

The Leadership Journey “Developing a Personal Brand”



When I decided to incorporate a company I turned to master brander, Laura Coburn, President of Coburn Design. We discussed how to develop a brand that would set my business apart in the marketplace. We had a traditional marketing and communications conversation. However as we continued to talk she said, “Gwen, you are your business. Why do you think people choose to do business with you over others who do the same work in our region?” “How would you describe your personal brand?” I had to consider the connection between my brand and that of my business. The questions made me ponder the significance of leaders developing a personal brand.

Personal brand is another way to think about reputation. Having a great reputation is important for those interested in being effective leaders. Turning your reputation into a brand requires you to consciously monitor the interaction between who you are, what you do, your values and how people react to you. It seems the combination of these factors, over time, transition a leader’s reputation into a personal brand. This is very much like a related set of factors that contribute to a company’s brand. I’ve learned to think of a positive personal brand as a set of qualities and characteristics a leader desires to consistently be known for at work, home and in the community.

Leaders often believe they can’t pro-actively affect people’s perceptions of their personal brand. I believe, just as we do with companies, leaders can and should pro- actively affect this aspect of their professional lives. In the void of defining your brand others will do it for you and it may not be the best representation of you.

Leaders can take specific actions to develop a positive personal brand. Begin with determining the qualities, characteristics, and values you want to be known for and commit to living these consistently as you lead. Mark Sanborn, president of Sanborn and Associates and author of “*You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader: How Anyone, Anywhere Can Make a Positive Difference*” uses an acronym, **DNA** to describe qualities one should consider in developing a strong positive personal brand.

Dependability – Can others count on you?

Novelty – What makes you uniquely valuable to co-workers, colleagues, and customers?

Attitude – What is your attitude? Is it working for you?

Sanborn invites leaders to use these questions to write out the DNA of their personal brands. In addition, translate these answers into a personal mission statement. A personal mission statement is a great tool for managing your personal brand. A personal mission statement focuses on who you are, what you believe in, and how you desire to interact with others. It is a resource that helps leaders focus on the qualities and characteristics that make up their brand. It holds you accountable to you.

We all know a leader who has a negative brand. Are they effective? Are they viewed as having integrity? Are others willing to follow them? The value of a positive personal brand is documented in leadership research over and over again. The evidence is in, a positive personal brand adds significant value to one’s effectiveness as a leader. I encourage leaders to think of themselves as “you,inc.” Spend time developing and managing your personal brand. The success of your company’s brand is directly connected to perceptions of your personal brand.