

Personal branding

Define how others perceive you

You are always branding yourself. Everything you do and say as well as how you engage with others creates an impression and that impression, reinforced over time, becomes your personal brand (PB).

Whether you intentionally create your PB or not, be aware, you are making an impression.

Early in my career, it became obvious that the people being promoted all possessed similar characteristics. Was this a coincidence? Or did they know something I didn't? This awareness led me to become a conscious observer. I listened and watched everything these top performers did and said.

Within a short time I learned that they weren't focused on managing their "to-do" lists – they were managing their careers. They purposely invested time, energy and resources to create a valued reputation while helping the company achieve its desired goals.

PB is the process of authentically aligning who you are with the experience others have with you. It means deliberately creating an impression about your areas of expertise, how you engage with others, how you think and process information, and how well you execute and achieve results.

Your PB is about defining the experience you want others to have of and with you.

Why is your PB important?

- » It opens doors and helps you build market share.
- » It elevates your perceived worth.
- » It defines the value you bring to a client or employer.
- » From a networking standpoint, you can more easily define the types of prospects who can benefit from your brand of expertise.

How do you create your PB?

Step 1: Craft your list of qualities

Develop a list of attributes that make you unique, different and valuable to your clients/employer. Then select a handful of people you trust and ask them to define up to three qualities that they most admire about you.

I suggest this only because we sometimes take for granted our greatest and most unique qualities. To illustrate, I have a colleague who is an amazing synthesizer of complex information. Recently, I com-

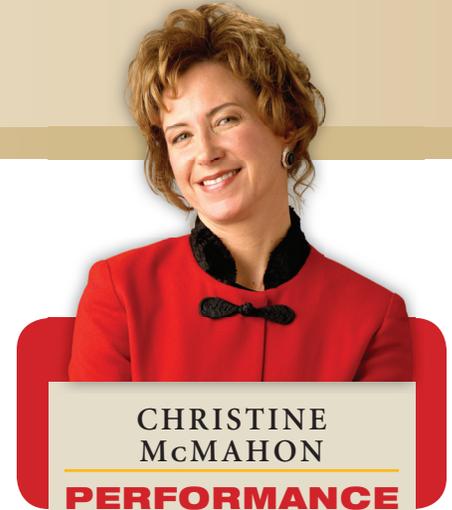
mented on how incredible he is at turning volumes of information into easy, bite-sized pieces for the average person to process and absorb. Without thinking he replied, "It's just what I do." Exactly! It is just what YOU do and no one I know does it better.

Step 2: Narrow your list

Once you've developed your list, narrow it down to the most compelling, unique, powerful, marketable, etc., five qualities.

Step 3: Define each quality

Next, define the value or impact that each quality offers. Let's say your list includes diligent researcher, persuasive communicator, and compelling presenter. In their current form each descriptor is a feature and fea-



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tures aren't brand-builders. Benefits build brands. Benefits provide tangible value to a prospective client/employer.

To discover the benefit behind the feature, ask yourself clarifying questions such as:

A. What does it mean to my clients (or employer) to be a diligent researcher?

I present quantifiable information that helps them make fact-based and informed decisions.

B. How does being a diligent researcher support their success?

Since I can quantify results, I help them make the right decision, which saves them time, money and valuable resources in the process. For example, at Simple Samples I discovered and researched a new business opportunity that generated \$3 million in net new revenue in the first year.

C. How can I leverage this talent to improve my customer's (or my employer's) business situation?

Many companies today are so lean they can't afford to allocate human capital for research. I have a proven track-record for efficiently finding

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information, synthesizing it, and providing specific and quantifiable recommendations that either saves or makes them money.

Continue this process for the remaining qualities on your list. Then as you read through each descriptor, circle the ones where you are silently saying to yourself, “Yep, that’s me!” This is your power list.

Step 4: Market yourself

Now it’s time to position yourself in the market and let people know you exist. Be sure your message is easy to understand and that you are consistent. Think one message, many channels.

Decide how your target market will find you, i.e., what media channels do they read or go to for your brand of information? What events do they attend?

Once you’ve gathered this information, develop a presence.

It’s a myth to think, “If you build it, they will come.” Marketing requires thoughtful planning and time, time to create your image and reinforce it with compelling new material that continues to demonstrate and reinforce your competency.

Everyone is brand worthy. Each of us possesses genius traits and genuine talents. Dedicating the time to define your PB is mission critical to your success. It provides you with a road map that guides you from where you are now to where you want to be.

You are a free agent in a world of free agents. Your authenticity is part of your strategic – and competitive – advantage. ■

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