

YOU and Your Company: Making the Corporate Brand / Personal Brand Connection

You may already know that defining and communicating your unique personal brand on the job is a powerful way to further your career. But have you ever thought about the connection between your personal brand and your *company's* brand? What role does that “connection” – or lack of a connection – play in your career success? And how do you determine if your personal brand is out of sync with your company's brand?

Whether we're talking about personal brands or corporate brands, here's a secret that the best marketers know: Great brands don't get to be great by accident! In fact, there is a tried-and-true formula for building great brands, and it starts with defining six core elements. These elements fit together like puzzle pieces to define your personal brand or your company's brand, and they reflect what you want your firm – or “YOU” – to stand for. How does your personal brand line up with your company's brand in terms of these six elements?

1. **Target Market/Audience.** Who does your company target as existing or potential customers for its products or services? BMW targets wealthier customers than Toyota, for example. Cuervo targets younger customers than Smirnoff. Just as your company focuses on who it wants as its customers, your personal brand should also be focused on the people at work who can most impact your career and future. They make up your personal brand's “audience.”
2. **Needs.** Your company meets the needs of its customers through its products or services. It's no different with your personal brand. Think about it: What does your personal brand audience need from *you*, and how well are you meeting those needs?
3. **Competition/Comparison.** Corporate branders need to know their competitors well in order to understand why a customer would choose their brand over another. Similarly, personal branders must know something about the other people that their audience will compare them to. Is there someone else who can better fill your personal brand audience's needs? That's your personal brand “comparison.”
4. **Benefits/Unique Strengths.** A corporate brand must offer specific benefits to its target market, just like your personal brand needs to communicate the unique strengths that set you apart from others.
5. **Reasons Why.** A big name brand must have “reasons why” – reasons that convince a company's target market that the brand can deliver the benefits it offers. Your personal brand has reasons why, too – reasons your personal brand audience will believe *you* can deliver the unique strengths you promise. What credibility do you have, and why?

6. **Brand Character.** Every brand – corporate or personal – has a personality or “character” that makes it different from any other brand. Think about the difference between Pepsi and Coke. The products contain almost the exact same ingredients, but each brand has a unique character that has been carefully created by marketers. And that character is what helps you choose one soda over the other. Your personal brand character does the same for “YOU.”

Comparing Your Personal Brand with Your Company’s Brand

If you apply the above framework to both your company’s brand and your personal brand, do they connect well with one another? Is your company’s target market of interest to you, and are they the kind of people you enjoy pleasing? Are you passionate about working to fill the needs of that market?

Everyone who works for a company is a *marketer* for that company. You represent the firm whether or not you deal directly with customers or perform direct sales as a part of your job. The bottom line? To be successful on the job, you need to have a *connection* with the company’s brand, character, and mission. Your personal brand definition needs to “fit” like a glove with the corporate brand definition.

Let’s take Anna as an example. She had worked for 15 years as a corporate executive for a multinational airline, a job which had given her opportunities to travel and live all around the world. She had been very happy there until a few years ago when she began to feel uncomfortable in her job. She realized she was no longer content and passionate about the company, and she couldn’t figure out why.

When Anne sat down and defined both her personal brand and the airline’s corporate brand, she discovered that the two brands were out of sync. Her personal brand character hadn’t changed over the years, but the *company’s* brand character had changed – as a result of “9/11.” Before those fateful events, the company had been a friendly place to work. But after September 11, 2001, the company had implemented many new policies and changes that resulted in a less friendly work environment.

After evaluating her own personal brand character and the changed brand character of the airline, Anna realized that there was a disconnect now where there wasn’t before. This helped her make better sense of her existing situation and helped her develop a plan of action for better short-term and long-term career success.

Side By Side Comparison

When you sit back and look at the six elements of both your company’s brand and your personal brand – side by side – what do you find? How strong is the connection? If it’s strong, you probably feel great about your job and enjoy your work. If the connection is less than strong, what elements are disjointed? What could you do to make a stronger bond between your own individual brand and the company’s brand?

The bottom line is: Your short- and long-term career success – as well as your overall job satisfaction – depend on having a strong corporate brand/personal brand connection. Do YOU?

Brenda S. Bence is an internationally-recognized branding expert, Certified Executive Coach, dynamic trainer and Certified Speaking Professional, and the author of several books. Her award-winning *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding book series began with *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo: The Breakthrough Personal Branding System Based on Proven Big-Brand Marketing Methods to Help You Earn More, Do More, and Be More at Work*, the first step-by-step personal branding system for defining and communicating your personal brand for greater success in the workplace.



With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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BRENDA BENCE

Speaker • Trainer • Executive Coach • Author
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