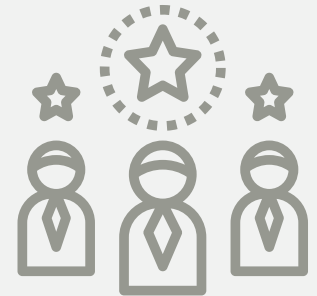


In today's world, building a strong professional brand is a critical cornerstone of overall career success. Your professional brand should embody the unique value you bring to your profession. It is your narrative, conveying who you are and what you stand for. It highlights your skills, values, and individuality. Each day, we actively shape our brand, so it is crucial to align our behavior and image to create a consistent, positive, and successful reputation.



WHY IS A PROFESSIONAL BRAND IMPORTANT?

We all have reputations. Our reputation is built from first impressions, relationships with others, and how and what we communicate. All of our actions impact how others perceive us. Thus, our reputation is a combination of the opinions and beliefs people form based on their experiences with us.

Our professional brand is about being intentional in how we want people to see us through our values and behaviors. When your professional brand and reputation are synchronized, you create credibility by aligning your intentions with your actions. Without a strong, positive brand and reputation, you may miss out on growth opportunities, achieving your professional goals, or landing your next job.

HOW TO BUILD A STRONG PROFESSIONAL BRAND

There are four parts to building a positive professional brand: self-awareness, stakeholder perceptions, review and reflection, and refinement as needed. First, you need to get a clear picture of your current state, which involves both self-reflection and others' perceptions.

1. Self-awareness

Understand your strengths and opportunities to figure out your current brand. Ask yourself:

- What are 3-5 adjectives you believe your colleagues would use to describe your professional persona? Would family and friends say something different?
- What are your top 3-5 professional skills?
- What are your superpowers?
- Create one sentence to describe your personal brand.
- What is your ultimate career goal(s)?
- What do you think you are known for?
- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- What legacy do you want to leave?



2. Stakeholder Perceptions

Gain knowledge of how others perceive you. Different stakeholders may hold different views. To gain honest and helpful feedback, determine the best format (verbal or written), response format (anonymous or direct), and create powerful questions (between 3-5 maximum) for your audience (boss, peers, customers, team members). Some of your questions may be similar to the ones you asked yourself:

- What are 3-5 adjectives you believe describe my professional persona?
- What are my top 3-5 professional skills?
- What could I improve upon?
- What is unique about me in terms of my conversation style, personality, interests, experience, skills?
- In one sentence, how would you describe my professional brand?



3. Review and Reflect

As you look through the responses, remember that the goal is to understand where there is consistency and alignment versus where there are differences. You want to achieve better alignment between your self-perception and others' perceptions. Do you see consistency across different populations? What words jump out at you? Are there opportunities that surprise you? What is confirmed as a strength?

4. Refine

After reviewing the feedback from stakeholders and your self-evaluation, determine what changes you need to make to align your actions and behaviors with the brand you desire. Identify ways to build credibility and visibility with your stakeholders and to reach your professional goals.

Creating and growing your professional brand is an ongoing process. As you grow and change, so does your brand. It is important to be intentional and proactive, continually seeking feedback from those who are critical to your success.

RESOURCES

- Book: *On Brand* by Aliza Licht
- HBR Article: *A New Approach to Building Your Personal Brand* by Jill Avery & Rachel Greenwald
- TedTalk: *5 Steps to Building a Personal Brand You Feel Good About* by Marcos Salazar (6:14 minutes)