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## 5 Rock Star Moves to Manage the Brand Called YOU

Here are five ways to help you leverage the power of your personal brand to stand out and attract the right opportunities for your career and your firm.



**By Wendy Terwelp**

**Y**ou're a C-suite executive for your employer and you're also CEO of Brand YOU. What's Brand YOU?" In 1997, Tom Peters coined the term "The Brand Called You" in *Fast Company*. He wrote, "We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You." And since that time, "personal branding" is the term used to describe the process individuals and entrepreneurs use to stand out for career success.

Finding time to manage your career when you're juggling so many priorities can be tough. Here are five ways to help you create your personal brand.

### **Get focused**

Every person has a personal brand. Your current personal brand is either by default or by design. A default brand is one that others assign to you. A default brand sounds like, "Herman is a micromanager" or "Gertrude doesn't follow through on projects." With this in mind, the brand others assign to you may not be the one you'd necessarily choose.

A well-designed personal brand is one you choose for yourself. How do you wish to be known? What's your core message and value differentiator? Do you know if others see you in the same way?

To manage your personal brand, assess where your brand currently stands. Take a survey. Ask friends, family, colleagues, and staff whose opinions you value what three words come to mind when they think of you and what they see as your top three skills. Knowing how you're perceived will help you leverage your strengths to enhance your personal brand.

### **Get real**

Personal branding is not about being fake. It's about being authentic and true to your core values and conveying this in all you do. Jeff

Bezos, CEO of Amazon said, “Personal branding is what people say about you after you leave the room.” Ensure that what’s said after you leave the room is how you wish to be perceived.

### **Get clear**

Clearly communicate your value by quantifying your contributions. Use stories and ROI-driven language to get your point across. Convey how you, your team, or your program will make the company money, save the company money, or streamline procedures. This strategy will not only help you track your results when lobbying for department budget dollars, but also help you lobby for a raise or bonus. Tracking your results also helps you take stock of your career and be prepared should your work situation change.

One senior leader I coached used this strategy to get training initiatives approved, as well as to earn a promotion and get chosen to head up the communication efforts of the company’s acquisition. Later, her employer was acquired by a Fortune 50. My client retained her role and was promoted yet again.

### **Get connected**

In my book, *Rock Your Network*, I recommend a three-step system to help you network effectively, starting with focus. What’s your networking goal and who needs to know about you? Inside your organization, identify key stakeholders across departments and generations.

At a recent event, I asked a two-star major general how she established the allies she mentioned in her talk. Her allies had helped her get significant change initiatives done. She said, “I’m very social. I went to the dinners and gatherings. And I talked to everyone. It didn’t matter their rank. You never know where someone will land.” She also was well prepared for each pitch meeting, conveying the value of her initiatives in bottom-line terms.

But you don’t have to be an extrovert to be an effective networker.

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One client has landed a few different roles over the years, all through one-on-one networking meetings. He always is willing to provide resources or tips that benefit his network. And it pays off.

Want raving fans who lobby for your success like the examples above? Identify ways you can add value to those in your network, then make a networking plan and set goals for reaching out to your internal and external networks. Whether you reach out online or off, keep in mind that face-to-face and voice-to-voice contact solidifies the business relationship.

**Get social**

Check where your brand currently stands by doing an online search of your name. Are the search results how you wish to be perceived? If not, change it.

It's important to have an online presence and actively participate in social media. Don't set it and forget it. Potential candidates you'd

like to hire will search for you online; as will suppliers, audience members at your next talk, contacts you meet networking, and more. According to a 2012 Harris Poll, 86 percent of people will search your name online before ever meeting you. Use social media to communicate your thought leadership, share your vision, and stay top of mind with your network.

Wondering which social networks to join? Choose those that are right for you, your career goals, and the target audience who needs to know about you. Typically, that's LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. But other networks may be right for your brand, too. Don't join so many social networks that you can't engage your fans.

Schedule social media time in your day. To save time networking online, repurpose what you're already doing. Have you read a blog post that would benefit your network? Repost it, stating the reason you found it helpful. Checking your LinkedIn account? Hit the like

button on a colleague's post and spread the word. Provide valuable, helpful information and use tools such as Hootsuite and Buffer to schedule tweets ahead of events, such as conferences, so you remain visible within your network.

### **Get noticed**

To win in today's competitive market, personal branding is an essential part of the game. By taking control and improving your personal brand, you'll design one that helps you stand out and attract the right opportunities for your career and your firm.

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