



## Why You Need a Personal Brand

Whether you are an entrepreneur or work for an employer, you need to see yourself as a personal brand. Whether you are in an entry-level role or the CEO, you need to think of yourself as a personal brand. If you don't see yourself as a personal brand, you are putting yourself in a precarious position from a career standpoint. Why? Because the market sees you as a commodity. And what happens with commodities? As they are not seen as unique, they tend to be acquired at the least possible cost. Simply put, you won't get the pay, the opportunities or the respect you deserve if you don't become a unique, personal brand.

Being average and flying under the radar screen are no longer options. People who try to fit in are endangered – they'll be seen by their employers as not adding enough value, of being dispensable. We need to find ways to stand out through our outstanding, unique approach to our work. We need to create greater value each day. We can do this by focusing on what we do, what we value, deciding on what makes us different at work and demonstrating this daily. To operate this way requires emotional commitment and discretionary effort. So we need to consciously create and define our own authentic personal brands, just like the brands we know and use daily. Becoming a personal brand means standing out. It's our promise to our customers. *"This is what you can expect from me."*

While successful entrepreneurs have no doubt defined their personal brands, becoming a personal brand doesn't mean we have to quit our jobs. We do, however, probably need to rethink how we go about our jobs.

In summary, our **personal brand = bringing our true selves to work and doing our best work**. And our brands are either growing in value or decreasing in value. It's up to us to ensure our brand is increasing in value.

Famous personal brands we all recognize include Oprah, Martha Stewart, Anderson Cooper, Madonna and Lady GaGa. Gold medalist snowboarder Shawn White, MVP catcher Joe Mauer, Apple CEO Steve Jobs and actor George Clooney have strong personal brands. Each of these individuals has taken special care to define their unique brands.

In the Twin Cities, a number of personal brands stand out. We've got Kieran Folliard, owner of the Local, Liffey, Kieran's, Cooper and other Irish pubs. We've got Chris Freytag, fitness and wellness expert and star of Motivation Monday on KARE11. Clothier Marty Mathis of Marty Mathis Direct, who will custom fit you to help you look your best and photographer Wendy Houser Blomseth of InBeaute Photography, who will photograph you to make you look your best. And, we've got Wally the Beerman, the beer vendor extraordinaire for all the major sporting events and state fair who greets us warmly with a smile and his booming baritone voice.

So thinking of ourselves as personal brands starts with our worldview, our belief system. To become our own brand requires the following beliefs:

- To take total responsibility for our career, happiness and fulfillment.
- To realize it's more about attitude than working longer hours.
- To forget trying to fit in. Forget the 9 to 5 mindset. Forget the TGIF business.
- To look at work as an opportunity to display our art and unique talents.
- To be willing to exert emotional, discretionary effort.
- To accept there is no roadmap for success. We each have to find our own way.
- To face the fear and uncertainty of being unique. Yes, someone may laugh at you. Yes, you may not always know the way. Committing to becoming a personal brand, means committing to figuring it out when you hit a wrong turn or roadblock.

Once we accept the need to become our personal brands and commit to defining our personal brands, we can tap into our own special gifts, talents and skills and let our art flow at work. To do this requires us to lean forward at work and stretch. How can we let our art flow? How can we do something really special that will be of great value to our customers? How can we exert our emotional labor, our discretionary effort, to create value for others? How can we use our gifts, talent and skills to do something very special and become indispensable to our customers and companies?

A step we can each take today is to identify one or two things we can do to create even more value at work by really leaning into our work. How to do this? Where to do this? The good news and the bad news is there's no roadmap. I can't tell you how exactly for your situation how to create more value and become indispensable, but some areas to look at could include:

- Take on a messy project;
- Volunteer to do what others don't want to do;
- Coach and inspire staff and others;
- Look for new ways to connect others;
- Volunteer to speak at conferences and become a thought leader in your area of expertise;
- Lead customers and provide service they'll rave about;
- Provide deep domain knowledge;
- Share a unique talent;
- Deliver exceptional creativity;

Accepting that you need to become a personal brand is your first step. Look for my upcoming blog posts ([www.chuckbolton.wordpress.com](http://www.chuckbolton.wordpress.com)) to learn more about how to build your personal brand and ideas for promoting your personal brand.

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