Stand Out: Boost Your Personal Brand
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Attention! I’m trying to get your attention—and so is everyone else.

Today, globally, people will send 270 billion emails. Headlines, links, videos, posts, podcasts, pop-ups, click-bait, chatbots, and tweets are vying for your eyes. The challenge for brands has never been greater: to reach audiences with a valuable message through all the noise. And by brands, I’m referring not only to product brands but also to your personal brand.

When personal branding first entered the business lexicon, perhaps you viewed it as a fleeting trend. You may not have connected with a term traditionally used for manufactured products. It may have sounded hokey or artificial. Worse yet, the notion of building it may have suggested the disagreeable task of self-promotion.

Today, having a strong personal brand is your new competitive advantage. After two decades as an executive coach, I am your witness that one of the most sought-after goals in coaching is personal branding.
In this issue of TD at Work, I will
• define personal branding
• walk you through a framework for developing your personal brand
• give tips on incorporating brand building into your daily schedule
• provide templates and tools for growing your brand.

What Is Personal Branding?

According to personal branding guru William Arruda, “personal branding is the habit of demonstrating and communicating your unique, valuable traits to communities where you can thrive.”

Like a reputation, a personal brand is something you have already—whether you like it or not. Your personal brand is based in authenticity. It’s real; it’s genuine; it’s what makes you unique. It includes your values, passions, “superpowers,” and even quirks.

If your job title defines you, you’re not unique—you’re replaceable. For example, every physician with a medical degree has the same job title. While it’s necessary, doctor neither distinguishes nor differentiates. The title is not the factor that may lead you to refer the physician to a friend. Rather, you may recommend a doctor because of the qualities that set her apart. It could be her bedside manner and the way she listens. Maybe it’s the simple way she describes complex medical issues. Perhaps she promotes preventative medicine rather than being quick to prescribe drugs for every malady. Maybe she never keeps you waiting. These are not the must-haves for all doctors; they are unique brand attributes.

Your aim is to have an in-demand brand—a brand with the positive attributes people desire.

When you have an in-demand brand, companies will select you to work on and deliver meaningful ideas, products, and services. They will single you out for recognition and favor you for promotions. Individuals who want to be your clients will seek after you.

Everyone has the potential to enhance their brand. This means focusing on delivering the value your audience treasures. People undoubtedly seek you out or compliment you for something that you do superbly. It may be for something that comes naturally or effortlessly to you. For me, people often ask me for advice on handling a tough conversation or a challenging professional situation. But no one would ever dream of asking me for Excel spreadsheet tricks—and for good reason.

Your aim should be to have positive brand attributes that people desire: an in-demand brand.

As you grow or as your work landscape changes, evolve your brand to stay relevant and meet your audiences’ needs. You may choose to amplify certain brand attributes and diminish others. For example, I recently conducted an interview-based 360-degree assessment—a process of gathering data from a broad range of stakeholders—for a high-potential executive client. Through the assessment, I learned that others perceived her as “stuck in the weeds.” Earlier in her career, she was rewarded for being attentive to every detail, but now as a more senior leader, she was expected to delegate the minutiae and set the strategy. More aptly put, it was time for her to diminish her brand attribute of detail orientation and amplify her knack for innovative thought.

Just like Volvo plays down its fine leather interior and promotes its safe-as-a-tank exterior, you can also influence your brand perception. Let’s explore how you do this. According to Ditch. Dare. Do!, you need to know your brand, show your brand, and grow your brand.

Know Your Brand

You can’t power up anything without having a tight handle on it. So, first, let’s get clear on what your personal brand is. By taking time to reflect, a picture of your unique strengths will emerge.

The greater your self-awareness, the easier it will be for you to step up, stand out, and succeed. As Daniel Goleman, the father of emotional intelligence, explains, “If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have
self-awareness ... then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far."

**Determine Your Brand Attributes**

To determine your brand attributes, begin by doing a brand self-exam. Your self-discovery doesn't need to include a pilgrimage or a meditative retreat. A brand self-exam simply requires you to pause in your day, be reflective, and articulate the answers to a few pointed questions about yourself—such as adjectives that describe you and projects that others come to you for—to collect your brand data.

To conduct the self-exam, find a distraction-free time, one where you are able to engage in self-reflection. A job aid at the end of this issue lists the questions and space for you to write your answers.

Don’t stop with the self-exam, because it’s not just what you think but also what others think. Others’ perceptions influence your professional success. For example, it’s possible you see yourself as a dynamic superstar communicator and others don’t. On the flip side, others may see you as an Excel wizard or their go-to best listener. Gather feedback from others, including professional and personal contacts, to gain a more accurate picture of your most desirable brand attributes. Find a distraction-free time and space to collect this feedback. From your self-reflection and interviews, you’ll find common brand attributes.

Next, in thinking about your career direction, choose the attributes you may want to amplify or diminish. As in the prior example of the senior leader, the attributes you choose to highlight or diminish will likely vary depending on your role and the stage of your career.

**Develop a Personal Brand Tagline**

Like any strong brand, you’ll need a tagline for sharing and raising awareness to your brand. Once you’ve defined your key attributes and determined those you want to amplify, pull together a pithy personal brand tagline.

Here are some examples of personal brand taglines:

- I make sure our talent has the skills, support, and sparkle they need to be the best in the industry.
- I’m a data explorer. I can grow your business by driving deeper understanding through data analytics.
- Coach. Author. Career blaster. I’m here on Earth to help as many people as possible soar professionally.

**One-Word Brands**

The strongest brands in the world can be described with one word. For example, Apple is synonymous with innovation, Volvo with safety, and Disney with fun. These brands not only have name recognition, but they’re also deeply desired. And when you strongly desire an Apple Watch, a Volvo family car, or a trip to Disney, you have little price sensitivity.

Whether you’re finding it challenging to come up with a tagline or simply have a yen for something pithier, developing a single word to describe your personal brand is a challenge that will heighten your self-awareness and help you know your brand more deeply.

First, identify what you do best with one word. Next, check that word out with others to make sure that they associate it with you or that you own it. Finally, integrate that word into all that you do at work. You, too, can be a one-word brand.

To formulate your personal brand tagline, focus on three aspects:

- what you do
- how you do this uniquely
- whom you do it for.

Keep your personal brand tagline brief and relevant to your audience. And go the extra attention-grabbing yard by adding something intriguing.

**Establish a Daily Brand-Building Habit**

After you’ve formulated your personal brand, intentionally work on it to make it a habit. According to Philippa Lally at Cancer Research UK, it takes an average of 66 days to form a new habit. Make a point to work on your brand building for 66 days, and soon it will be automatic and you’ll begin to yield the benefits.

**Show Your Brand**

Once you know your brand, it’s time to make it visible to others in the workplace. When your brand is transparent, others will seek you out, giving you opportunities to do