

# Branding Yourself:

## 6 Tips for Professional Success



Brands aren't just for products anymore. Thanks to social media, online forums and blogs, just about anyone can create their own personal branding. If less-than-talented reality show participants can go on to become household names, then you can surely succeed at branding yourself for professional success. Regardless of where you are in your career, you have a story to tell and talent to share. Make sure your personal brand reflects that with these six tips:

### 1. Who do you think you are?

Branding yourself begins with self-reflection. Take stock of your strengths. What are your best attributes? What positive adjectives might a colleague use to describe you? Is there one particular talent or discipline in which you truly shine? What's your personality? If you're just beginning your career, choose a discipline or area of focus that truly interests you. Don't pretend to be something you're not. Hard-working, focused and reserved people get ahead just as often as social butterflies.

### 2. What are people saying about you?

To get a handle on the current state of your personal branding, Google yourself and see what pops up. Does your online presence communicate the brand you want? If not, take steps to change that. Start by refreshing your social media profile. Try joining some LinkedIn interest groups and become an active participant. Ask questions and initiate discussions. Volunteer your own ideas and expertise when others post questions.

### 3. Imitation is flattery

Now that you have a better grip on your brand, check out the brand presence of some colleagues you admire. What sets them apart? How do they go about letting others know about their talents? What skills can you use to help polish your own image?

### 4. Don't forget your soft skills

Savvy employers seek individuals with the right combination of hard skills and soft skills (like persuasion and diplomacy). For example, your ability to compile quarterly financial reports might set you apart, but if you're not adept at marshaling the support of the colleagues who contribute to those numbers, career advancement could be more challenging. Approach fellow team members informally to find out how you can improve, and then act upon the feedback. You'll demonstrate two valuable soft skills at once — teamwork and adaptability.

### 5. Talk a great talk

Making presentations in the office or at a professional event is a great way of branding yourself. It showcases your strengths and makes an impression on people who could help advance your career. If you're not a natural public speaker, check out your local chapter of Toastmasters to help build your speaking skills. The added boost you'll give to your brand is worth overcoming the stage fright.

### 6. Manage your reputation

Privacy is practically nonexistent in the age of Facebook. When branding yourself personally and professionally, assume that anything you post may be viewed by the masses. While you want to showcase yourself as knowledgeable, interesting and fun to work with, be sure to use good judgment. If there's anything out there you wouldn't want a potential employer to see, delete it now. Remember, your reputation is your best asset.