

9 Things You Need to Do Right Now to Build Your Personal Brand



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Unless you're *summa cum laucky*, have the networking connections of a Rockefeller or are a computer science professional who's skills are in demand, chances are you will face periods of frustration, self-doubt and failure throughout your career.

Finding a good job and navigating your career have never been easy What's easy is to feel stuck and unsure of which career paths are best for your talents and preferences.

Realize that your personal brand is communicating to others whether you do anything or not.

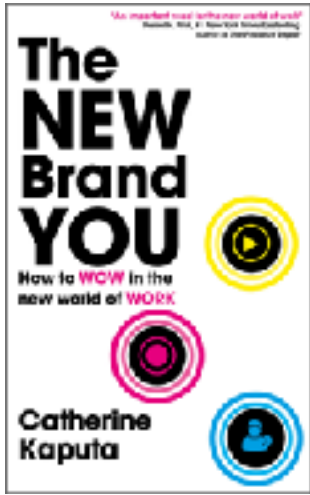
Take Lara whose story is highlighted in my new book, *The New Brand You: How to Wow in the New World of Work*. Because of her hard work and successful team projects, Lara was hoping to get promoted at her company.

Then the pandemic hit. Her company merged with another larger company, and Lara got a new boss who didn't know of her past deeds.

Lara had been so focused on her work, she didn't have many contacts or strong relationships inside or outside the company. She quickly realized that she needed an action plan to create a new future for herself. She needed to stand for something of value, and she needed to take positive steps to achieve her goals.

In the new world of work, personal branding is more important than ever if you want to prosper. This e-book will introduce 10 tips for standing out and succeeding with a strong personal brand no matter what the job world throws at you.

1. Find your differentiator: What's different about you and why it matters



Corporate icons, star athletes, and Hollywood celebrities all have what it takes to be in control and in demand — a unique brand.

Personal branding can be subtle or grating, up-to-date or out-of-date, but if you don't participate, you will be left behind. After all, if you don't brand yourself, other people will. And no doubt, they won't brand you the way you want to be branded.

You need to learn how to use the secrets of branding to develop a strong, positive "career identity" for yourself, and how to apply branding principles to your most important product — Brand You.

"Be different" is a cardinal rule of branding. Commit to doing some research and analysis about Brand You.

Ask yourself:

- How are you different, even better, than others?
- Unlike others in your field, you (fill in the blank)
- How is the marketplace in your industry changing?
- What could be an opportunity for you?

What you're searching for is the sweet spot - the intersection of a good idea and a market need you can satisfy.

2. Brand yourself in a sentence that conveys your value



If you can tell employers why you are better, different or unique, you will get them interested.

But if you can tell them how you can solve their problem, the job offer will likely be yours. That's where your elevator pitch outlining your unique selling proposition (USP) comes in.

A pitch should convey the core idea you want people to remember about you.

A pitch's purpose is not to educate. It's to sell.

Its purpose is not to teach. It's to excite.

Whether you're pitching yourself for a promotion, in a job interview or meeting someone new at a networking event, you've got to have a good answer to the questions, "Tell me about yourself" and "What do you bring to the job that others don't?"

You need a differentiator, a reply that sets you apart from others and conveys the value that you - and only you - bring to a work situation.

3. Use social media to build your brand



Everyone Googles everyone else in business and when they look for you they'll either find a strong brand, a weak one or nothing.

A weak digital footprint is like a weak reputation. People won't think you're as good as someone with a strong online reputation.

Successful professionals use social media like LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook as a strategic resource to nurture existing professional relationships and attract new career contacts.

Your LinkedIn profile is often the first impression you make with a potential employer. That's why you need to take the time to not only fill out all of the sections on LinkedIn, but to craft a powerful personal brand and actively use it to network and expand your brand presence and contacts.

The decision to hire you and build a career relationship with you is based on perceptions and social media is a big factor in molding professional perceptions today. Look at the numbers, a whopping 78 percent say they Google prospective employees, and 94 percent of recruiters use LinkedIn to find and vet job candidates.

If you've ever marketed yourself on dating sites like Match.com, you know how important a great profile and flattering picture are to success. The same is true on LinkedIn. Master the LinkedIn Headline so it conveys the key thing you want people to know about you. You'll only get 120 characters to make a power statement about yourself and include relevant keywords. Here's an example: "Innovative computer programmer: Known for building Next-Gen Software, C++, Python, Java."

4. Tap into the “hidden job” market



According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, the majority of jobs (and many believe the best jobs) are never advertised. You can't find out about them in the public job market on job sites or company web sites.

Networking and marketing yourself directly to companies is the only way to find out about the “*hidden job market*,” the majority and the best jobs that are never advertised or posted online.

Most people miss out on the hidden job market because online job postings are their main job hunting activity. That's why it's smart to take a more strategic approach and spend 70 percent of your time on marketing and networking activities to tap the hidden job market, and 30 percent on online job hunting to tap the public job market.

So how do you tap the hidden job market of unadvertised jobs? Here are the 4 key ways:

- **Referral:** Through your network, you are introduced to someone at the company who refers you to the hiring manager.
- **Direct Pitch:** You write a letter, email or social media message to the hiring manager, which is so compelling, you are invited in for a meeting.
- **Internal Hire:** You already work at the company, hear about the opportunity and pitch yourself for the opportunity.
- **Personal Marketing:** A recruiter or hiring manager finds you online through social media

5. Keep your brand up-to-date with new credentials and accomplishments



Brands are always coming up with product enhancements or “new and improved” ingredients. The business world is dynamic, and your brand needs to be dynamic and up-to-date too or you’ll quickly become yesterday’s news.

Recommendations, certifications and awards can make you stand out. They differentiate you from other people and act as a kind of third-party endorsement as well as proof of performance.

That’s why getting people to recommend you on LinkedIn or through a personal phone call is so important.

Certifications in skills that are in demand can also propel your career. Many careers have certifications in key skills that you can get at industry conferences or online.

Put together a brag book, a notebook or file of accomplishments, complimentary letters and emails, newspaper clippings, and credentials. Your brag book can take the form of a brochure, attractive binder or PowerPoint, and its purpose is to sell Brand You.

Don’t take people through it on interviews, but use it as a leave-behind. You can include personal marketing pieces like your profile statement or narrative bio, a one-pager of key achievements, awards and certifications and the like.



6. Become a little bit famous



Humility may be a virtue, but visibility is important for brands and it's important for you too.

Most of us have low wattage on the visibility spectrum. We are unknown outside of a small network of friends and professional contacts. We are not boldface names. As I show in my book, *Women Who Brand*, women especially can be visibility challenged and hide in the shadows in the business world.

When I talk about fame, I'm talking of fame on some level - famous in your industry, company, division, or department.

And we're talking of being famous for something - an idea, an achievement, an area of excellence.

Brand managers build visibility for their brands through advertising, PR, events, product placement and social media programs. Today, with the internet and social media, you have many avenues at your disposal to build visibility for Brand You. You can gauge your visibility by Googling your name or using an online tool.

You can start out with low visibility tactics like being a project leader, giving presentations and talks, playing a leadership role in charitable activities or company groups. Getting involved in industry association activities is a great way to build your brand in your field.

7. Build a network that's big and broad but selectively deep



You can't do it alone. You'll need an army of helpers. You'll find networking a lot easier if you take the work out of networking. You make it a chore when your primary goal is making contacts. Make your goal expanding your thinking and getting new ideas for your business or career and maybe some lifelong friends in the process.

As you grow your network, don't be afraid to tap into it for help as Jamie discovered. Jamie was in marketing but she felt stuck and under appreciated in her job. She had substantial student debt and wanted a more challenging job where her talents were valued and offered better compensation.

Jamie noticed a job posting at a top company and she made it into the final round of interviews. The interviews went so well that Jamie felt sure she had the job.

Of course, we know how this story ends. The job went to Sylvie who had a strong network of supporters. What Jamie discovered was that she had *interviewed* for the job, but Sylvie had *networked* her way into the job.

Surprise, the most qualified person doesn't necessarily get the job! What tipped the scales were recommendations that Sylvie had asked colleagues to make on her behalf. Jamie had just filled out the application for the job and felt that her credentials and experience should speak for themselves. But it's never as simple as that.



8. Develop a personal marketing plan every year



Defining your personal branding goals is one thing. Making your goals a reality is something else. To accomplish anything, you must have an action plan.

A personal brand action plan consists of the following:

- **Goals:** Lay out the path you plan to take by setting two or three concrete goals for yourself.
- **Self-Brand Strategy:** Define your brand positioning that sets you apart from others.
- **Time Frame:** Set a time frame to check your progress against.
- **Tactics:** Outline a series of specific marketing and professional activities that will help you reach your goals.
- **Measurement:** Check your success by noting your progress at periodic checkpoints

A self-brand marketing plan is not carved in stone. Situations change. You change.

Change always creates new opportunities and challenges. But if you do a marketing plan every year and look at the opportunities and threats in the marketplace, you will stay on top of your game.

9 Have a consistent brand at every touchpoint and track your progress.



You will want to step back from time to time to look at your career identity holistically. What are all the places where people come into contact with you, both online and offline? What is that experience like, and is it consistent? How do prospects find out about you? What do they learn?

Do you know? When you do that, you'll find that you have many contact points, what marketers call touch points: your LinkedIn profile, your social media presence, and your self-presentation in person. You want every one of your touch points to convey a consistent, positive impression. And you should always be looking for ways to increase your touch points.

Marketers have always known that the best way to sell your brand is to get other people to do it for you. That's why they seek out testimonials from influential people and you should too. Seek out people you worked with on projects at work, volunteer activities and the like to write a recommendation on your LinkedIn profile or for an achievements addendum to your resume.

Each of us is unique. No one can create the best career and personal journey for you but you. You must take ownership but personal branding will help you make the most of your most important asset, Brand You.

To learn more about leveraging your brand, visit www.selfbrand.com.

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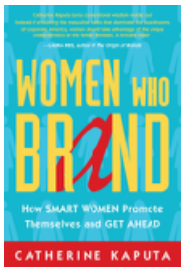
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Catherine Kaputa: Brand Strategist, Speaker, Author

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“Your brand can make you a star in the business world — or break you. That’s why Catherine Kaputa and her ideas on personal branding can make such a difference. Her speaking event at PepsiCo was very well received. She gives those who attend her talks, practical and strategic steps to achieving what they once saw as an impossible dream.”

Beverly Tarulli
VP Organizational Development
PepsiCo

“Catherine Kaputa came in like a whirlwind of fresh ideas that turned my thinking about my brand upside down! She gave me ideas and motivation to define and differentiate my personal brand, to think bigger about myself and talents, and the tactics to bring maximum benefit to me and the company I work for.”

Elizabeth Hitchcock
Co-Head
Women’s Initiative
Microsoft

Inquire about bringing in [Catherine](#) as a speaker at your organization. selfbrand.com