

Having a Personal Leadership Brand Creates Value

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The other day, I was sitting down with a sales executive and explaining that I want to continue writing stories for my website. I was explaining to him the importance of writing these stories, and how they help add value to my personal leadership brand. This sales executive looked up from his coffee and said, “Huh. I haven’t thought of how doing something like that can contribute to your own *personal* brand.” I turned to ask, “Well, what are the things that you’re doing every day that add value to your personal leadership brand?”



In the book *Be Your Own Brand*, McNally and Speak emphasize that if you can not only understand who it is you want to be, but be able to reinforce who that is, you become an even more effective leader. If you can say “this is who I am, and why I’m doing that”, it helps your colleagues and peers understand what the expectations are and what you stand for, as a person and as a leader.

Branding yourself is important, as a lack of clarity with your personality can make it difficult to be followed. If you’re making decisions that don’t align with the way you have presented yourself, it’s likely to throw people for a loop. Let’s say you go into a burger restaurant expecting to get a burger, and all you see on the menu is pizza. You’d be left confused, wondering if you walked into the right restaurant. You can expect the same with leadership style. If you brand yourself as an optimistic leader but you are constantly looking for the problems in every situation, people might be left confused and wondering about the commitment to yourself. This often can lead them to question their commitment to you. If you let people know that you are an optimistic leader and act as such, others will be able to call out that behavior much easier as well.

Further conversing with the sales executive, the first conclusion we came to was that he needed to put words to his brand before anything else. To begin the process of mastering your personal leadership brand, start by writing down 5 words that best describe you. You can search online if you find yourself getting stuck. Then, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why are those words important to you?
- How do you exhibit those traits, as a leader and personally?
- How will you commit to those five words?

By taking the time to understand your own brand, you can become stronger and more committed to the version of yourself you want to be. You could take it one step further and put these words in a place you will look at every day, perhaps on your desk or by your calendar. Another great place to add these words would be in your professional bio or LinkedIn Bio. I've done this process myself, and found that I resonate most with insightful, encouraging, forward-thinking, strategic, and knowledgeable. These five traits have added value to myself and others, and reminders of who I am and what I stand for.