

5 Ways to Build Your Personal Brand At Work

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The idea of being a “quiet leader” has always appealed to me. I was never a fan of colleagues who seemed to brag or self-promote at work. However, early on in my career, my manager told me that if no one else in the company actually knows about my work accomplishments, those accomplishments won’t really count for much.

Hearing this was a bit of a rude awakening for me. Up until that point, I’d always presumed that my work would speak for itself. I assumed that if I worked hard, the quality and impact would be obvious.

However, as someone who spent the majority of my career working in brand marketing, I quickly discovered the power and necessity of positive PR on the growth and positive trajectory of products and brands. So it didn’t take long for me to realize that my own *internal* PR within an organization would have a direct impact on my own personal brand and career trajectory.

PROMOTED

Gone are the days when personal branding was only for celebrities or executives. Stacey Cohen, CEO of Co-Communications, says you should always be reinforcing your value to brand both yourself and your company. “Personal brands aren't reserved for CEOs. A company's rank and file employees should capitalize, too. It allows professionals to differentiate themselves, and also angle for the promotion that best suits them.”

[Personal branding is a way of establishing and consistently reinforcing who you are and what you stand for in your career and life.](#) Here are five ways you can be on the front foot of strengthening your personal brand within your organization and beyond.

1. Say Yes To Relevant Opportunities



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In one of my first brand marketing roles at a large consumer packaged goods company, I spent much of my first couple years neck-deep in analyzing our brand's performance, going deep into monthly market data. On the one hand, this taught me the nuts and bolts of marketing analytics and allowed me to understand the commercial metrics behind our business. But on the other hand, my identity started to become the go-to “data-guy” on our brand, something that felt limiting to me as an aspiring brand manager. I eventually had to make a point to advocate for myself to get involved in more creative projects, which eventually allowed me to create a more versatile, well-rounded identity for myself.

I work with a lot of people trying to change directions in their careers, and one of the most common questions I get is about how to change the way other people see you, especially when your personal brand is holding you back from reaching the next stage in your career. For

example, if other people think you have certain strengths or weaknesses that put you in a certain box, how do you shift those perceptions?

One way to reshape your professional reputation is to engage in projects, roles, or initiatives that strengthen your desired identity. Jo Miller, CEO of Be Leaderly, explains that your personal brand needs to evolve at certain points in your career, or it will hold you back. She recommends you think about where you want to be in a few years, then consider which specific activities will help you build the personal brand you need to reach that goal. “Actively seek out and volunteer for high-profile roles and assignments where you can demonstrate your new brand in action.”

Tip: complete an audit of your projects on your own and with your manager to align and focus on those that best reinforce the personal brand you’re trying to build.

2. Speak At A Conference



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I would describe myself as a strong introvert, which some people may find surprising since I spend a good chunk of my time now hosting workshops and delivering keynote talks at events. However, as someone who once found public speaking a bit nerve-wracking, I can definitely empathize with people who don’t exactly jump at the idea of getting up in front of your colleagues at your company’s annual meeting.

However, being the featured speaker, either in front of fellow colleagues within your company or other professionals at a larger industry conference, can be an incredibly powerful way to build your professional reputation and reinforce your credibility as a domain expert.

Jeff Butler, an author who has served as a TEDx speaker, explains that people who step onto a stage are seen as authorities and leaders. “Speaking gets you that immediate credibility not only internally but also externally where other companies are now seeing you as an expert.” He also states that speaking at industry conferences is not only good for you but also good for your company. “Companies want the exposure, so they are eager to have employees speak.”

Tip: volunteer to share a project update at an upcoming company meeting or conference that reinforces an area of expertise you want to be known for.

3. Ask One Question At Every Meeting You Attend



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My philosophy had always been to err on the side of *only* saying something if I have something truly unique and valuable to add because we’ve all been to meetings where there’s someone who’s speaking just for the sake of getting some air-time.

However, I was once told by one of my managers that I needed to “speak up” more during our meetings. I could see her point. If you don’t say anything or ask anything in a meeting, others simply won’t notice you, and you certainly won’t be building a reputation for anything other than being the “quiet one.”

Don’t talk for the sake of talking, but find a way that works for you to verbally engage in staff meetings, events, launch events or conferences. Grant Schreiber, Editor, Founder and CEO of Schreiber Media says conferences are an especially valuable opportunity when asking good questions can help build your personal brand. “Come prepared with an unusual question that sheds a new light on the topic being discussed—the more original the better. Introduce yourself

before asking the question with your full name, title and, company.” Schreiber describes this as the “best free personal branding you’ll ever get” that allows you to also raise your profile among fellow colleagues in attendance.

Tip: at your next meeting, make a point to ask a relevant question related to your expertise that helps deepen the discussion or clarify a particular topic.

4. Network Internally Beyond Your Immediate Team



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I pride myself on being a hard worker. If you ask any of my former colleagues, they wouldn’t describe me as the chattiest guy in the office. In fact, they would probably instead say that I tended to put my head down and just work away for hours without interruption. On the one hand, that work ethic allowed me to be quite efficient and productive, but on the other, it may have come at the cost of spending more time with colleagues at the water cooler.

As my career progressed, knowing my tendency was to quietly work away at my desk, I had to make more of a point to chit-chat a bit more, never eat lunch alone, and most importantly, proactively walk the halls to connect with people throughout the organization.

Morgan Chaney, Head of Marketing Blueboard.com, says that that internal networking and relationship-building is critical to building your personal brand. “This means internal networking above and beyond your immediate teammates.” Chaney states raising your visibility amongst colleagues also makes you more promotable. “People promote the people they know, trust, and who they see stretching beyond their immediate duties. Interacting with other teams and their

leadership gives you a household name, and creates opportunities for you to become a more well-rounded contributor to your business.”

Tip: reconnect with one colleague outside your immediate function to learn more about their current priorities and discuss potential ways you could help one another based on your specific areas of expertise.

5. Share Your Voice With Influencers



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One of the best ways to amplify your personal brand is to leverage the reach of journalists, influencers, and industry leaders. Although I now do a fair amount of writing myself for a range of career publications, I also try to make a point to share “expert” views and perspectives on specific topics where I’m continually trying to reinforce my domain expertise.

Cohen says you should make a point to proactively provide advice and support within your area of expertise. “Serve on boards. Engage with other industry leaders and journalists. Join relevant groups and make connections. Engage in both online and offline communities.”

With social media groups, consider actively engaging in discussions on relevant LinkedIn, Quora, or Facebook groups. If you want to get your voice featured in relevant industry coverage, you could make yourself available as an expert commentator amongst journalists covering your particular trade. You can also respond to journalists actively writing pieces on specific beats, tapping into online resources like HARO, ProfNet, or Pressfarm.

Tip: reach out to one relevant industry journalist, making yourself available for comment related to an area of expertise that reinforces your personal brand.

Summary: If You Don't Define Your Personal Brand, Others Will



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[Everything you do either strengthens or dilutes the personal brand you're trying to create.](#)

Building a strong personal brand is a choice. Personal branding takes time, effort, and energy. However, investing your energy to selectively engage with specific projects, conferences, meetings, relationships, and influencers can help you build a focused reputation. If you don't, you may be leaving yourself open to being labeled in ways that don't align with the type of professional you want to be.

My recommendation is to invest the time necessary, every single day, to further strengthen your personal brand with every single interaction and opportunity that comes your way. The professional opportunities and personal focus you can gain are absolutely worth it.

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