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Positioning yourself in the workplace: How to improve your personal branding for career success

To get ahead of your career, sometimes you need more than just paper qualifications and experience.

Yes, you may be an excellent student or you might have amassed a wealth of work experience. But are you positioning yourself right in the work place? Are you branding yourself correctly?

What is personal branding?

According to Lynne Ng, Country Manager of Singapore and Malaysia, personal branding is more than just how you look on the outside. It is more of your day-to-day behaviour. Personal branding is the fixed impression that pops into the minds of people when they think of you and is the generally accepted perception of those around you.

There are two kinds of branding - tangible and intangible. Tangible branding typically refers to the specific benefit that people will derive from you while intangible branding refers to the positive feeling people receive from you.

What does personal branding do for you?

Personal branding can improve your career success by dictating your promotability. An employee who manages his/her personal branding well will in turn help to increase the branding of the organisation. These employees are naturally highly regarded and rewarded by their organisations.

How you brand yourself is an indication of your true work. It further enhances your work capabilities and your perceived value as an employee.

Developing your personal branding and making it work for you

To develop your personal branding, you must first clarify and communicate your career objectives. Where do you see yourself in this organisation in 5 years' time? What do you hope to achieve and learn in this organisation?

Next, identify your strengths and weaknesses. What is unique about you? Play up your strengths. Be aware of your weaknesses and work on improving them and turn them into one of your strengths.

During the process of creating personal branding, be yourself. Be yourself as in, be genuine, be someone who you really are. This is really what we need to uncover with personal branding. It is about being authentic and expressing yourself in a natural way.

Ask yourself, "What would you like to be branded as and who is your target market?" For example, you would like to be known as a strong leader, a task-oriented person in the office. Work towards achieving these objectives but do bear in mind that you will still have to be the genuine you at the end of the day.



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Be consistent

The most important step is that of consistency. If we do not have that consistency, we do not come across as sincere and trustworthy. Our personal branding would then be deemed as slightly unauthentic and it will not work. Imagine this, if you come across as an over-bearing and bossy superior, someone who throws his or her weight around in the office and is a completely different person, i.e., meek and desperately trying to please when in front of your own boss, how would that make you look? Hypocritical? Totally.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is about knowing yourself and being aware of your own thoughts, actions and uncovering what your brand values are. These are essential in promoting and marketing yourself. Alternatively, learn to seek and accept feedback from those around you. Cast your net and make it work within your company.

Another way of positioning yourself at the workplace is to network within your company. Yes, many do not even think much of networking at work. They view going to work as just simply a means to an end, just to get work done. Perhaps, you should take this opportunity to be in touch with the right people and seek connections which may come in handy some day.

Remember

Personal branding is an important part of your overall career strategy. Branding is not about getting your targets to choose you over your competition; branding is about getting your prospects to see you as the only solution to your problem.

When personal branding is not enough, position yourself physically and strategically in an organization!

Lynne recounts a true and inspiring story to all job seekers:

Many years ago, a young candidate, who was about 16 or 17 year old, approached me for a job. When asked what positions he was specifically looking for, he said without hesitation that he wanted to work only for directors/CEOs of MNCs.

It came almost as a surprise and shock to me as this was an unusual request from such a young job seeker. When explained that this would be an almost impossible arrangement due to his lack of qualifications and experience, the young candidate was undeterred. He then settled for the next best position. Thought far from his expectations, he nonetheless made the best of the situation.

He networked with the people who worked closely with the senior management and won them over with his great personality and character.

One day, an opportunity presented itself when one of his network contacts casually mentioned that the MD of the company needed some help at his home. Though it was not within his job scope nor was it something he was made to do, this candidate volunteered his services with the MD and ended up creating such an impact on the MD that he was later offered a stunning testimonial when he left the company to further his studies.

Upon completion of his studies, he was offered a position in the company but he turned it down as he wanted to do something else.

Lynne says, "This is a really rare occurrence and it goes to show how far one can go should one be determined to create personal branding."