

# The Power of a Self Brand

By Catherine Kaputa

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The Art of Self Branding <http://www.selfbrand.com>

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Today, branding isn't just for companies, Hollywood celebrities, or highly-paid athletes. People in all walks of life are starting to use personal or self branding to get ahead in the game of life.

The single factor that often explains the difference between a professional who is competent and doing okay and one who earns a significant income and generates lots of business is self branding.

Self branding defined: Self branding is a strong personal identity based on a clear perception about what you stand for, what sets you apart from others, and the added value you bring to a job or situation.

Your self brand is the sum total of other people's feelings about your attributes and capabilities, how you perform, even their perceptions about what you are worth.

To brand or not to brand? Many people think that if they do a good job, their career will go fine. But no matter how secure your position seems to be, you are in competition with more people than you think.

To some people, branding may seem manipulative or phony. "I'd just rather be myself," they say, "to with the flow and see where my career takes me." Or, the familiar line, "I'm not good at marketing myself."

If you don't brand yourself, others will. The fact of the matter is you're giving the power to other people to brand you if you don't do it yourself.

Let me give you an example. A new client came in who was fuming because of the way another executive introduced her at a conference. He branded her as the company's direct mail maven. That may have been the way she started out at the firm, but not quite how she saw herself now.

Self brands are created not born. Branding is mainly a process of analyzing a product in

relationship to a market and figuring out how to maximize the brand's potential. Branding is creating an asset out of something. It is a matter of satisfying a market need in a different way. And figuring out a plan of action - the marketing plan - to build awareness and trial of the brand.

Launching a person on a drive to become a successful personal brand is essentially the same process. It is a conscious strategic process, a branding process, a process that Hollywood celebrities and high profile athletes have been using for some time.

The Self Brand mindset: Self branding means looking at yourself as a marketer would look at a product that he or she wants to make a winning brand. You don't think of yourself as an employee even if you work for a boss. You think of yourself as working for yourself marketing the brand, You.

The first thing a marketer does is analyze the market and the product to understand what the opportunities are, what the threats are. What are the current conditions? What are the assumptions about the future? What problems need to be solved? What needs aren't being met?

Act like the marketer of the product: You. In personal branding, after analyzing the market, you do a self audit. What are my strengths and weaknesses? How does my brand compare with the people I am competing with?

You focus on key attributes and resources that differentiate you. Skills, abilities, even personality traits you have that are a solution to a market need. Then you adopt what Theodore Levitt called "the marketing imagination." You build a personal brand identity that is different, relevant and adds value.

Plan to dazzle: write out a marketing plan. I often work with clients to develop a formal marketing plan that lays out a personal brand strategy and action plan. It is often in the writing that new creative options come to light.

It is important to set personal brand goals with a specific time frame and plan of action for achieving the goals. So just like a marketer would, you write down personal marketing activities to achieve your goals. And, of course, you execute the marketing plan. You can't get to where you want to go unless you plan it and then do it.

The final step is measurement. You assess your effectiveness. How is my "portfolio" different now than it was last year? What new projects did I take on? How did I expand my network? What new learning did I acquire? If something isn't working, you change trains. Branding is a dynamic process that offers the greatest rewards to the receptive individual.

Thinking and acting like a brand can create and maintain demand for your most important product - you.

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About the Author:

Catherine Kaputa is a personal branding strategist, seminar leader, speaker and coach who works with executives, entrepreneurs and others who are good at what they do, but want to use branding to be more effective and successful in their lives. Visit [www.selfbrand.com](http://www.selfbrand.com) or [catherine@selfbrand.com](mailto:catherine@selfbrand.com)

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