

Building Your Personal Brand Without Boasting

Tips for creating your strategic plan by linking your brand to your career goals

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» **WON'T I LOOK LIKE A JERK? Not if you do it right!**

One of the biggest hurdles to strategic personal brand development is the perception people hold that thinking, and even talking about themselves (gasp!), is counter to their desire to appear humble and demure. We can all think of the person in our lives whose lack of humility has been off-putting. These examples further solidify our near-allergic reaction to the idea of taking personal branding seriously. Who wants to be that jerk?

Personal Branding and Boastful Self-absorption Aren't Compatible

Boasting and all its related behaviors negatively impact personal brand. Need proof? Just remember back to a moment ago when you visualized that person who lacks humility. My guess is that you don't think terribly highly of this individual, right?

A high degree of self-awareness, and the accompanying appropriate levels of humility and compromise, are keys to successful personal brands in the vast majority of cases. When someone exhibits a willingness to engage with others cooperatively, to listen and take note of others' opinions, and to learn and grow from their mistakes, they are already more likely to have a strong personal brand foundation to build upon. If you consider yourself a humble individual, that is no excuse not to focus on your personal brand. In fact, you likely already have a head start.

Embrace Humility as Core to Your Brand

Let your humbler inclinations become a centerpiece of your personal brand. Be careful not to confuse humility with an aversion to showcasing your skills and strengths. Don't let being humble stop you from having the impact you wish to have. If you do fall into this trap, you may end up stuck in the land of waiting and hoping that someone notices how smart and good you are at something important while the world whizzes by. This is a hard trap to get out of in the world we live in now. Figure out how to showcase your strengths without violating your core sense of humility.

Branding is Not Boasting

There are countless ways to build your personal brand, and boasting is not one of them. What follows are three strategies for building your personal brand without boasting. Focus on how it will help your personal brand development, and it will serve you well without the worrisome ickiness you might equate with personal branding today. Go out there and give to others, ask for advice, and take a risk or two—your personal brand will thank you for it.

DEVELOPING YOUR PERSONAL BRANDING PLAN: babson.edu/personalbrand

» Three Ways to Build Your Brand and Still Be Humble

1 Go with the Give

As you work to get more comfortable with showcasing your strengths, experiences, and differentiators, a great place to start is from a position of giving. The first thing you must do in order for this to work is to shift your mindset. Think of your personal branding efforts as ways to give to others, not as a self-serving act. Start with your values and seek to give to others in ways that are aligned.

- » If you are excellent at spreadsheets, seek out a not-for-profit organization that you would like to support, and volunteer to help manage their databases or to train their staff on easy ways to reduce time during their budget season.
- » Perhaps you are an excellent writer. You can volunteer to write the next major quarterly report for your team.

In both of these scenarios, you are taking an area of strength and giving it freely for the greater good. You also are building your personal brand. Select a skill or strength that you want to be known for and demonstrate and reinforce your effectiveness, expanding the network of individuals who know this is a strength of yours as you add value. Those who benefit are happy because you helped them, and you are happy because, by doing so, you showcased your area of strength. Speak up, take initiative, and introduce the skills you want to be known for in contexts where they will have value. It's a win-win.

2 Ask for Advice

Ask for information, input, or advice from influencers and people you know you could learn from. I know this sounds too easy. Can you really build your brand by asking for insight from people you respect? Yes indeed! When you demonstrate a willingness to learn from others, to seek out feedback or advice, and to then act on that input where appropriate, you are sending a strong message about your willingness to grow and learn. This is a powerful positive in the world of a personal brand. By seeking out others who can share their knowledge, you also are expanding your network, and showing others what you care about and perhaps even where you shine. Again, if you do this in a disingenuous or overly self-serving way, you will damage your personal brand. Select someone you have a genuine desire to learn from, and not only will you have a valuable conversation—you will build an ally and demonstrate your brand all in one sitting.

3 Step Up and Take a Risk

One of the best (and most humble) ways to build your personal brand is to take a risk. Put yourself out there in some way that may push your boundaries a little.

- » Volunteer for a project that is outside of your comfort zone
- » Lean in when others are hesitating and take on a difficult assignment

In both cases, yes, you are likely going to have to stray away from your existing strengths, but these opportunities provide a chance for you to develop new ones. They also often broaden your network by exposing you to individuals you don't usually work with. Risks can help your personal brand by demonstrating a willingness to push yourself, learn, and pivot. These are serious positives in our rapidly evolving and often uncertain world.

Ready to build your brand? Join us for our course, “From Competence to Confidence: Developing Your Personal Brand” and learn how.

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