

# Creating your

# personal brand



"You are the chief marketing officer for the brand called you, but what others say about your brand is more impactful than what you say about yourself." Dan Schawbel, author of *Me 2.0*

What three words or phrases do other people use most to describe you? In essence, I'm asking about your "personal brand," which is all about the qualities that others *perceive* you as having.

These days, job seekers have to work hard to become clear about their differentiating qualities. When an interviewer is faced with a stack of 1,000 resumé's for one job, "Why should we hire you?" becomes a critical question to be able to answer in a memorable way.

There's nothing like being out of a job to help you act fast on figuring out your core message and "marketing yourself." Unfortunately, people aren't nearly as proactive about marketing themselves while they are employed.

Marketing has a bad rap. Women in particular often equate marketing themselves with showing off. And yet, connecting with others; ensuring your organization understands your capabilities; and contributing your expertise are all elements of marketing yourself.



BY SUE EDWARDS

**Connecting with others:** Connecting with others is important. You can't be an expert in everything. Knowing a range of people can help you put your finger on answers more readily. And, of course, the more people who know and feel connected to you, the better.

Connections need to be both inside and outside your company. The breadth of your connections brings value back to your own organization.

Make time for face-to-face connections where you can. The telephone is a good tool too. And don't overlook social media for powerful and efficient ways of connecting with others. LinkedIn is an excellent business tool and it's NOT just for people looking for a new job. Many groups are geared to business owners or people within companies trading ideas with one another.

Depending on the nature of your business, other forms of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, may also be valuable tools for connection.

**Communicating your capabilities:** Sometimes people do not see themselves as others view them. The harsh >

reality is that what others see, hear and assume about you is frankly all that matters. Perception is reality. The boss who “doesn’t know who you really are” will nevertheless make decisions about your readiness for promotion or the appropriateness of assigning you to a particular project team. It’s YOUR job to market yourself in alignment with who you are. Having a boss “not get you” is not OK.

Women in particular are often reluctant to toot their own horns. However, I see it as the mark of a mature and self-aware leader, who can embrace and leverage her strengths, making sure that people know what comes naturally to her.

**Contributing:** Each time you are in a meeting, you are also in essence

marketing yourself. Holding back from contributing undermines how you are perceived.

Social media is an exceptional means of contributing your knowledge, ideas and opinions. These contributions form part of your personal brand, and enhance the value that you bring to others.

So, let’s shake off those long-held misconceptions about marketing yourself and think in terms of connecting, contributing and communicating your competence in ways that are authentic for you! •

*Sue Edwards is President of Development by Design, a leadership coaching firm. She supports her clients in marketing themselves successfully and authentically.*

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