where would you place yourself in this scale?

- I have not started my personal brand but I am eager to develop my unique story
- I have established a strong personal brand that sets me apart in my organization

## Nine personal branding tips for professional success

Success in a company or profession these days requires careful personal branding, both to enter the arena and to stay in the game. Hollywood icons and high-profile athletes have long tapped into the branding model to build a personal brand. Now, savvy professional people and entrepreneurs are using personal branding to be more successful.

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Here are nine essential tips to help you kickstart your personal brand.

## 1. Master personal branding if you're ambitious

Many women have told me, "My work should speak for itself" or don't feel comfortable talking about my accomplishments." Unfortunately, that attitude will hurt you in the professional world.

Studies show that men are better than women in terms of personal branding, personal promotion and career networking. A male social scientist at University College in London who did a meta-analysis of 30 global studies on male and female leadership found that men tend to be more comfortable pitching themselves for a promotion and were more likely to exaggerate their accomplishments, what he called the "male hubris effect."

What about women? Women tended to downplay their abilities and accomplishments, what the social scientist called the "female humility" effect. Modesty may be a virtue, but it can be a liability in the career world. If no one knows of you and your accomplishments, unfortunately they don't have much value.

As I have learned in the business world time and again, if you don't brand yourself, other people will, and I can guarantee you, they won't brand you the way you want to be branded. Don't let anyone else brand you. Brand yourself.

## 2. Realize that hard work is not enough, soft power skills drive success

I like to say there are two types of power for professional success: Hard Power and Soft Power. Hard Power is the tangible skills and accomplishments you can put on your resume like your job experience and accomplishments, your internships, schools you attended and your academic record.

Soft Power or personal branding power is the intangible assets that mean so much in professional success: your image and reputation, your network and alliances, and your communications ability. It's standing for something that adds value and knowing how to market your value.

Soft power is about building visibility and a reputation for yourself in some arena such as assuming leadership roles at the university, at your company or in your industry. Make sure you have a strong online presence on career social media sites, especially LinkedIn.

Remember, hard power can help you in the early stages of your career, but you need strong soft power skills to succeed at the mid-level and at the top.

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## 3. Build positive perceptions about Brand You

If your boss and other career contacts think you are on top of your game, you will be. If people think you're a B Player, you will be - until you change their perceptions.

Your success in your career or life is based on perceptions, other people's perceptions of who you are, how good you are, and even what you are worth. Personal branding strategies and tactics can help you build the right perceptions in the minds of others about who you are.

## 4. Find your differentiator, your USP (Unique Selling Proposition)

The cardinal rule of branding is, "Be different." Brand strategy is about pinpointing relevant differences and creating positive perceptions about the brand. It's the same with people. It used to be about, "Can you do the job?" Today many people can do what you do. So it has to be about something more.

Branding for people is about finding your Big Idea - your Unique Selling Proposition (USP), your differentiator.

Your USP is your hook, the unique value that you, and only you, provide that sets you apart from others and establishes a value equation for you and your abilities.

## 5. Celebrate your uniqueness and why it's relevant

Another key tenet of branding is, "Be relevant." That's why marketers frequently conduct a brand audit - studying a brand's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats - known as the SWOT analysis.

You can do the same. The SWOT analysis is an intensive look at yourself in a real-world framework. "Strengths" and "weaknesses," the first two areas, deal with you. Start with skills, experience and accomplishments. Then expand the list to include personality traits; expand your strengths quadrant to include anything you have ever explored that's a strength.

The "opportunities" and "threats" deal with things that could affect you in the future. What is going on that could dramatically change things? The career world is dynamic so there is always movement and change, particularly today with the rise of technology and new developments like AI.

**Here is a simple exercise for you to start your own SWOT analysis. Take a minute to write down the following:**

✓ One strength

✓ One opportunity

✓ One weakness

✓ One threat to your personal brand

## **6. Use the principles of visual identity to create executive presence**

It may seem superficial. It may be unfair. We may not like it. After all, why should you be judged by your executive presence? Self-presentation - your visual identity - is important because of the link people make between what something looks like on the outside and what is on the inside.

We do this today despite all the familiar admonitions, such as "Don't judge a book by its cover." The fact is the way you look, carry yourself, the clothes you choose, affect people's judgment of you, especially for women.

Studies show that women face more scrutiny in the workplace. You want to be appropriate but have your own "style." Men wear sort of a "uniform" at work while women have more choices in work clothing that can aid or harm the personal branding process. That's why you should think about visual identity like brand managers do.

## **7. Harness the power of verbal identity**

Brands try to own a Word, or a short phrase in the minds of consumers that's often conveyed in the brand's tagline and marketing. If a brand succeeds, people think of the brand when they hear the Word, and vice-versa.

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For example, "overnight" is FedEx, "safety" is identified with Volvo, and "search" with Google. Owning a word or phrase can help in personal branding too.

Your word can be a positive attribute that defines you, your philosophy or your accomplishments. One professional wanted to be known for "accountability" and established new metrics for measuring and improving customer satisfaction in her department. She even developed a personal mantra for her team: "Everyone is accountable, everywhere, all the time."

## 8. Become a little bit famous

In self-branding, we're talking of being famous for something - an idea, a belief system, an accomplishment, an area of excellence. And we're talking about visibility on some level - your department, your company, your community. Visibility - what advertisers call mindshare - brings big rewards. You can get a higher price for your services or a bigger salary. People will seek you out.

That's because of the connection people make between something that's well-known being better than something that is not. ("She must be good, or why would she be so well known in the company?")

If you work in a corporation, there are a lot of low visibility tactics you can use to build mindshare at your company and in your industry such as volunteering to be a project leader or team member, getting involved in an employee resource group, writing trade articles, speaking at an industry conference or contributing to the company newsletter.

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## 9. Develop an action plan to move the plot along - the plot of your career and life story.

Defining a great self-brand strategy is one thing. Making it a reality is another. Brand managers use a marketing plan to tie it all together to achieve your goals and you should, too.

### A self-brand marketing plan includes the following:

1. 1 - 3 specific goals, target markets  
(who you need to influence to achieve your goals)
2. Your personal brand strategy or differentiator
3. Time frame for achieving each goal
4. Tactics (the specific actions you are going to take to achieve your goals)
5. Measurement (How are you doing?)

Throughout your career, you'll want to tune into your goals and how your profession is changing so that you stay relevant and in demand. If you don't keep a successful narrative going with new developments and accomplishments, the story line could get away from you, and you will be regarded as yesterday's sensation.

Take a minute to think about what you have just read and what steps you will take to implement it in your daily life.

You could discuss it with your coach to see how you can make the most of it.