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5 Tips on Developing and Profiting from Your Personal Brand

By Rayona Sharpnack



We have to face the facts about the business world we work in. Although change is slowly moving toward equal opportunity for women, even today qualified women get repeatedly passed over for new opportunities, stretch assignments, even promotions. Their ideas may get attributed to someone else – usually a male who picked up on their idea and spoke up about it. (Rarely, if ever, are they even trying to steal it.)

Developing a personal brand is an excellent way to mitigate those frustrations.

1. You can use your personal brand to expand your scope. If you have established a personal brand (which by definition means others will know about it), people will think of you in situations where that kind of skill is needed. "Rachel is a risk-taker, why don't we try her out on this stretch assignment?" Or, "Jenna is a great listener. Let's bring her along on the visit to that dissatisfied client and see if she can bring them around."
2. You can use it to get and keep credit for your ideas. When you come up with a new idea at a team meeting, you can link it to your brand so that people remember it was your idea. "You all know I love solving problems, so what I'm thinking is...." "I'm all about coming in under budget, so let's talk about whether we can cut out Step 4 and get that same result."

Now that you see how vital having a personal brand can be to your career advancement, we are going to back up a step. First you have to create that brand. You have to intentionally design **your reputation at work**.

3. Ask yourself what you want people to say about you. What can people count on you for? When they think of you, what comes to mind? Start by identifying the qualities or characteristics that make you distinctive from your competitors — or your colleagues. What have you done lately — *this week* — to make yourself stand out? Ask yourself what you do that adds remarkable, measurable, and distinctive value?
4. Next, what would your colleagues or your customers say is your greatest and clearest strength....or most noteworthy (as in, worthy of note) personal trait? (You can even ask them, if they are friends or mentors.)

- Do you deliver your work on time, every time?
- Do your internal or external customers get dependable, reliable service that meets their strategic needs?
- Do you anticipate and solve problems before they become crises?
- Do your clients save money and/or headaches just by having you on the team?
- Do you always complete your projects within the allotted budget?
- Do your ideas and encouragement open the team to new solutions undertaken with fresh energy?
- Are you a courageous “truth teller” with senior leaders?

5. You should be building quite a list by now. It's time to ask yourself, what do I do that I am most proud of? What have I accomplished that I can unabashedly brag about? If you're going to have a brand, it has to be authentic. It has to be something that not only adds value but something you can become relentlessly focused on and *shamelessly* take credit for *because you know it's true*.

When you've done that, sit down and ask yourself one more question to define your brand: What legacy do I want to leave? What do I want to be famous for? That's right — *famous* for!

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