



DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Having a good professional reputation is an obvious key to success, but many people don't take the time to nurture it. Or they don't know how. I find it helpful to think about a reputation as a personal brand. Developing your own unique brand is considered not a luxury but an essential for future employability and success.

I work with corporate clients in the area of brand development, and I've identified the DNA that makes up a good brand. This DNA, the basis which guides the development of a brand, also applies to individuals as well as to products and organizations.

DNA is, coincidentally, an acronym. To get you started on your journey of ongoing individual brand development, contemplate these three concepts, which form a similar acronym:

Dependability

A good brand is consistent. With a good brand, there are never any unpleasant surprises. You can count on a brand to help you quickly sort through an unlimited list of options to identify "a sure thing." In the old days, there was a sales adage that went something like this: "Nobody ever got in trouble for purchasing IBM." If you aren't old enough to recall exactly what that meant, it alluded to the fact that IBM was not always the "best" or "most innovative" or "most anything" for that matter, but it was a dependable brand.

When applied to you, the question becomes: What can others -- your customers, employer, and colleagues -- depend on you for? What kind of "sure thing" are you exactly?

Whatever you decide distinguishes you in the marketplace of talent, make sure consistency is the bedrock of your brand.

Novelty

OK, so what makes you different? It's not enough to be as dependable as everyone or anyone else. Brands always have substantive identifiable differences -- perceptually if not in fact -- in the mind of the marketplace.

Being a generalist isn't a bad thing, but being a generalist without any discernible specialized skills, abilities, or talents isn't a great thing, either.

What makes you different (or better)? While weird may work for celebrities, it is seldom a desirable attribute for the world of commerce. For a difference to be valuable to the brand, it must be valuable to the customer.

Attitude

This is the most nebulous part of a brand. It is more than a combination of novelty and dependability. I call it the brand's predisposition to the world. It is about the vibe a brand puts out. It's about the demeanor and flavor and orientation.

Attitude is how the brand -- "you, inc." or "organization, inc." -- presents itself to the world. I believe that all brands have a boldness about them. Even if a brand is quiet, dependable, and safe, those attributes are expressed to the marketplace boldly and definitively.

What is your attitude? Have you considered it and identified it? Is the attitude of your brand something that draws others to it, or puts them off?

DNA. Dependability. Novelty. Attitude.

As a first step toward marketing yourself better, take some time soon to write out the DNA of your brand.

