

Can People Be Branded?

If you’re like most people, you’re probably faithful to at least a couple of corporate brands. Maybe it’s your favorite brand of breakfast cereal or a particular shampoo that does more for your hair than any other. Certain brands command higher prices than others because they are perceived as superior.

If brands are so powerful that they can bring out such loyalty in us – even making us part with more of our money – why shouldn’t people be branded? Why can’t we, as individuals, evoke that same kind of loyalty in our careers? If you were the “brand of choice” in your workplace, think about what that would mean in terms of promotions, recognition, and higher pay!

Now, of course, I’m not insinuating that you’re a product like a box of breakfast cereal or bottle of shampoo. But the truth is that we are all *like* shampoo! Just as shampoo must offer a benefit to improve your hair, you must offer something of value in business, or you’re out of luck, right? So, taking charge of your personal brand is exactly how you become known for what you have to offer in the workplace.

Don’t worry – personal branding doesn’t involve walking around in a sandwich sign advertising yourself. It’s not all about self-promotion, I promise! There are subtle ways you can become known for your greatest strengths and talents. No one has to know you’re working on your personal brand.

So, the question isn’t whether people *can* be branded. The question is: *How do you create a personal brand that makes YOU™ – the trademarked you – the “brand of choice” in your workplace?*

The Art of Branding Yourself

Becoming the brand of choice in your workplace means that your *Audience* is loyal to YOU™. Who is your Audience? They are the people who most affect your position at work. They may be your boss, your clients, or your colleagues. These are the people whose *Needs* you must fill in order to distinguish yourself as uniquely valuable. Just as a corporate brand must fill the needs of consumers, you must determine the Needs of your Audience and fill at least some of their Needs.

But how do you know that you’re filling your Audience’s Needs and becoming their brand of choice? In my experience as a marketer, the only way to take a corporate brand to the top is to use the proven step-by-step framework that establishes the brand’s position in the marketplace. This same proven framework works for personal branding, too! The framework begins with a Personal Brand Positioning Statement that consists of the same six elements that have been used to create every top selling corporate brand. This positioning statement is the first step in the Personal Branding System outlined in my new book, *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo*.

I have already mentioned the first two of the six elements, but what are the remaining four? Here are all six:

- *Audience* – The people who most affect your career.
- *Need* – The needs of your Audience that you must fill.
- *Comparison* – The others who could fill your Audience’s Needs, and how you can distinguish yourself from them.

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- *Unique Strengths* – The talents and strengths you bring that will make you memorable to your Audience.
- *Reasons Why* – The credentials and experience that will make your Audience believe you can deliver your Unique Strengths.
- *Brand Character* – The aspect of your personal brand that is unique to your personality. It’s what differentiates Pepsi from Coke.

Your Personal Brand Positioning Statement allows you to *define* the personal brand you want in order to achieve greater success at work. But defining your brand is only the first step! It will do you no good to have it all down on paper if it isn’t applied to your work life.

That’s where *communicating* your brand comes in. This is step two of the Personal Branding System. Once again, no one has to know that you’re working on your personal brand, so you won’t be communicating it in an obvious way at all. You can communicate your brand in subtle ways through the five activities we all do every day:

- Actions
- Reactions
- Look
- Sound
- Thoughts

The third and final step of the Personal Branding System is to *avoid damaging* your personal brand by learning from the mistakes of others. These are our Personal Brand Busters™.

Personal branding is a process that requires some work on your part, but if you follow the system, it’s a no-nonsense approach that allows you to take advantage of the same proven methods that marketers have used to take the best-selling corporate brands to the top. So, there’s no reason why you can’t evoke the same kind of loyalty to your brand that you have for your favorite shampoo! Becoming the “brand of choice” in your workplace is an enviable position that can spell greater job satisfaction, as well as more money in your pocket.

Brenda Bence is an internationally-recognized branding expert, certified executive coach, professional speaker, and award-winning author of the How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo personal branding book series. With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s 25-year career has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. As President of Brand Development Associates International, Ltd. Brenda now travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through corporate and personal brand development.



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