

Five Tips to Branding Yourself

Career Development

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We've all been taught that a firm handshake, professional attire, and sound credentials are the makings for a good first impression.

Today, that's no longer enough.

The advent of blogs, Facebook, and Twitter have enabled anyone and everyone to become known; connect in almost real time directly with clients, colleagues and friends; and build relationships across the globe. Now, making an unforgettable first impression *in-person* is no longer the only way to establish your brand. Yes, *your* brand.

While you may not be Nike or Disney, who you are and how you come across are really important to being successful. Our personal brands are in the spotlight everyday for everyone to see online. Are you putting your best foot forward? Maybe it's time for some personal branding.

If you don't brand yourself, someone else will, and the outcome might not be so favorable. Branding yourself keeps you current in your field, opens doors for you, and creates a lasting impression on potential and existing clients. By developing your own brand, you'll have control over the initial perception people have of you.


"What is it that you want to be known for? Personal branding is how we define ourselves in the work space while also incorporating the personal elements that make us who we are," according to Dawn Rasmussen, president of the Portland, Oregon-based [Pathfinder Writing and Career Services](#).

What Makes You, You

A successful brand can go a long way with self-promotion, conveying loyalty, and offering consistency in the quality of the services you provide.

#1: Define your brand and become an expert. Take the time to do some soul searching and determine exactly who you are and what makes up your brand. Use words such as *collaborative, resourceful, flexible, forward-thinking, connected, visionary, diplomatic, intuitive, precise, enterprising, ethical, genuine and/or accessible* to describe your persona, culture, and outlook.





Whether you're looking to garner media attention, attract new clients or build your business, you should focus on becoming an expert in your field. Avoid establishing an expertise that's irrelevant to your mission, goals, and vision. You'll just be wasting your time.

For example, if you know corporate tax accounting, it's probably not wise to brand yourself as a personal financial expert. Yet, remember that people want to hear about the professional *you*, but they also want to understand your personality. Don't be afraid to inject your personality into the conversation.

#2: Establish a presence. You're being Googled by friends, colleagues, and potential customers, so make sure your branded content is what people find when they Google your name. One way to do this is to build a basic online presence through your own website or blog.

For example, you can purchase your full name as a domain name (yourfullname.com). By developing either a static website or a blog under your domain name, you will own the first result for your name in Google and other search engines. This should be a separate site than your company's website. After purchasing your domain name, add your picture, a bio, your email address, and links to the rest of your presence (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter). This way, people can get in touch with you in their medium of choice. Claim your name before someone else does. While search engines will pick up on your social media pages, having your own domain will produce a more finite result.

#3: Generate brand awareness through networking. You should be connecting with other young professionals in the accounting industry by using social networks and commenting on their blogs. Networking is one of the best ways to become known in the industry. By forming relationships with people in your audience, you can grow your business and your brand long-term.

#4: Remember the 3 Cs of branding. Clarity, consistency, constancy. Be clear in who you are and are not. Don't sugar-coat your qualifications. Express your brand across all communications mediums. Determine where you want to fit in (industry and niche area of expertise) and then remain visible to your target audience.

#5: Get feedback from those who know you best—at work, at home, anywhere. The true measure of your brand is the reputation others hold of you in their hearts and minds. Notice how they introduce you to others. Ask them what your top brand attributes and core strengths are. If they can easily tell you, then you've succeeded in branding *you*.

These days, branding the company you work for isn't enough. The world wants to hear what you have to say as a professional within a company. The work involved in uncovering your brand may seem daunting, but your efforts can benefit you immeasurably. Your unique brand message differentiates the best you have to offer, gives a good indication of what you're like to work with, and shows how you make things happen.






Uncover your brand

The first step when it comes to identifying how to brand yourself online is uncovering your brand. This is a key component to making sure that you are represented positively and accurately online.

Branding yourself is not an act or a show you put on for others. Your brand reflects who you are at your core. The qualities that define you as a person should shape your brand too. These attributes are unmistakable.

If I asked ten members of your family how they would describe you, they would likely describe you by using a few key words. Identifying the heart of who you are is key when undergoing the process of branding yourself appropriately.



To help you in this self-discovery phase, here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- What are my biggest strengths?
- What am I most passionate about?
- What makes me unique?

If these questions seem overwhelming, think about them in specific contexts.

Consider them in relation to your current job. How does your answer change when you think about your family life? What are your answers as a student? How do your feelings today compare to how you would have answered ten years ago?



