

## Career Intelligence: Strategies for Developing the Brand Called “Me”

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Quick... which company coined the phrase “Just Do It”? If your response was ‘Nike’, you’ve just demonstrated how effective a good brand can be!

We all know how relentlessly companies work to create brands that attract customers and business. What we fail to grasp is that every working individual needs to develop a Personal Brand as well.

Your Personal Brand defines your value, as perceived by others. Your manager, colleagues, internal clients and external customers all form impressions of your worth and characteristics. A stellar Personal Brand will get you interesting opportunities for professional growth and greater possibilities for career advancement. A lousy brand will expose you to the risk of losing your job or being passed on for promotion.

### Here are the top four actions you can take to create a strong brand:

1. Gain clarity. Identify what you want your brand to stand for (to learn how, see box). This will enable you to create a brand-by-design rather than let it happen by default. For example, once you get clear that you’d like to be known as a ‘team player’, you may decide to boost your brand’s reputation by helping at least one colleague each day in some way.
2. Manage your appearance to fit with your brand. Do you rely on that old comfy fleece jacket to protect you in the cold office, or do you choose a more tailored look? If you want your brand to feature you as ‘a leader’, choose the fleece at your own peril.
3. Adopt a brand-congruent attitude. Beyond the usual must-have attitude traits such as being positive and collaborative, it’s crucial to develop an attitude that specifically fits with your brand traits. For example, if you want a brand that stands for ‘professional’, avoid gossip and other forms of incivility.
4. Develop dynamite competencies. Let’s face it, you can have a phenomenal attitude, but if your skills aren’t up to much, your Personal Brand won’t be up to much either. So go out there and become the best at what you do.
5. If you have been at your current job for a while, you’ve already created a Personal Brand, whether you know it or not. If your brand is what you want it to be, work on perfecting it. If not, it’s never too late for corrective action!

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## A Brand-By-Design: Getting Started

What do you want your ‘personal brand’ to stand for – what words would you like people to use when describing you? (Examples: responsible, creative, helpful, leader, software expert, true collaborator, straight shooter etc)

Jot down your response.

1. Of the list you created above, list the 3-4 descriptors that you consider most important.
2. Now, on a scale of 1-10, honestly rate the extent to which you think you currently demonstrate these traits (10 = all the time, 1 = hardly ever).
3. If your manager were asked the same question, how do you suppose s/he would rate you on the same traits? (be honest, even if the answer may be unpleasant!)
4. For each of the traits, list one thing you can do over the next week to improve your self-score. In doing so, consider both your own and your manager’s score.
5. Then list two actions you can take over the next month to boost your brand further.

Now... Just Do It!



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