

## Personal Brand Damage Control: 8 Tips to Stay on Top at Work

Every day at work, you run the risk of damaging your personal brand – even if you don’t think you have one. How is this possible? Well, your personal brand is *the way people perceive, think, and feel about you in relation to others*. The people you work with already have perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about you, so just by virtue of being “you” in the workplace, you already have a personal brand.

The question is whether you have the personal brand you *want*. Is your brand bringing you greater success, or is it actually holding you back? Not knowing the answer to that question can mean the difference between a career that stays land-locked and a career that skyrockets.

So, what are the best ways to keep personal brand damage under control?

**1. Get clear about what your current brand stands for right now.** This means discovering how people perceive, think, and feel about you in the present moment. Enlist a friend you trust to ask several work colleagues for the top five words they would use to describe you. Are you described the way you want to be? If not, your personal brand needs some adjustments.

**2. Determine where you need to make changes.** If you aren’t happy with the results of your research, that’s good news. Why? Because it will clarify exactly what you need to change in order to create the brand you want.

**3. Define carefully what you *want* your brand to be.** Once you have an idea of where your *current* personal brand is failing, you need to define your *desired* personal brand. Most people struggle with their personal brand because they haven’t taken the time to clearly define it. Not having a personal brand definition is like meandering from point A to point B without a map. You might get there eventually, but you’ll make a lot of wrong turns along the way.

So, take some time to consider: How do you want to be known? What are your strengths, and how can you best fill the needs of your brand’s “target audience” – i.e., your boss, your colleagues, and/or your customers?

**4. Learn how to communicate your brand effectively.** Defining your desired personal brand is an important first step, but if it remains on a piece of paper in a drawer, it won’t do you much good. In other words, no one’s perceptions, thoughts, or feelings about you will change unless and until you *communicate* the personal brand you really want. So, keep your personal brand definition in mind as you go about the top five activities that all of us do every day. These activities best communicate what you stand for: Your Actions, Reactions, Look, Sound, and your Thoughts. The key to success is being consistent with these five activities – in what you say, do, and think – day-in and day-out.

*Page 2: Personal Brand Damage Control: 8 Tips to Stay on Top at Work*

Do you act like someone with your desired personal brand would act? Do you stop yourself before reacting negatively to situations that arise? Do you look and sound like someone with your desired personal brand? And yes, do you *think* like someone with your desired personal brand? Thoughts are incredibly powerful and can not only affect your own feelings but how others perceive, think, and feel about you as well.

**5. Avoid damaging your personal brand.** After you have defined your personal brand and created a plan for communicating it, you also need to take special care to keep it intact. How do you do that? One way is to watch others, and learn from their mistakes. Even if you don't know anyone personally who has damaged their personal brand, you have certainly heard of celebrities who have made serious blunders. For some of them, the damage has been so severe that their careers have never bounced back. So, pay attention to what others do that damages *their* personal brands, and avoid doing the same things.

**6. Be aware of your own mistakes, and fix them quickly!** If you do commit a personal brand blooper, do whatever is necessary to fix it. Apologize for it, show that you take responsibility for your errors, and go out of your way to correct them. This works wonders to promote a positive personal brand.

**7. Learn from your errors to avoid making them again.** When you realize your brand has taken a beating after a mistake, ask yourself: “What did I learn from this?” Write down the lessons, and make a commitment to never make that mistake again.

**8. Keep a good sense of humor!** Most importantly, if you make a personal branding mistake, be willing to laugh at yourself. Everyone likes to work with someone who doesn't take themselves too seriously.

**Remember: 24-7-365**

The truth is: Your personal brand is either working for or against you 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you aren't taking control of it by consciously defining and communicating a brand that brings you greater success, you may actually be damaging it and even preventing yourself from reaching your full potential. So, create the personal brand you *want* today, and learn how to harness it. It can be one of the most powerful ways to move forward in your career.

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**BRENDA BENCE**

Executive Coach • Speaker • Trainer • Author  
[www.BrendaBence.com](http://www.BrendaBence.com) • [www.BDA-Intl.com](http://www.BDA-Intl.com)

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**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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