

# WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO CREATE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND?

TO CREATE A PERSONAL BRAND THAT WORKS, IT IS BEST TO DEVELOP A UNIQUE SET OF ELEMENTS WHICH, TAKEN TOGETHER, PROJECT THE IMAGE YOU WANT



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**W**hether you like it or not, you have a personal brand. When you come in contact with people, they will “brand” or type-cast you based on the image you project. Why? Human brains are wired to do this as a “short cut” to make sense of the world. Without short cuts, life would be too confusing, complicated, and in some cases dangerous. The brain simplifies as much as it can so that it can focus on those things that really matter. Your brain needs to decide if another person, animal, or thing is a friend or a foe that will help or harm you. It does this by categorising everything according to symbols and patterns that are hard-wired or learned from experience.

Considering this it becomes really important for you to create your personal brand before others do. And to accomplish the task it’s useful to think of branding as having two components – the lock and the key. The lock refers to the target audience (TG) that has a need, and the key is the image of the product you create to fill that need. In the case of your personal brand, you are the product. You have more control if you create your own brand image (key). If you don’t, others will create one for you. More often than not, the image they create will not be flattering or helpful because they may have a negative agenda, lack branding expertise, or have a natural inclination to compete with you by highlighting your weaknesses.

To be successful, you need to project the image that fills the needs of your target audience, which typically includes a group

you want to join, a prospective employer, or an audience you want to sell. Your key has to fit their lock better than your competitors. If it does, you will reap the rewards of being selected or followed. To create a personal brand that works for you need to keep following things in mind:

**1. Identify your target audience (your lock):** Determine the audience you want to target and what they want or need from you.


**2. Determine the image you project now (your key):** Ask the people you trust to honestly tell you what image you project. You have to be open to listening to their answers even if they tell what you may not want to hear.

**3. Is it the image you want?:** If their answers are consistent and represent the image you want, your personal brand is working. If not, you need to make changes related to your appearance, behaviour, name, personal symbols, or other branding elements.

**4. Make adjustments to your key:** Make the adjustments necessary to project the personal brand that enables you to realise your objectives and better fill the needs of your audience.

**5. Create branding elements:** You need to develop branding elements that help you to create and reinforce the image you want to project. People typically employ names, logos, slogans, hairstyles, or clothing items to help their personal brand.

**6. Execute performance:** Your product has to deliver on the promise of your personal brand. A bad performance, unless your brand is deliberately based on this, will undermine your personal brand.

**7. Measure results, and take corrective action:** Repeat steps 3 and 4 and the others if necessary. 

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