

What's Your Personal Brand Worth?

Frank Sonnenberg

It's a brand-new world. In the past, employees remained with their employers for life. Today, the Bureau of Labor Statistics cites that full-time employees will average 11.7 jobs from ages 18 to 48. Additionally, some folks act as free agents who do project work for any organization willing to retain their services. For that reason, whether you serve as a full-time or a contract employee, it's critical to build your personal brand to remain marketable.

That begs the question, what steps should you take to build your personal brand? What's the most effective way to stand out among your peers? What's the best way to get the word out? The fact is: Take a hands-off approach at your own peril!

10 Steps to Make a Name for Yourself

Whether you're a full-time employee or a freelancer for several organizations, it's critical to develop a personal brand that showcases the knowledge, expertise, and value that you provide. Your brand will serve you well throughout your career. Here are 10 steps to make a name for yourself.

1. Find your *niche*.
2. Create a clear *value proposition*.
3. Develop a narrative that *distinguishes you* from others.
4. Identify *challenging, thought-provoking, noteworthy* projects that you want to undertake.
5. Establish credibility by doing *cutting-edge work* for *world-class organizations*.
6. Generate a track record of *proven results*.
7. Marshal a cadre of influential *movers and shakers* who mentor you and are willing to *sing your praises*.
8. Encourage *word-of-mouth* publicity that demonstrates your worth.
9. Create content that showcases your *knowledge* and *experience*.
10. Network, network, *network*.

Good News Travels Fast

The bottom line is to create a buzz that you've been *retained by the best organizations*, to *address tough* — rather than run-of-the-mill—*challenges* and have amassed *an impressive record of proven results*.

That will trigger others to think:

- “If you're *good enough* for them, you're good enough for me.”
- “If you did that *type of work* for them, you can obviously handle this work for me.”
- “If you *delivered results* like that for them, I'll never lose sleep if you work for me.”

Whoa. Wait a minute!

Is Personal Branding Simply a PR Activity, or...?

If you think personal branding is *entirely* a marketing and public relations activity, you've got it *all wrong*. If you're a good person and do the right things, people take notice. The converse is also true. While you may be able to fool some folks in the short term, the truth will always find its way to the top. The fact is, moral character matters. Period!

Truth is not what it seems, but what it is.

Margaret Thatcher, the former British prime minister, said, "Power is like being a lady...if you have to tell people you are, you aren't." The same holds true for being an exceptional individual. While the 10 steps above are still valid, here are 7 guideposts to reach those goals while maintaining your personal character. These will truly make you more marketable.

1. **Establish high expectations.** Set your bar high and don't lower your standards for anyone.
2. **Hold yourself accountable.** If you look in the mirror and don't like what you see, don't blame the mirror.
3. **Learn K through life.** Keep learning — even when you're busy. Everything you learn is like money in the bank.
4. **Build trusting relationships.** You gain trust by proving that you're worthy of it. People will test you in small ways before trusting you outright.
5. **Add value.** Focus your efforts on adding value rather than on promoting your achievements.
6. **Live with honor.** Refuse to compromise your honor at any price. Knowing what's right isn't as important as doing what's right.
7. **Be true to yourself.** Listen to your conscience. That's why you have one.

How Does Your Personal Brand Compare?

A first-rate reputation doesn't happen by chance. It's a reflection of who you are and how you choose to live your life. Personal branding is less a marketing exercise than it is becoming the best person you can be. That means investing in yourself, developing win-win relationships, living a life of honor and integrity, and adding maximum value to the organization that hires you.

The motto of the movie *Field of Dreams* said it well: "Build it and they will come." The same holds true for you. Build an exceptional personal brand, not through marketing but through moral character and personal achievement, and the world will beat a path to your door.

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