Most of us have no problem determining how to market our companies or our products. Thinking of ourselves as a brand, however, takes a little mental adjustment. But it can be a smart way to manage a career. Find out how to brand yourself successful with the following steps:

The first step is to stop thinking of yourself as an employee and start thinking of yourself as a company. Consider this:

- You have customers - your actual customers, your boss, and anyone at your company that you provide a service to.
- You have vendors - your actual vendors and those people in the office whose services you rely on.
- You have a product - you. Everything you do professionally reflects on and builds your brand value.

**Basic Brand Strategy**

Typical brand management work would include establishing long-term goals, understanding strengths and weaknesses, knowing the competition (sounds harsh, but there are only so many jobs), and knowing the market. For our purposes we are going to focus in on the basics of branding. The four P’s: Position, Promotion, Placement, and Price.

**Position**

Positioning defines a product in the mind of the consumer. It is the essence of the brand. You may not need a personal tag line or logo, but you definitely need a strong position. How do you want to be seen by others? Work on your personal positioning by focusing on your strengths and figuring out what is unique about you.

Knowing how to summarize what you do and how well you do it is an important part of communicating your personal position. Start by crafting a 15 second elevator pitch that answers these questions:

- What is your area of expertise:
  - **Bad:** “I work in marketing.”
  - **Good:** “I launch consumer brands and deal with all stages from product development to consumer advertising. But my real passion is marketing to kids.”

- When have you done it well:
  - **Bad:** “I’ve launched lots of products.”
• Good: “One of my favorite projects was launching product X which targeted inner-city tweens.”
• What were the results:
• Bad: “It was a really successful launch.”
• Good: “Within eight months we were number three at retail in our category.”

If you can explain your strengths in the time it takes to ride an elevator, you’ve got it.

Promotion

Network, network, network. Make sure that you are representing yourself well in all environments. Self-promote with vendors, competitors, and even co-workers. Be vocal about your current successes, and let people know where you want to go in the future. You never know who might be able to help you get there.

Placement

Where are you working? Like it or not, if your company is not doing well, it reflects poorly on you. Successful companies look good on a resume. Wow, you worked at Google? You must be talented, smart, sought-after... What is your current title, what are your responsibilities, and what do you see yourself doing in five or ten years? Be sure you are placing yourself in a position to move to the next step.

Price

Are you what the retails industry refers to as an Opening Price Point product (OPP)? Are you at the bottom-end of the salary scale? Or, are you a luxury brand? OPP may work for selling volumes of product at Wal-Mart, but it never works for developing a brand. Value your worth appropriately and monitor your income as you would a profit and loss statement.

Thinking of yourself as a brand is not a novel concept. There are books, and even seminars you can attend like the Brand You World that all promote the concept. Tom Peters, management guru and author, may have launched the phenomena with his 1997 article The Brand Called You. Peters calls the idea being “the CEO of Me.” It’s more than just a clever way to look at your career. It’s a great way to manage the future of your business. And who better than you to be the CEO of your career?

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